Volunteer Voice

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

Freeman Stage Update

Dear Volunteers,

We cannot wait to be with you once again as we prepare for our 13th season at The Freeman Stage. Our team has worked hard to plan a wonderful season that brings diversity in genre and welcomes everyone to enjoy the arts.

As you know, we have hit the pause button temporarily to find the right time to announce our season given the unprecedented turn of events that we are all experiencing during the COVID-19 disaster.

Although this is a challenging time for all of us, I want you to know that our team is thinking of you and sending positive thoughts for you to remain healthy and strong in mind, body and spirit. We are grateful for your service, commitment and enthusiasm and we will need you back at the Stage to welcome our patrons this season, so please take this time to care for yourself.

We continue to work remotely to prepare for the season and communicate with local and state officials to navigate this uncharted territory. We remain as fluid as possible and are confident that the arts will prevail. Our purpose is to create opportunities that elevate the human spirit.

With your help this summer, we will create such opportunities that will continue to bring the community together, provide hope and celebrate the arts. Keep the faith and let the music play!

With gratitude,

Patti Grimes
Executive Director

Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Your Volunteer Coordinator, Paul Tooker

Paul is a natural fit for the Volunteer Coordinator position at The Freeman Stage. As a teenager, he spent Sunday mornings volunteering at a facility for developmentally disabled children and adults. This volunteer work led him to a career of teaching instrumental music to special needs adults and students. With his wife, Eva, and their three teenage daughters, many hours were spent participating in his church’s singalong program at local nursing homes.

Paul worked as a music teacher in the New York City public schools for 12 years. During that period, he also served as a high school performing and visual arts administrator for 10 years. Afterward, he spent the next 20 years with the Ossining & Bedford School Districts in Westchester County, N.Y., as a high school music teacher as well as district performing arts administrator for 7 of those years. Paul retired from teaching in the New York school system in 2017 and relocated to Millville with his wife.
Relocation did not spell the termination of his teaching career. He spent the 2018-2019 school year teaching music appreciation and music education classes at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

After reading about the Freeman Stage in a local newspaper, Paul and Eva attended the Mid-Atlantic Symphony concert in 2018. He thoroughly enjoyed the performance and fireworks.

“At that point I knew this place was special,” he said, adding he would often check the Stage’s website to learn more about events and programs.

The more he became familiar with the events and programs, “the mission of the JMFF really spoke to me,” he said.

Once Paul became aware of the Volunteer Coordinator position, he saw this as an opportunity to put his 33 years of classroom and leadership experience to work.

He has been on the job since September and has had an opportunity to work with some of the volunteers.

His hope in his role is "to leave the Freeman Stage every day and night with a smile on my face," he said. "Having fun and living the mission is what we all strive for together."

He summed up his impressions so far, by simply stating, “I have been so impressed with the dedication of the volunteers and my colleagues, their willingness to contribute to our collective vision, mission, purpose and core values, and especially the social fabric of the volunteers. The Esprit de corps is truly special.”

Paul’s lifelong spirit of volunteerism and dedication to the arts make him the perfect candidate to take the helm as our Volunteer Coordinator. We are truly lucky he read that article and attended a performance in 2018.

Phil Facciolo
VAC Chair

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Volunteer Advisory Committee Update

The Volunteer Advisory Committee met on March 9, 2020. Some of the highpoints of the meeting are as follows:

1. We start the 2020 season with 9 Captains.
2. Approximately 217 experienced volunteers have completed Virtual Orientation.
3. We are considering modifying the Pin Recognition Program to include recognition for total years of service, periodic years of service and total hours of service within the volunteer calendar year.

We also discussed venue and safety tours, new volunteer orientation and upcoming social events, all of which, have been put on hold. Unfortunately, the coronavirus has impacted the way we individually go about our daily activities as well as planning for the upcoming Freeman Stage season. Consequently, we are in a holding pattern.

Keep checking your emails for updates and instructions regarding preparations for opening day. Hopefully, things will settle down soon and we can go about getting ready for another fantastic season.

Stay safe and well,
Phil Facciolo
VAC Chair

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Thank you 2019 Captains!

Our 2019 volunteer captains were treated to a paint party as a thank you for their dedication and work last season. Pictured, clockwise from left, are Mimi Rottiers, PJ Cavanaugh, Trudy Albrecht and Diane Gilner.