Volunteer Voice

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

Freeman Stage Update

Thank you! This Freeman Stage season has been unique in so many ways — yet, you, our committed volunteers, helped us find a path forward. Collaboration and teamwork allowed us to fulfill our mission and honor the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation’s purpose, “creating opportunities that elevate the human spirit.”

I want ALL of you to know — including those volunteers who decided to take a year off as well as the many new volunteers who we will welcome in 2021 — we look forward to keeping you informed as our plans for 2021 evolve.

Before the end of 2020, your Volunteer Advisory Committee will meet to select new volunteer members and your volunteer leads will assist me with exploring the “Points of Light Service Enterprise Program.”

Additionally, the VAC social subcommittee will reach out to engage you; the recruitment & recognition subcommittee will continue to explore ways to recognize your work; and your newsletter subcommittee will publish its final issue of the year in November.

In 2020, the Stage and its volunteers were truly a beacon in our community, providing numerous opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy and experience the arts throughout an ongoing pandemic. Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay tuned for 2021 at The Freeman Stage.

Paul Tooker,
Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteer Spotlight

Maureen Griffith “Mo”ments

Maureen Griffith is not only the secretary of the Volunteer Advisory Committee, but also a volunteer captain, a Freeman Stage sponsor, and the primary leader of The Freeman Stage Young Audience Series.

Maureen is originally from Philadelphia, (Delaware County) Pa., but has lived here in Keen-Wik on the Bay since 2007. She earned an undergraduate degree in human resources from Cabrini College and a graduate degree in education from Pennsylvania State. She retired from Verizon in 2017 after 26 years of working in multiple Verizon national positions.

Her interest in The Freeman Stage came in 2012 after a friend gave her and her husband, Terry, tickets to the Darius Rucker concert. She was so impressed with not only the concert but with the Stage’s nonprofit goals that she sought out Robin Spangenberg, the Stage operations manager at the time, and asked him how she could become involved in the organization.

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At the time of our last newsletter update in June, the 2020 season was uncertain, to say the least. The Freeman Stage staff faced a host of issues. Performers canceled appearances. New acts had to be booked and scheduled. Safety protocols were being developed in anticipation of a yet-to-be-determined opening date and the venue had to be configured to safely accommodate maximum capacity within the state’s guidelines.

However, a key component to any attempt to salvage the season rested at the feet of the volunteers. The burning question in the back of everyone’s mind was how many volunteers would feel safe enough to participate in the 2020 season. Each volunteer had to assess their health situation and risk tolerance. Ninety-seven volunteers stepped forward.

Safety was paramount at the venue. Hand sanitizing stations were strategically positioned about the premises. A dedicated hand-washing station was available for volunteer use. Volunteers were instructed in the proper handling of masks and gloves. Detailed guidance was provided regarding the protocol while on site. Volunteers were advised as to the efforts directed toward sanitizing the venue. A pump sprayer to clean high touch areas and a power disinfectant fogger were added to the array of tools to keep the venue as safe as possible.

At the initial pre-show huddle and every pre-show huddle thereafter, the emphasis was on safety. Volunteers were always counseled not to do anything they were uncomfortable doing. “Masking up” and “gloving up” became second nature and the season was off and running. During the season, I took an unofficial random poll of the volunteers to ascertain their feelings about conditions at the Stage. The consensus was the venue was a reasonably safe environment to work in because of the established protocols.

We received the all-clear to start the season on June 4. Our first show opened on July 7 with The Stims. While attendance was not earth-shattering, it was a start. Attendance picked up as the season progressed. Midway through our abbreviated season, shows started to sell out. Additional 5 p.m. shows were added to accommodate the increased demand. Despite the challenges presented during this difficult time, The Freeman Stage completed its 13th consecutive season of building awareness for the arts in the local community.

We conclude the season with some interesting statistics:

- Number of performances including the Young Audience Series: 49
- Attendance: 11,000+
- Volunteer Shifts: 332
- Volunteer Hours: 2,800 through Sept. 30

As we close the chapter on the 2020 season, we turn the page and look to 2021 and the return of all of our volunteers. We enter the 2021 season with 1-2 captain vacancies and 5 openings on the Volunteer Advisory Committee. Volunteers who needed to take the 2020 season off are still invited to submit their names for consideration for these positions.

Captains are the appointed leaders of the volunteer corps during every show. They also assist with volunteer management, training, recruitment, and retention. The VAC is composed of appointed leadership volunteers who serve as an advocate for the volunteers and act as a liaison between the JMFF and the volunteer corps. If you are interested in taking on a volunteer leadership role, please email Volunteer Coordinator Paul Tooker.

Phil Facciolo
VAC Chair
Development Team Update

The Development team is full of profound thanks to our dedicated volunteer corps who make so much possible here at the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation.

The number of hours devoted to everything from performances to executing special events is inspiring. We can thankfully rely on consistent devotion from volunteers who tirelessly support our organization in countless ways.

During this special season of the arts, we developed new, safe ways to acknowledge, thank, and show appreciation to our sponsors who made this season possible through their financial support. Whether it was a request to fill over 400 sponsor snack bags for performances or staffing a socially distanced sponsor reception for over 100 guests, our volunteers eagerly offered their assistance to make certain our projects and events were executed successfully.

We are grateful for the opportunity to host the 14th annual golf tournament on Oct. 3 that honors many of Josh Freeman’s beloved traditions. So many logistical elements are in play with this event, and we owe our volunteers a great deal of credit for their work at making this event possible.

Volunteers at The Freeman Stage embody our vision, mission, and values every day. Their support truly fuels our work of making art accessible for all. As the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation seeks to conclude this year successfully, please consider making a financial contribution that will directly impact our efforts of growing the accessibility of memorable art experiences. Online gifts are welcomed at freemanstage.org/donations, by calling 302-241-0454 or emailing darren@freemanfoundation.org.

Darren Silvis
Development Director

Volunteer Captains Corner

A pre- vs. post-COVID captain

How life has changed for those of us who held a captain position before 2020, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. This 2020 season has not only seen revisions to a lot of volunteer duties but also how volunteers were to interact with the patrons. For example:

- Gone were the days of “Bring Your Own Chair” or having over 2,000 fixed seats strung together over the green. Instead, the green was covered with 97 carefully drawn white circles (aka pods) that were spaced six feet apart and held four seats per pod.

- Gone was the need for up to 85-90 volunteers per show including four to five captains (parking, gates, green, and head captain). Instead, in 2020 we utilized a maximum of 14 volunteers who not only had to wear a mask but had to have their temperatures taken before entering the venue. The 14 volunteers consisted of a gates captain, who worked with three criers and two scanners; a head captain who also acted as the green captain, and worked with four ushers, a donor relations attendant, and a sponsor bar attendant. The parking volunteer duty was eliminated since the maximum number of patrons for 97 pods totaled only 388 patrons. This season seldom saw Lots A and B even full by the time the show started at 8 p.m.

- Gone were the days of allowing purses and an unopened bottle of water. Instead, no food or drinks — including water — could be brought in and all personal items had to be visible in a clear plastic/vinyl bag only. Criers would stand at the gate areas with Ziploc bags in case a patron needed one for their items. Criers also would ensure all members of each pod were together before they went into the line. This was crucial as the scanner volunteer only scanned one ticket per pod and if all the pod members were not together at the time ticket was scanned, then those not present would not be able to enter the venue later.

- Gone were the days where the ushers stayed among the patrons in designated areas on the green during the performance. This season allowed the patrons to remove their masks while in their pods only, and so for the safety of all volunteers, at the time of performance, ushers went behind the Café or on Arts Alley where they could social distance and remove their masks temporarily.

- Gone were the days where volunteers at the end of the night stood unmasked and held trash bags for patrons to put items into. Instead, 2020 saw all volunteers fully masked and wearing gloves, depositing any trash found on the green in the trash barrels already in the venue, and rearranging the fixed seats in each pod so that a Freeman Stage staff member could sanitize them.

Yes, this 2020 season has been quite a different one from those seasons in the past, but the Stage staff achieved in 2020 a feat that many other larger venues could not. They were able to design and provide a COVID safe venue for both the patrons and volunteers and bring the joy of the arts and music back to all.

Mary Pineda,
Captain and VAC Member
The Joshua M. Freeman Foundation is blessed with having a group of outstanding volunteers. Volunteers play a significant role in achieving service excellence, as noted in the patron survey. The staff and VAC, in appreciation of volunteer performance, have expanded the recognition program to better reflect the achievements of this special group.

Performance: Based on the 2019 survey of volunteers, captains, and staff this year awarded recognition pins immediately to volunteers upon observation of exceptional service. Captains acknowledged the volunteer in the next huddle and thanked them for the specific reason for the pin award. The recognition pin options are typically for:

- Safety Through Teamwork
- Bright Ideas
- Good Vibes Only
- Outstanding Service
- Going the Extra Mile

Captains and staff utilized other “fun” pins, which were awarded at the end of some shows. These were awarded to the entire shift twice this year. Statistics of recognition awards are kept by the chair of the recognition committee and were recognized at the end of season volunteer appreciation event. This data will also be published in the newsletter.

Hours of Service: Beginning this year, milestone service pins were awarded to volunteers in good standing after the fifth year of service and in five-year intervals after Year 5. Anyone who serves beyond 10 years now receives an annual pin.

Although we chose not to recognize hours for this season, for the 2021 season, we will return to recognizing volunteers who meet benchmarks of 50, 75, 100, 125, 150, 200, 250, 300 hours in a calendar year. These achievements will be recognized with hourly pins, which will replace the printed certificates. Starting in 2021, volunteer years of service will be printed on the volunteer badge — for example, seven years of service. The VAC believes this will be appreciated by both the volunteer and the patron.

Student Program: The recognition program is the same for students as other volunteers except for hours of service, and in 2020, includes a milestone recognition pin for at least two years of volunteer service provided the student is entering the last year of high school or is in college. Students will receive a greeting card with good wishes upon graduation from high school and college. At the end of their service, students will receive a letter of commendation which they can use for education or vocation reference.

Due to the pandemic, people volunteered based on their situation. We missed those who chose not to serve this year and look forward to working with them next year. We also appreciate the extraordinary effort by those who helped us during this crisis. As the chair of the Recruitment & Recognition subcommittee, I welcome your suggestions and comments.

Bob Katz.
VAC Recruitment & Recognition Committee Chair

Volunteer Recruitment & Recognition Update

Student Volunteer Corner by Nicole McDuffie

Student Volunteer: Julia Buoni (pictured right)

What school do you attend: Sussex Technical High School

What year are you in school: Senior (yay!)

What year did you begin volunteering: 2019

What was your favorite Freeman Stage concert you volunteered for and why: My favorite show was the ABBA tribute band. I’ve always loved their songs, and the singers did an amazing job with all of them. It felt like I was watching the original ABBA!

What would you tell other students who might be interested in volunteering at The Freeman Stage: I highly encourage anyone who wants to volunteer to join us at The Freeman Stage. It’s a great way to hear new types of music and see amazing performers, whether it’s Diana Ross herself or a Led Zeppelin tribute band. Not only this, but the volunteer team is like a family, and we all work hard to ensure a great experience for everyone. I love volunteering at the Stage and hope people will continue to join our team each summer!

Student Volunteer: Sarah Buoni (pictured left)

What school do attend: University of Delaware

What year are you in school: Sophomore

What year did you begin volunteering: 2018

What was your favorite Freeman Stage concert you volunteered for and why: My favorite show was the ABBA concert in 2019. I was amazed at how the performers sounded exactly like the real band! My sister was also volunteering that night selling the band’s merchandise. When we weren’t interacting with patrons, we were making up dance moves to our favorite songs. It was an unforgettable night for us both.

What would you tell other students who might be interested in volunteering at The Freeman Stage: The Freeman Stage is the perfect place to volunteer because the work we do is genuinely fun. The other volunteers are very kind and will always help you if you need it. Once the show starts, you get to spend the evening watching amazing performances while you work. It’s a very fulfilling experience.
Volunteer Social Update

It’s A Wrap: 2020 Season is Officially Signed, Sealed, Delivered

On Sunday, Sept. 13, 48 volunteers were treated to a social evening like no other — social distancing and face masks were in full effect. 2020 pins were given to all who attended. Sub sandwiches (donated by Harris Teeter) were served by Patti, Darren, Barb, and Melissa, drinks by Dave served with a smile (even with a mask), cookies, and candy for all as well as great conversations and funny stories.

Patti Grimes extended the gratitude of Michelle Freeman and our Board of Directors for the 97 volunteers who gave their time and energy to keep Molly’s “plane flying.” Recognition and pins were presented for those who have volunteered five-plus years and for students who completed their second year.

There are plans for more recognition and pins next year. Dancing under the stars with DJ Hook completed the evening.

We are all hoping to return to normal next season but we know we can handle anything. In the words of Fleetwood Mac ... “Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow!”

We will be back in 2021!
— Elena Ripkin, VAC member