Volunteer Voice

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

Volunteer Advisory Committee

The Volunteer Advisory Committee met on March 9 with all eyes focused on the 2021 season. Although we have not returned to pre-COVID-19 normalcy, the development of vaccines, increasing numbers of people vaccinated and our approach toward herd immunity serve as the basis for growing optimism that this season will be a successful one. Along these lines, I’d like to review some of the exciting developments that have taken place over the last few months as well as VAC’s involvement as we approach opening day.

- The ground for the permanent venue has been acquired. We will be operating at our new location on a graded lawn with our existing mobile stage. As construction progresses, the venue’s configuration will be modified accordingly. We will open with over 500 four-person pods. The new expanded venue will provide several volunteer opportunities. At this point, the return of most of the traditional volunteer positions is expected. VAC is currently reviewing volunteer roles with staff.
- With our new site, we have a new name - The Freeman Stage has become Freeman Arts Pavilion.
- The VAC Social Subcommittee Sponsored a virtual social informational meeting on March 11. Fifty-two prospective volunteers attended. Participants were presented with an overview of volunteer roles, Captains duties, composition and workings of VAC. The Social Subcommittee is working on future events to get the volunteers together and in person. Keep checking your emails for future developments.

Volunteer Spotlight

Meet the new VAC Members

New VAC members, clockwise from top left, are: Lynette Catha, Linda Ferguson, Pat Farina, Frank Ripkin, Mark Kronenberg, Lizbeth Cortez-Galindo and PJ Cavanaugh.

How to begin your Volunteer Impact Journey

We are well into our new software management system, Volunteer Impact! Just a few reminders as we get everyone fully into the new system:

- Please be sure all of your contact information is accurate ("Contact Information" under the "My Profile" Tab)
- Please review the About You and Emergency Info ("Additional Info" Under "My Profile" tab)
- Please be sure you answer the questions and click on "I Agree" after you have read the Volunteer Agreement ("Qualifications" under the "My Profile" tab)

Experienced volunteers will have access to register for all shows starting Tuesday, May 4, at 11 a.m. New volunteers will have access to register beginning Monday, May 11, at 11 a.m.

As with any new software system, there will be bumps along the way. Please feel free to contact Paul at volunteer@freemanfoundation.org or at 302-231-1216 at any time for assistance.

Maureen Griffith, VAC Secretary

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The 2021 Freeman Arts Pavilion season is here! As you now know, we’ve revealed the season’s lineup and tickets are on sale. Our health, safety and sanitary protocols will continue to be guided by CDC and the State of Delaware, and we look forward to sharing these in the virtual and in-person volunteer orientations.

Here is a Freeman Arts Pavilion Construction Update and a few photos of the construction in process:
- Town Lake water levels have been restored to normal levels.
- Lakeview Drive has been re-opened to Americana Parkway and bollards will be installed in front of the venue entry gate to create a safe place for Freeman Arts Pavilion patrons to line up for performances.
- Landscaping and plantings are now being installed, and the expanded seating lawn will be installed soon.
- Permanent fencing will be installed around the site in May, based on construction progress.

Paul Tooker,
Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteer Social Update

If you weren’t able to sign up to volunteer to assemble the "Creative Nourishment Kits" you missed out on a fun and social activity. It was such an honor to be a part of the assembling packets for the schools. There are four different kits designed for students from kindergarten through 12th grade. It was wonderful to package these kits and share fellowship with the other volunteers. On March 2, the volunteers hit the 1,000-hour mark!

Mini Golf, ice cream and arcade games! That’s what we’re inviting you to on Sunday, May 23, at the new Millville Boardwalk on Route 26, Atlantic Avenue in Millville. The fun is from 1-3 p.m. and you will be invited to register for this event soon in Volunteer Impact.

Lynette Catha,
VAC Social Subcommittee Chair
Volunteer Captain's Update

The Freeman Arts Pavilion Volunteer Captains kicked off 2021 with meetings on Feb 18 and March 23, welcoming two new captains, Melanie Hoffman and Pat Farina, and welcoming back returning Captains Myrie Ward, Kathryn Chapdelaine, Kim Littman, Lynette Catha, PJ Cavanaugh, Diane Gilner, Mary Pineda and Trudy Albrecht. The team is eagerly anticipating the new season that will see a number of changes as we continue to carry on the JMFF mission to make arts accessible to everyone.

While the mission remains the same, 2021 is anticipated to be a newly energized one, complete with an expected full schedule in a brand-new space adjacent to the previous performance space. If you get a chance, stop by to check out space as it comes to life this spring.

A large part of the discussion during the captain’s meetings was related to this year’s venue and safety protocols. We anticipate the volunteer corp will return to the level of 2019. This will include over 100 new volunteers as interest in volunteering for the JMFF continues to remain steady. Patrons will once again bring in their own chairs this summer, and a contactless process will be in place upon entrance. The captains will work with all volunteers so that everyone is familiar with the new Freeman Arts Pavilion configuration, as well as address the myriad of questions that will likely arise as people encounter the modified venue. The watchword for this year, as it was last year, will be to stay flexible as we learn and fine-tune how to best manage the configuration and safety protocols.

Paul requested that everyone provide appropriate feedback on the new software management system, Volunteer Impact. Although the rollout has been extremely smooth so far (thanks to all who have test-driven the system), there will almost certainly be desired tweaks as the system goes into widespread use. You may not know this, but the software system is utilized by the captains as they prepare the roster for each and every show.

This year, the book “The Speed of Trust” is a focus of the captain’s leadership program and will be discussed throughout the year. Finally, please go to freemanarts.org and sign up for the email list and be sure to follow the social media channels if you don’t already.

Captains meet several times throughout the season to discuss the volunteer program and offer suggestions for improvement. In April, the captains will visit the venue as construction continues.

This year is going to be a most exciting one for the JMFF patrons, staff, artists, and volunteers, with lots of changes and improvements, as we re-open and renew our mission to present the arts to all of our patrons. Following last year’s limited availability of live performances, in general, it’s safe to say all participants are looking forward to the 2021 season.

Pat Farina,
VAC Newsletter Subcommittee Chair

Volunteer Orientation is underway. Orientation sessions will consist of two phases. The first will consist of a virtual session. The second phase will be an in-person venue tour and safety update at the venue.

New Volunteers:
- Thursday, May 6, 3:30-4:30 p.m. via GoToMeeting
- Monday, May 17, 5-6 p.m. via GoToMeeting

PHASE 2
The in-person venue tour and safety update at the venue schedule is subject to weather conditions and construction progress.

- Wednesday, May 26, 2-4 p.m. at Freeman Arts Pavilion
- Thursday, June 3, 1-3 p.m. at Freeman Arts Pavilion
- Tuesday, June 8, 5-7 p.m. at Freeman Arts Pavilion
- Saturday, June 12, 10 a.m. to noon at Freeman Arts Pavilion

In addition to a new venue and name, we have a new volunteer online portal. This year, Volunteer Impact will be used. It is user-friendly and will be a valuable tool in volunteer scheduling and communicating with the Volunteer Coordinator.

SAFETY: COVID-19: Last season, safety protocols were implemented for the protection of patrons, volunteers and staff. There were no incidents of volunteers and staff being adversely affected in the course of working at the stage. Just as we did last year, safety protocols will be implemented based upon guidance provided by the state of Delaware.

This season’s schedule has been announced! We anticipate 70 shows, consisting of national recording artists, local talent, tribute bands and Saturday morning Young Audience Series programs. The new venue and the current performance schedule present many opportunities for volunteers to help make this season a memorable and successful one for patrons and volunteers alike.

The Volunteer Advisory Committee is the volunteers’ voice and is dedicated to improving the volunteer experience, as well as the volunteer program. We are always open to suggestions and comments. Please feel free to contact any member of the committee with your comments.

Phil Facciolo,
VAC Chair
Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition & Retention Update

Recruitment: Fifty-two potential volunteers participated in a video call on March 11. Although no new volunteers were added in 2020, we are working with those who expressed an interest in volunteering in 2020 and 2021. We are hopeful that many of these individuals will join our team.

Recognition: All volunteers who participated in the Creative Nourishment Kit project will be recognized by receiving a customized pin celebrating the success of this program. Recognition will take place at the In-Person Venue Tour & Safety Update sessions in late May and early June.

Recognition of this activity was also achieved by a news spot on WRDE. The reporter highlighted the contribution of our volunteers and the joy the program brought to the participating students throughout the region.

Retention: The Social Committee of the VAC held a Virtual Volunteer Happy Hour Social on March 16. The 22 volunteers shared their vision of what it will be like for them when travel restrictions and mask requirements are lifted.

Excitement is growing for volunteers. Phase 1 construction of the Freeman Arts Pavilion continues. Various artists are announcing their plans to travel and perform in live concert events. It won’t be long until we are together again, doing what we love; helping bring the arts to Sussex County Delaware.

Bob Katz, VAC Recruitment, Recognition & Retention Subcommittee Chair

Meet Your Volunteers by Linda Urban

Volunteer: Tom Gairy


What you do for a living or what you did before retirement? Spent 25 years with Domino’s Pizza as a Corporate Regional Director and Franchisee owning stores on the Eastern Shore. After retiring, I wanted to volunteer and stay active. The Freeman Arts Pavilion was a great fit. Great entertainment, organization and volunteers! I also try to stay busy following my six grandchildren and their various sports activities throughout the year.

What year did you become a volunteer? I have been a volunteer since 2017.

Of the concerts you volunteered at, what was your favorite and why? My favorite show has been the Beach Boys who I have followed since the early 1960s. Love that harmony! There have also been some great tribute bands who have performed.

Volunteer: Nancy Eick

Where do you live? I had a career in finance for a Government contractor and retired in 2016. I moved to Delaware full-time in January of this year from northern Virginia. I serve as treasurer of my homeowner’s association. I enjoy live music, reading, Zumba, and painting in my free time.

What year did you begin volunteering? This is my fifth year volunteering for the JMFF.

What is your favorite volunteer role and why? My favorite role is a crier. I enjoy greeting patrons as they enter the venue and chatting with them about their musical tastes.

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What is your favorite volunteer role and why? I liked working on the creative nourishment kits this winter. It is such valuable work for kids missing their art classes. I am looking forward to summer and the new Freeman Arts Pavilion.
Meet the JMFF Staff

I’m Melissa Rizer, Development Assistant for the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation. I have been in a variety of positions with the Foundation since joining in September 2012 and have found my home in fundraising. I spent the summer of 2012 as a volunteer at The Freeman Stage primarily scanning tickets at the gate. I loved the mission of the Foundation, the staff and my fellow volunteers and the impact we had on our community. I was ecstatic when a position became available and I was hired.

During the season, my primary focus is on our sponsors. These are generous people who donate funds that allow us to grow our mission, purpose & vision. It is imperative that we do our best to provide these patrons with an experience that lets them know they are truly valued by the Foundation. With only two people on the year-round Development staff, we cannot create this special feeling on our own without the help of each and every volunteer. From the moment a guest drives into Bayside for a performance, they encounter our volunteers.

A simple “good evening,” “I hope you enjoy the show” or “is there something I can assist you with” makes a world of difference for our patrons. Sponsors tell us they appreciate it when volunteers say “thank you” to them when they see them wearing their sponsor credentials. Without their support, we would not be able to accomplish our mission.

Darren Silvis, our Development Director and I work closely with volunteers at the VIP gate and the Sponsor Deck at every performance. We may be beside you in the parking lot helping to direct guests toward the correct entrance line, we may be scanning tickets if the line gets long close to the start of a performance or we may help direct patrons to their pods once they are in the venue. We are always happy to jump in as needed to help create a magical experience for our sponsors.

Gratitude is at the core of the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation. Our staff takes every opportunity to show our gratitude to our sponsors, donors and our fabulous volunteers. I can honestly say that we would not be able to accomplish all that we do without our volunteer corps. Thank you!

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Student Volunteer Corner by Lizbeth Cortez-Galindo

Student Volunteer Name: Julia Buoni

What school do you attend? Sussex Technical High School

What year in school are you? Senior

What year did you begin volunteering? Summer of 2019

What is your favorite volunteer role and why? My favorite volunteer role is being an usher for the guests. When I show them to their seats, I get to talk to them about the concert and get to know them a little bit, which is really nice.

Of the concerts, you volunteered at, what was your favorite and why? My favorite concert that I volunteered for was definitely the ABBA concert in 2019. I’ve always loved ABBA’s songs, and I thought that the band did an outstanding job performing them; it felt like I was listening to the real ABBA band! Everyone was singing and dancing along to the music, and it warmed my heart so much.

What would you tell other students who might be interested in volunteering at the Freeman Arts Pavilion? To anyone interested in volunteering at Freeman Arts Pavilion, you should absolutely do it! The volunteers are so welcoming and enthusiastic, and you have the pleasure of hearing live concerts while you work. It’s truly such a fun experience.

Julia Buoni

Joshua M. Freeman FOUNDATION

Phil Facciolo, chair; Mary Pineda, vice-chair; Maureen Griffith, secretary
Lynette Catha, PJ Cavanaugh, Lizbeth Cortez-Galindo (student volunteer), Pat Farina, Linda Ferguson, Bob Katz, Dave Kittell, Mark Kronenberg, Frank Ripkin and Linda Urban