Volunteer Voice

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

Freeman Arts Update

I hope this update finds you safe, healthy and dreaming of warm summer nights filled with music and joy! I am thankful for our team of volunteers, staff and vendor partners who worked together to create an incredible inaugural season at Freeman Arts Pavilion.

We served a record breaking 80,000-plus patrons, which was both humbling and exciting. We learned so much about our new five-acre space and how our patrons would enjoy it! We are working to make several improvements for the 2022 season:

- Relocate Box Office: this has been moved to the front gate, where patrons will be able to access it from outside or inside the venue
- A new exit from the Grand Green seating lawn: this spacious walkpath will provide much needed additional egress
- Paving and widening walkpaths: we widened the walkpaths on the Grand Green to 12-feet and paved all walkpaths in the venue to create a better experience for patrons and team members.
- Relocate restroom trailers: the restroom trailer from the lower lawn has been relocated to the Grand Green in the back left and the existing restroom trailer on the Grand Green (front right) has been moved in front of the concrete fence to improve patron flow and overall experience
- New concession locations: We have added two new concession locations to the Grand Green, to maximize access for patrons
- Additional operational improvements include paving the food truck area, expanding the artist area backstage and adding a new walk-in cooler backstage

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Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Mary Kendall

Mary and her husband, Bob, have been married for 32 years and originally hail from Essex and Dundalk in eastern Baltimore County. Mary is the oldest of five children and they are blessed with a daughter, Amanda, a wonderful son-in-law, Ron, and three young grandchildren; Connor, Sadi and Finn, all of whom reside back in Baltimore. Mary is recently retired last spring after 19 years at Intervet / Merck and Bob is also in the glow of his recent retirement from Mountaire in Selbyville at the end of December.

Mary’s professional exploits include a 14-year stint in the purchasing and inventory department with Martin Marietta in Middle River and then after Bob took on a position with Mountaire they moved to Millsboro. Mary then worked in purchasing at Intervet, a wonderful pet medicine producer who was eventually acquired by Merck.

Mary and Bob are avid members of Ravens Roost 44 in Ocean City where they met Patti and Marc Grimes who introduced them to JMFF 10 years ago. While attending a concert in 2015, an announcement was made asking for volunteers and Mary followed up and joined as a volunteer.

"I have worked and tried every aspect of volunteering at shows including set-up, White Party set-up, concerts and the Creative Nourishment Kits program," she said.

"It seems like it’s been more than six years (in a good way) and I enjoy the shows so much that sometimes I feel like I should pay them for letting me work.”

Mary says the important thing to remember is that “you’re there to have fun and enjoy it, and if you can do that, it doesn’t really matter what assignment you are asked to perform. I consider every night an opportunity for a promotion and I especially get such appreciation when I have received an acknowledgment pin.”

“I believe my biggest impact is having a positive and welcoming attitude with all patrons young and old as well as with my fellow volunteers, and I look forward to every opportunity with JMFF,” she said. "I feel privileged to be able to give back any way I can because it's so much fun.” Mary shares this with patrons and she tells them “I enjoyed your company” as they filter out of the venue at the end of shows.

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Arts Education Update

You have probably heard talk about volunteers who assist with the Saturday morning Young Audience Series or the volunteers who work with us to present arts programs in schools. As the new Arts Education Coordinator, I thought I would give everyone a quick overview of what our arts education program is all about, and what our arts education volunteers do. Note that for sake of brevity, we are using the term Arts Education rather than Arts in Education.

Pre-pandemic, we were bringing live arts programs to all of the public schools in Sussex County, Maryland. We hire artists, musicians, dancers and poets to present experiences to supplement the arts curricula in the schools. The arts education program’s vision is to build a relevant, impactful arts education program that will provide a layered approach to a school’s current curriculum by presenting opportunities for students and teachers to experience diverse arts both in their schools and at the venue.

In order to be considered for an opening in the arts education volunteer program, volunteers must:

- Have at least one year of experience as a JMFF volunteer
- Successfully complete the Biden Child Protection Act process which is a Delaware Criminal Background Check (fingerprinting) completed by the State Bureau of Investigation in Georgetown
- Successfully clear the Child Protection Registry process completed by the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families
- Submit the JMFF Arts Education Attendant Waiver which outlines the arts education volunteer commitment

When our season opens in a few short months, we will have about 40 volunteers who are designated as Arts Education volunteers. These volunteers will assist us in the schools when we present artists for assembly programs and classroom events. We haven’t finalized our school programming just yet, but rest assured, we will be in the schools in the fall, provided COVID guidelines will allow!

As she does each summer, we are thrilled that volunteer Maureen Griffith will lead the Saturday morning Young Audience Series. We typically present 12 family-friendly shows on Saturday mornings throughout our performance season and arts education volunteers assist with tasks including parking, scanning and ushering.

It is gratifying to find so many of you willing to volunteer for our student-centered events. Although we currently have a full roster of arts education volunteers, I am interested in hearing from any experienced volunteers who would like to be on the list for future openings.

Paul Tooker
Arts Education Coordinator

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Our staff is growing to accommodate the growth of our venue and audience and we have added several new positions and team members, including a Digital Media Specialist, Facilities Director and Community Access Coordinator. As we celebrate our 15th season, you will continue to see performances announced periodically that will include a diverse season of the arts. Our recent seasons have been revealed in stages, and as we continue to adapt to the touring industry’s standards, the announcement of performances in 2022 will be done as they become available. We will continue to adapt to the dynamic concert industry and public health guidelines.

We are honored to continue the Freeman family’s long tradition of passion for the arts. Carl M. Freeman, Josh’s father, gave one of the leading gifts required to build The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Virginia Freeman, Josh’s mother, was a skilled sculptor, painter and poet. She also collected art and many of her pieces are displayed on the grounds of Tusculum Farm in Gaithersburg, Md., the family homestead, which operates as a Bed and Breakfast.

When Josh died suddenly in 2007, Michelle chose to honor his legacy by creating the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation whose vision is to offer opportunities to elevate the human spirit. We do that through arts programming, like 70+ performances at Freeman Arts Pavilion each year that include National Recording Artists, Symphony, Dance, Tribute Bands, Opera, and Theatre and our Arts Education program, which brings diverse arts experiences to 25,000+ K-12 students enrolled in local schools. We believe in the power of the arts to transform lives and bring people together. I am so glad you’ve joined us in this journey to honor the legacy of Josh and the Freeman family’s commitment to the arts!

Molly Williams, Patron Experience Director
Mary’s volunteer efforts don’t stop with JMFF. She is also involved with Mountaire Farms’ Feeding Programs for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. She has also helped with the chicken sales program created by Mountaire to help those impacted during COVID. “I try to be a good neighbor and lend a hand to whoever needs help.” Mary said that one of the nice things about being retired is “being able to go when and where I’m needed.”

For all of her efforts and particularly for her efforts with the Creative Nourishment Kits (CNK) program, the Foundation nominated Mary for the Governor’s Award program, for which she won the individual contributor award. She had earlier last fall received the state’s “Hidden Heroes” award, which she was honored and happy to receive. The Governor’s Award was “surprising and overwhelming” when it was presented during the December Volunteer Social event by the Governor’s representative for her work on the CNK. Mary had been successfully kept unaware that she had even been nominated. “Words just can’t express how privileged I feel to have the opportunity to volunteer and to have won the award.”

Mary’s wish is that all volunteers go into the program expecting to help whenever and wherever they are needed no matter the job, just have fun, and enjoy the company of patrons and the other volunteers.
The Joshua M. Freeman Foundation is fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented volunteers. JMFF frequently recognizes and emphasizes the volunteers as being crucial to the success of its mission. Last fall, this volunteer corp was also formally recognized by the State of Delaware and bestowed three Governor’s Outstanding Volunteer Service Awards for volunteer contributions by JMFF volunteers. Individual award recipients were Mary Kendall who received the Individual Volunteer award and Sarah Grady who won the Volunteer Leadership award winner.
The entire JMFF Volunteer Corps was also selected as a Group award winner. What a successful season and how wonderful it is to be recognized by the larger community we serve. Congratulations to all!

Here is a summary of the JMFF award winners and contributions.

Mary Kendall: Individual Volunteer Award
Mary Kendall is a loyal, devoted volunteer with the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation. This past January, JMFF embarked on an ambitious program to supply Creative Art Nourishment Kits for children in Sussex County schools, as well as students who use the Food Bank of Delaware backpack program in Kent and Sussex Counties. Mary registered herself to volunteer for every morning and afternoon shift offered. This was an 8-hour daily commitment for several weeks at a time. Mary also took it upon herself to gather hundreds of empty boxes from local stores so that kits could be assembled and packed in a timely manner. She was instrumental in making sure we were able to deliver our Creative Nourishment Kits to local school children on time.

Sarah Grady: Volunteer Leadership Award
Sarah Grady is a dedicated volunteer with the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation when she is not working as a seasonal employee. Serving in a volunteer role, Sarah played a key role in the success of the CNK program. She was asked to lead dozens of volunteers who committed to assembling more than 22,000 kits over a four-month period. In this role, Sarah coordinated the complex logistics of the intake of supplies alongside developing and executing the timeline that the organization committed to delivering the kits to local schools. Since Jan. 15, 2021, Sarah has contributed more than 250 volunteer hours to the CNK project. In doing so, she consistently and selflessly devoted her time to assure that every aspect of assembling kits reflected the brand excellence of the organization. Her leadership and dedication have enabled this program to deliver vital arts enrichment supplies to more than 30,000 local children.

JMFF Volunteer Corp: Volunteer Group Award
The JMFF’s volunteer corps provides the opportunity for patrons to enjoy the arts in a welcoming, safe and efficient environment. The volunteer corps has donated over 100,000 service hours since 2007. Without that support, the organization would not have the resources to provide the depth and breadth of quality programming. Our volunteer corps provide the manpower to manage the patron experience which allows us to invest funds for increased arts programming. Also, arts education funding has been cut from most school budgets and we believe strongly that providing opportunities to bring the arts to the students of the Delmarva region will positively impact our community for generations to come. Based on the value, as published by The Independent Sector, for a Delaware volunteer’s time, JMFF has leveraged $2,868,000 into arts programming in Delaware since the inception of our volunteer program. Our volunteer corps also advocates for the arts and acts as ambassadors in the community to increase awareness of the availability of the arts, as well as the need for a vibrant arts community.

The Governor’s Outstanding Volunteer Service Awards, administered by the State Office of Volunteerism, honors the contributions of individuals and groups in Delaware who have made a positive impact in their communities or across the state through service and volunteering. In 2021, 48 individuals and 13 groups were honored with awards.

During the December social event, a staff member from the State Office of Volunteerism worked with JMFF staff to surprise honorees with the news of their selection. The “SurPRIZE Patrol” delivered small gifts to the honorees as they continue to serve their communities. Mary Kendall vouched that an excellent job was done keeping this surprise.

“I salute these worthy recipients and all those who volunteered their time and energy this year to help improve the health and well-being of their neighbors in need,” said Governor John Carney. “The coronavirus pandemic has brought special challenges for many of our residents in 2021, which is why I am doubly grateful for the generosity and selfless commitment of these volunteers.”

“We are honored to be able to celebrate the exceptional service of so many deserving Delawareans,” said Kanani H. Munford, Senior Administrator for the State Office of Volunteerism and the Executive Director of the Governor’s Commission on Community and Volunteer Service. “With a combined total of nearly 200,000 hours of service in 2021, and representing an economic impact of over $5.6 million, these individuals and groups represent the largest and one of the most diverse groups of honorees we have ever had the privilege to recognize in a single year.”

Pat Farina
VAC Newsletter Subcommittee Chair
The Young Audience series is currently booking for the 2022 Freeman Art Pavilion Season. We have secured a few artists and over the next six weeks, we will finalize the Young Audience artist roster. Rest assured some of our tenured performers will be returning! The Young Audience Series will include a dozen or so shows and will predominantly be presented on the Lower Lawn on Saturday mornings at 10 a.m.! We are looking forward to the 2022 Young Audience series where our focus will continue to be presenting diverse programming that is free and fun for children and families!

Maureen Griffith, VAC Newsletter Subcommittee and Young Audience Series Leader
Meet Your New VAC Member Volunteers by Pat Farina

We are delighted to recognize the newest Volunteer Advisory Committee members to the 2022 team: Susan Senecal, Sharon Penhallegon and Melanie Hoffmann. The VAC is here to serve as an advocate for the entire JMFF volunteer community and we are fortunate to have three outstanding individuals in their new roles. Note that Melanie is also a returning captain this year. Welcome Susan, Sharon and Melanie!

Susan Senecal

Hello, my name is Susan and I am starting my first year as a VAC member and my fourth year as a volunteer at the Freeman Arts Pavilion. My main goal for becoming a VAC member is to do what I can to help the volunteers feel valued and heard through open communication. I have found from my years of volunteering in public health in Boston and educational communities in Southern New Hampshire, that volunteers can be a critical component of any organization. Volunteers can lend not just their time, but also their talents, and I look forward to working with you this year.

I am a Wilmington, Delaware, girl who ended up in Boston in the 1970s for college and stayed in New England until my husband, Dan, and I retired to Selbyville in 2018. Once our son moved from Boston to San Francisco, we knew we’d be headed this way. After vacationing my whole life along the Delaware and Maryland shores, it seemed like the right choice. After retiring to the area, I learned of the Freeman Foundation and how it supported the arts in our schools and in our community. I was intrigued. One evening while I was walking my dog, I heard Chicago playing from that direction, and I was hooked. I am a firm believer that music unites us, and that has been my experience at Freeman Arts Pavilion.

When asked what my favorite volunteer position or concert is, it is difficult to choose. During my first summer volunteering, I experienced ABBA the Concert as an usher. Watching three, maybe four generations of Dancing Queens dancing and singing in utter joy has stayed with me. Marching and singing on the blacktop with the parking volunteers for the University of Delaware Marching Band concert of 2021 is another favorite evening. There is nothing like spectacular music and youthful enthusiasm to send you home with a smile on your face. Who says you don’t get paid for volunteering?

As you can see, my experience is that there is fun to be had while supporting our community through this worthwhile organization. As a VAC member, I hope to do what I can to help our volunteers enjoy their experiences. See you soon!

Sharon Penhallegon

Hi fellow volunteers. Some of you might already know me as Sharon who has enjoyed volunteering at Freeman Arts since 2016. I find it to be a great group of people who love giving back while having fun at the same time. I look forward to continuing as a volunteer this season and also serving on the VAC. It is important to me and also all volunteers in the white and khaki uniform that the stage experience be a positive one for everyone who comes to Freeman Arts Pavilion. This place has grown by leaps and bounds since we bought our first home in Bayside back in December of 2005. Since then, we traded in that home for one that could better accommodate our growing family. In 2020 we became permanent residents in Bayside and visit our kids and grandkids in Baltimore County often.

My career was spent as an educator and school counselor in Baltimore County Schools. In the years when I was not working, I spent many hours volunteering at my kids’ schools. This experience impressed on me the importance and value of collaboration and positive communication between staff and volunteers.

Melanie Hoffmann

Melanie is following up after her first very successful year as a Volunteer Captain with an additional role this year serving on the VAC. For those of you who have worked with Melanie in the past, you know that she will make an excellent addition to the team.

Melanie is a talented leader and she will be an accessible and attentive advocate for all the volunteers. Melanie has already taken on the role of Social Subcommittee chairperson. We look forward to working with Melanie on the VAC this year and into the future.

Melanie has been a volunteer with JMFF for six years and has worked every role so she is familiar with the joys and challenges experienced by volunteers at the Pavilion. Her background includes extensive experience in education and she also served as a District Coordinator where she nurtured and utilized her leadership skills.

“I love the arts and believe in the mission of access for all,” Melanie said, adding she embraces the JMFF mission. She has also served on the Board of Directors for C.E.R.T.S, an organization that provides day programming for adults with severe disabilities.
Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition & Retention Update

After a very successful recruitment process, we ended 2021 with 259 active volunteers. This resulted in a total of 21,223 volunteer hours representing the equivalent value of over $600,000. The enthusiasm of the volunteer core was evident as we filled the rosters for our paid and free shows, our Young Audience Saturday morning shows, Creative Nourishment Arts kit assembly, and many other volunteer opportunities.

While we do not anticipate such a large influx of new volunteers this year, we will be working on improvements in the recruitment process. These improvements will be reflected in updates to the Volunteer Impact portal to capture more demographics and interests so we can better match the skills and interests of new and experienced volunteers alike.

On our plate as we move forward will be a new and improved recruitment and training materials and changes to the orientation process that will make it easier for the volunteers to complete, while at the same time providing confirmation that all volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities. We will also investigate new recruitment efforts to help fill any gaps in the volunteer corps during the year. There will be more to come as we get closer to the new season.

Frank Ripkin
Retention, Recruitment & Recognition Subcommittee

Good to Know

In this section, we’ll identify a fact or an area of interest for the volunteer community. We welcome suggestions and write-ups for future issues of the Volunteer Voice. This month’s area of interest was submitted by Melinda Stone and is related to potential tax advantages of volunteering in general including volunteering with JMFF. Please note, we are not tax experts and recommend consulting with your tax professional before acting on any information presented here.

Here is a link to the IRS document covering charitable contributions and includes information on volunteer out-of-pocket expenses such as mileage and uniforms. See page 5 for details. A volunteer may have to itemize their tax return to take full advantage of these deductions noted in the publication. Mileage is 14 cents per mile and the cost of the uniform can be deducted if wearing it for volunteer events.

Pat Farina
VAC Newsletter Subcommittee Chair

Volunteer Impact: Tips & Tricks

We have begun to utilize a QR code for clocking in and out for volunteer shifts. So far, the pilot program has been successful and it is easy to use. Not to worry — it will be reviewed during the orientation sessions for the upcoming summer season. Special thanks to all those who volunteered to participate in the pilot. It is also good to know that the system will auto-clock a person out after 25 hours if they forget to clock out. Someone will always review the hours before “accepting” them so any errors can be corrected.

To set up your QR code:

- Log into MyImpactPage.com
- Click on the MY PROFILE tab
- Click on the TIMECLOCK QR CODE section
- Select either: DOWNLOAD (download and save your Timeclock Code to a file) OR Print your Timeclock QR code.

— A great hint: Print and cut out your QR code and place it in your name badge holder so you always have it available.

If you are using MyImpactPage.com on your mobile device, all you need to do is to check the box labeled Save my username and QR code to the login screen for easy access.

We will have an iPad at the entrance of the venue so volunteers can sign in with the QR Code or use their mobile device.

I have found that accessing the QR code system using my mobile phone is the easiest for me. I just open up the app on my phone and my QR code is right there. I just press START CLOCK when I enter the venue (no iPad needed).

Linda Ferguson
VAC Secretary

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Later, as a volunteer, I directed an after-school tutoring program for at-risk students. Volunteerism is important to me. My most positive volunteer experiences have always included good communication between staff and volunteers. My hope is that I can be available to other members of the volunteer team at Freeman Arts and facilitate communication between staff and volunteers. The mission is to bring the arts to our community both at the venue and in the schools. I can’t wait to see what this team can do together this year!

Freeman Arts Pavilion has come a long way from the grassy area next to the lake where folks came with their own lawn chairs and a bag of snacks for their kids to enjoy arts of all kinds. So much has changed and so much remains the same. Freeman Arts is a place for people of all kinds to come and share beautiful experiences with others. I loved it then and love it now.