Volunteer Voice

Information for those who donate their time, treasures, and talents to our organization

Freeman Arts Update

It’s hard to believe that we have just two more weekends of shows! This has been an amazing journey for our organization and our 250+ volunteers. Since our last newsletter on July 3, we’ve welcomed more than 60,000 patrons to the Freeman Arts Pavilion! It’s been a work in progress for us and we continue to change as circumstances dictate.

Celebration is one of our Joshua M. Freeman Foundation core values, and we want to continue to celebrate with you. This season we have acknowledged dozens of volunteers with on-the-spot pins for exemplary service.

At our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in October, we will honor volunteers who are completing their 1st, 5th, 10th year of volunteer service with milestone pins. Beyond the 10-year mark, we will give a pin for each additional year. Would you believe we have five volunteers who have crossed the 1,000 hour lifetime mark this season! How about 20 first-year volunteers who have given over 75 hours to date!

The JMFF is now a certifying organization for the President’s Volunteer Service Award. We are choosing to honor volunteers who have completed more than 250 hours this calendar year. These Silver award winners will receive a certificate and medallion at the end of this calendar year.

Joyce and her husband Dick of 52 years moved to Sussex County from Hackettstown, N.J., in 1999 after Joyce retired early from M&M/Mars.

Joyce’s 30-plus years with M&M/Mars included various assignments in Human Resources and assistant to the President. After retiring Joyce was eager to explore the area and the opportunities it offered. When they moved here, Bear Trap Dunes in Ocean View was just being built and Joyce jumped on her bike and rode over to see what the golf course and community was all about.

Since 1999, Joyce has been an employee of Troon Golf at Bear Trap working in the snack bar and pro shop. During her early employment at Bear Trap Dunes, she got to know Josh Freeman.

Joyce relates that "Josh was really nice and very supportive of his employees and participated in organized athletic events that Carl M. Freeman Companies would have."

Employees participated in a corporate challenge for many years to benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. One year, Josh asked Joyce to participate in the corporate challenge in her age bracket. Joyce reflects on that day as she was running the race and said, "Josh joined me while finishing the final leg of the race to make sure I was OK. It was a memorable experience for me."

Joyce enjoys volunteering in many areas in Sussex County: AARP tax aid program for seniors and low-income residents, Millville Fire Auxiliary, site captain for the Coastal Delaware Beach Clean Up, mentoring at local schools and acting as hostess for the South Coastal Delaware Library Cottage Tour. She is also a Recreation Committee member for Salt Pond Community where she lives.

If she isn’t busy volunteering, she fills her time with golfing, bike riding, knitting, reading, and walking the beach. Joyce also has a degree in Business Administration from Centenary University in Hackettstown, N.J.

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A big thanks to all who came out for Yoga on the Beach on Sept. 8. Although our first date was rained out in August, we had some nice fall weather on the sand.

Save the Date: Volunteer Appreciation Dinner will be held on Oct. 12 at 5 p.m. at Signatures at Bayside. This event is where we recognize our volunteers. Looking forward to seeing everyone as we finish out the season strong!

Lynette Catha
VAC Social Subcommittee Chair

We look forward to celebrating those of you who attain this honor! Note that our students serve a shorter window of volunteer time but are eligible to be recognized if they attain 100 hours of service this year.

You recently received an invite to complete the 2021 Annual Volunteer Survey. PLEASE take the time to give us your honest feedback so that we can plan for the 2022 season.

As we approach the end of our Freeman Arts Pavilion season, we will start recruiting some additional captains and Volunteer Advisory Committee members. Captains are the appointed leaders of the volunteer corps during every show. They also assist with volunteer management, training, recruitment and retention. The Volunteer Advisory Committee is composed of appointed leadership volunteers who serve as an advocate for the volunteers and act as liaisons between the Foundation and the volunteer corps. If you are interested in taking on a volunteer leadership role and would like to be considered for either of these positions, please email Paul at volunteer@freemanfoundation.org.

Strong finish — as a group we have contributed more than 16,000 volunteer hours to date and will far exceed the 2019 total of 15,781 volunteer hours. But besides the numbers, let’s support each other, be kind to each other and enjoy our time together in the closing weeks of this season.

Paul Tooker
Volunteer Coordinator
Volunteer Captains Update

The 2021 concert season has been a busy one, a labor of love for the captains and leads serving the Freeman Arts Pavilion. As of mid-September, the captains have covered 44 shows, 218 captains shifts, and 268 shifts overall.

In addition to the performances, there have been three captains’ meetings since the season began, the most recent of which was thankfully an in-person meeting. During the summer performance season, we’ve also conducted bi-weekly conference calls which included the captains and Volunteer Coordinator Paul. These get-togethers focus on improving performance logistics and processes in place at the venue, and in support of the volunteers and patrons in order to enhance the volunteer and patron experiences. Ideas are also raised and communicated following each performance on the Captains’ End of Night Report and are discussed in the Captains’ Huddle before each show.

The meetings and calls have been especially important and productive this year as we’ve been able to help identify and quickly address issues and concerns associated with the new venue configuration.

Some of the issues responded to include: bag and chair checker procedures and responsibilities, crier instructions and handling of bag size issues, the addition of a separate gate captain and division of labor between the two, pavilion of the entrance to support wheelchairs and management of the special assistance usher, coordination with security, best and most effective practices for parking and traffic flow, chairs for gate monitors, number of volunteers needed for each role, training for scanner operation, green issues such as missing pod markers and faded pod circles, wet pods and other safety hazards, etc.

As Phil mentions in his update, we have built the plane while in flight but the process improvements are just an ongoing reality. Thanks to all for your continued support as we grow and continue the journey towards excellence. Now that we are coming down the home stretch, we wanted to capture the experiences of this season’s first-year captains, Melanie Hoffmann and Pat Farina. There will be several captain openings for the 2022 season, and we think this will help give you a feel for what to expect if you decide the captain role might be right for you.

What was it like to start out? (Melanie): I was a little nervous. There were some volunteer jobs I had never done before. (Pat): I really didn’t know what to expect. I knew I’d be going to more events and had only done three of the roles as a volunteer.

What is the best thing about being a new Captain? (Melanie): The experienced captains, other volunteers and staff were wonderfully supportive. (Pat): Meeting so many wonderful new people. Being able to advise on changes/improvements. Working with the patrons, Captains, VAC, staff and security. Having the freedom to make a difference, provide service to patrons and volunteers and to help them have a good time.

What was the most surprising thing about being a new Captain? (Melanie): The most surprising thing was how quickly I was accepted and how suggestions from a new captain were considered and respected as much as those made by experienced captains. (Pat): How quickly you learn everything, thanks to the cooperation and teamwork among the captain team and Paul. As a captain, you are required to serve on a rotation of all four captain roles, so you have to learn a broad spectrum quickly. I especially appreciate that the captains really have been a team, with the full support of each other, Paul and Molly. I never felt uncomfortable doing or trying to do anything. Paul advocated for us, provided backup utilizing the leads, ensured that we were mentored when taking on a new role, and even provided leadership training in the captains’ meetings.

What was the biggest challenge with being a new Captain? (Melanie): Lots to learn. This was especially true this year with COVID-19 challenges and an essentially new venue. We really needed to be flexible because there was literally something new or changed just about every night. (Pat): Changes due to new venue configuration. For the first half of the season, it seemed like everything I did was the first time I did it, so I had to learn and adapt a lot over that stretch of the season. It gets much easier as time goes by, although we really do practice continuous improvement. Advice from other experienced captains was always forthcoming and helpful. That was huge.

What was the most fun/rewarding thing about being a new Captain? (Melanie): Meeting and getting to know a lot of new people and being part of something that brings so much fun and enjoyment to the community. (Pat): Getting more deeply involved, helping and being an advocate for the other volunteers, and supporting the captains. Getting to see all sides of the operational venue experience. And always, of course, the music, entertainment and patrons. The more effort you put into it, the more you get out of it.

What advice would you give to anyone considering becoming a new Captain? (Melanie): Go for it! I’ve made some friends for life. (Pat): Get experience with as many volunteer roles as possible. It really helps when you take on the captain role and it’s the best way to understand the challenges faced by captains and volunteers.

Favorite show(s) this year? (Melanie): My favorite shows this year were Black Violin and Foreigner. Black Violin because they were new to me but wonderfully talented. I’d definitely see them again. And Foreigner because they’re an old favorite. I knew and sang along to every song. (Pat): Dark Star Orchestra and Grace Potter. It was fantastic to see Grace in a solo performance. It was also great to finally see Steve Earle and I always enjoy Brown Box Theatre Project’s Shakespeare performance each year.

Hopefully, this provides some insight into what life as a new captain is like. It’s been a busy, fun and rewarding experience and I’m amazed at how many new friends we’ve made and the entertainment we’ve enjoyed over the summer. This wouldn’t be possible without the support and energy supplied by the volunteers. Thanks to all and reach out to any of us captains if you are interested in the captain role next year!

Patrick Farina
VAC Newsletter Subcommittee Chair
Meet Your Volunteers by Linda Urban

Volunteer: Steve "Skip" Skipper

Where do you live? Herndon, Va. We have lived there since 1996. When we became empty-nesters, we bought a small vacation home in Sea Colony in 2015. We pretty much shuttle back and forth depending on what is going on and whether the lawn needs mowing.

What is your occupation or past occupation, if retired? I retired from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in January 2021. I worked on several FAA programs to modernize the National Air Traffic Control system serving in various engineering, acquisition, program management, and contract management positions. I recently began a part-time consulting gig to continue to support the FAA. Prior to my time at the FAA, I was an officer in the U.S. Air Force.

What year did you begin volunteering at the Freeman Arts Pavilion? 2021. I’m in my rookie year but I’ve volunteered for enough shows now that I don’t feel like a rookie anymore.

How did you find out about the volunteer opportunity at Freeman Arts? From attending concerts in the past, but was motivated by my wife, Kathy. She had been talking about volunteering at the Freeman Arts Pavilion prior to COVID-19. She signed up as a volunteer for 2021 and after she finished her first online training session, she mentioned that the organization was still looking for more volunteers. After thinking about what I would do while she was volunteering, I decided to volunteer and give it a try. It is one of my best decisions so far this year.

Kathy and Steve Skipper

What is your favorite volunteer role and why? So far, my favorite volunteer roles are Parking Attendant and Chair Checker. It is fun to interact with the patrons when they first arrive — most of them are thrilled to be here and excited for the show. Guiding the patrons to park on the lawn is an interesting and sometimes amusing endeavor with the wide assortment of driver capabilities (when it comes to backing into parking spaces). I also like working as a Chair Checker helping the security team and talking with the patrons as they go through the check-in.

What has been your favorite show you’ve volunteered for? Three shows were special to me: Fitz and the Tantrums, Lee Brice, and Train. Lots of energy from the performers and crowd, excellent setlists, and great musical/vocal performances.

What would you tell community members who may be interested in volunteering? Volunteer and give it a try! It’s especially enjoyable to do as a couple. You will meet new people in the volunteer and staff ranks, provide service to a great organization and mission, interact with the patrons to promote a positive and happy vibe and hear a lot of great music. One of the benefits is exposure to different genres of music and performers. It has broadened my appreciation of the arts. The flexibility of volunteer scheduling is an added bonus.

Any personal hobbies, talents or achievements? I am a big Gators fan since I graduated from the University of Florida. I enjoy supporting the Washington Nationals and the Washington Capitals; occasionally attending some of their home games. I play golf with my two sons, who put up with me despite my high handicap. I have a substantial bourbon collection; I guess you could say one of my “hobbies” is to collect and drink bourbon.

Volunteer: Kathryn “Kathy” Skipper. Also known as “Mrs. Skip.”

What town do you currently live? Herndon, Va., and Bethany Beach, Del./Sea Colony.

What is your occupation or past occupation, if retired? “Mom” to two wonderful sons, David and Jimmy. David is a Manager at Grant Thornton in Rosslyn, Va., and Jimmy is a Customer Experience Coordinator at National Corporate Housing in Herndon, Va. Both graduated from James Madison University. They treated me to the ultimate soccer mom experience. I look forward to having a daughter-in-law soon, as David was recently engaged to his beautiful girlfriend, Samantha. I also managed a career as an Attorney-Adviser in the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Human Resources at the Department of State. I retired in March 2020, after over 32 years of government service. I worked in various areas: international claims, management, United Nations affairs, and labor/employment law.

What year did you begin volunteering at the Freeman Arts Pavilion? 2021. Freshman year!

How did you find out about the volunteer opportunity at Freeman Arts? We have been attending concerts at the Freeman venue for several years, and I admired the volunteers as a happy, fun, and engaged group. I looked forward to joining them when I had more time in retirement.

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Volunteer Advisory Committee Update

The Volunteer Advisory Committee met on July 13 and on Sept. 14. In addition to our usual order of business, considerable attention was focused on our progress year-to-date at the new venue. With that in mind, I’d like to take a few moments to discuss our journey thus far.

Season 13 ended with pods, and we began our 14th season with pods. The difference this season was that we had a significantly larger venue. The larger venue meant more pods and consequently more patrons. More patrons meant — (you guessed it) — the need for more parking spaces. Staff met with VAC representatives during the winter months to discuss traffic flow, parking needs and develop a plan that would serve our parking needs as we progress toward the construction of our permanent venue.

The only solution was to open up as many parking spaces as possible to accommodate the increase in patrons. This meant volunteers and seasonal staff would have to park off-site.

Everyone remembers our orientation sessions. The walk from the Sound Church parking lot raised a few eyebrows amongst the volunteers. VAC representatives approached staff to address this issue. We were informed that they were in the midst of arranging a shuttle.

Opening night didn’t go as smoothly as planned. We had patrons backed up at the gate as they tried to get their chairs out of their bags. Likewise, positioning scanners and chair checkers presented challenges. VAC members and Volunteer Captains consulted with staff to get things up to speed. After a couple of nights through trial and error, we resolved most of these issues.

The approach to the Grand Green presented its own unique challenge. The incline to the entrance was a crushed gravel path. As a special assistance usher, I was happy I only had to push/pull one wheelchair up that incline. A few days later we arrived to find the path had been paved and was a smooth blacktop surface.

As the season progressed, Molly kept reminding us that we are “building the plane as we fly it.” Gradually, one issue after another was resolved. I think we can safely say the plane is in the air, the wheels are up, and we can turn it over to the flight engineer to tune things up.

This could not have been possible without the dedication, teamwork and cooperation of the volunteer corps and staff. Our job is far from over and we have to assume the role of flight engineer to continually improve the volunteer program and experience while accomplishing the mission of the Freeman Arts Pavilion.

Along these lines, I’d like to share a few unofficial year-to-date volunteer stats recognizing the time and effort expended in getting our plane off the ground. In this calendar year, the number of volunteers who have exceeded:

- 300 hours service = 3
- 200 hours of service = 11
- 100 hours of service = 37
- 40 hours of service = 194

These numbers are certain to increase as we are in the season’s home stretch. We started strong. Let’s finish strong. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and effort this season.

Finally, I want to thank the volunteers who sat down with me during their breaks and shared their concerns, questions and suggestions. Your input was submitted to the Volunteer Advisory Committee. We assembled a summary that was presented. Remember, VAC is the volunteers’ voice and representative. If you have any questions, concerns or comments regarding any aspect of the volunteer experience, please do not hesitate to approach a VAC member and talk to them.

Phil Facciolo,
VAC Chair

What is your favorite volunteer role and why? I have been working on trying out all the volunteer roles, but admittedly have not checked all the boxes yet. While my favorite so far is concessions (working in teams to serve the patrons), I’m also going to give a little shout-out to venue set-up, where there is an opportunity to get to know Freeman Arts staff and volunteers a little more. Plus, it takes care of going to the gym for the day!

What has been your favorite show you’ve volunteered for? Train — energizing atmosphere and quality performance.

What would you tell community members who may be interested in volunteering? It is richly rewarding to be an ambassador for an organization that you believe in and support. Additional bonuses: working with an amazing group of people — staff and volunteers alike; swaying to the beat of some great music; scheduling flexibility.

Any personal hobbies, talents or achievements? Keeping it simple in retirement. Exercise walks on the beach, reading, gardening, and traveling.
Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition & Retention Update

The Recruitment, Recognition and Retention committee is excited about our next recognition activity which is a reception to honor those volunteers who have completed 1,000 hours of lifetime service with the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation. The Board of Directors and staff will host a reception on Sept. 24 for these five outstanding volunteers — Trudy Albrecht, Chuck Bologna, Phil Facciolo, Maureen Griffith and John Tiberi.

Volunteers have done an excellent job this season, particularly the many first-year volunteers who have learned quickly and made significant contributions. These folks will also be identified and recognized at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. Fun activities have been identified as a means to improve the volunteer experience.

A raffle of various gift certificates was conducted before all of the shows during the volunteer huddles. This practice was well-received — everyone likes to be a winner! Also, throughout the season, there have been shows with volunteer signup shortages for key roles. Frequently, volunteers were recruited at the last minute to alleviate these challenges. Typically, the much-needed and appreciated response to these requests was met by many volunteers who agreed to work the shows and alleviate the volunteer shortage at those shows. As an incentive to entice volunteers to sign up for these shows, volunteers working those shows were sometimes entered into a drawing for a free pod for a future show. These pods were typically high-value pods donated by sponsors who were unable to use them for the shows.

We are most appreciative of the sponsors who recognized the contribution of the volunteers and who went the extra mile to provide this value to the volunteers. This generosity was well-received by all. See photos of the lucky pod winners on Page 7 of this newsletter.

Phil Facciolo has led a team of VAC members to identify volunteer needs. Through meetings and direct interviews with volunteers, a significant number of recommendations have been documented and developed. These recommendations were presented to Freeman Arts Pavilion staff for their consideration and implementation. This is viewed as being particularly valuable related to volunteer recruitment, recognition and retention.

Finally, Frank Ripken, a new member of our VAC is a numbers guy! He is sifting through available data to determine trends that will be analyzed to improve recruitment and retention. This effort is in process and will be followed through prior to next season.

We all realize what a crucial role the volunteers play to help bring success to the JMFF mission. Our goal is to optimize these efforts for the betterment of the patrons, volunteers and mission. This is an ongoing goal of continuous improvement for the benefit of all. Thank you all for your support this year!

Bob Katz
VAC Recruitment, Recognition and Retention Subcommittee Chair

Student Volunteer Corner by Lizbeth Cortez-Galindo

Student volunteer name: Lucia Gaffney
What school do you attend? Chatham High school, N.J.
What year in school are you? I will be a senior this year.
What year did you begin volunteering? This is my first season — 2021!
What is your favorite volunteer role and why? Ticket scanning, because I like using the scanner and I enjoy the fast-paced nature of the job. I also get to interact with a lot of the patrons which is fun. There's always an exciting feeling when the gates open and people start coming into the venue.

Of the concerts, you volunteered at, what was your favorite and why? My favorite concert was Fitz and the Tantrums. I’ve been listening to them since I was a kid. My dad would play their album called "Pickin’ up the Pieces" a lot in the car. It was a really fun time hearing the music I grew up with being played live. I also met another student volunteer during that show, and she was really kind, having a lot in common with me.

What would you tell other students who might be interested in volunteering at the Freeman Arts Pavilion? I would say that if you have the time to commit, you should totally volunteer. It was such a special experience that I’m really hoping I’ll be able to do it again next year. On top of getting to hear some really awesome music, a lot of really special staff and volunteers are there who will welcome you with open arms.
The winners of this season’s giveaways, clockwise from top left, are, Rich Hammond and guests; Les & Linda Ferguson; Dan & Janet Henderson; Gayle Smith and guests and Renee Wiley and guest.