Volunteer Voice

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

Freeman Stage Update

We are thankful that we will have the opportunity present the arts at The Freeman Stage this summer!

Our Board has approved a plan that protects the health and safety of all staff, volunteers, and patrons. As of this writing on June 15, here is what we do know:

- The season is anticipated to begin the second week of July and will feature local/regional acts. Saturday morning Young Audience Series programming will also be held.
- The Freeman Stage staff will hold Virtual Volunteer Freeman Stage Update meetings through the GoToMeeting platform for all interested volunteers.
- After the staff has disseminated all health, safety and sanitary regulations and protocols to the volunteer corps, a short survey will be sent asking you to let us know if you will return to volunteer at the Stage this season.
- The In-Person Venue Tour & Safety Update sessions are scheduled for 10 a.m. on June 23, 7 p.m. on June 25 and noon on June 27. Registration for these in the HUB is required.
- Soon after the Venue Tour & Safety Update sessions, volunteers will be able to register for shows in Volunteer HUB.

As you can imagine, we are creating our timelines with the best information we currently have available. Please be patient as we carefully roll out our protocols and venue policies for this season. Your health and safety continue to be our highest priority.

As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns as we prepare to continue presenting the arts here in Sussex!

Paul Tooker,
Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteer Spotlight

Bob DiPalma enjoys this Stage in His Life!

Robert “Bob” DiPalma is the vice-chair of the Volunteer Advisory Committee, Stage sponsor and committed JMFF volunteer where you will often find him tending to the sponsor deck bar or backstage during the season.

Bob, a Buffalo, New York, native, one of 11 children, has been a patron of the Stage for 10 years where he first attended a Beach Boys concert. Bob, a master plumber and gas fitter, is a longtime resident of the northern Virginia area where he ran a plumbing business for over 30 years and retired in 2014.

Shortly after he retired, he moved to his residence in Keen-wik on the Bay, which he has owned for 20 years. He is the proud father of two children, Michelle and Max. Max excelled in the arts and attended San Francisco Arts Institute.
The Volunteer Advisory Committee met virtually on May 11.

Needless to say, the primary topic on everyone's mind was the COVID-19 virus and the impact on the 2020 Freeman Stage season. At that time, everything was on hold pending the progress of the virus and the authorities determining when the march toward recovery and reopening could begin. Our primary concern was how we can provide the safest environment possible for volunteers and patrons upon opening.

Gov. John Carney in his guidance for reopening, stated, "our response to COVID-19 has been driven by the science since day one and will continue to be driven by the science."

Once conditions improved, June 1 was established as the target date for Phase I of Delaware's reopening. The state authorized the limited opening of small businesses practicing where applicable, limited access, entry by appointment, curbside pickup and contactless pickup/delivery in advance of June 1. On June 1, dine-in service with limited capacity began, short-term rentals resumed and the 14-day quarantine for out-of-state visitors was lifted.

It is worth noting some of the high points of Phase I guidance.

**Individuals:** Should wear face coverings in accordance with the State of Emergency Order; practice social distancing when in public; vulnerable individuals should continue to shelter in place.

**Businesses:** Surfaces touched by customers should be disinfected every 15 minutes to 2 hours; employees should perform daily health checks as prescribed by the Delaware Division of Public Health. Hand sanitizer and hand washing stations should be available to customers and employees. Post signage on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, hand hygiene and properly wearing face covering.

**Arts and Culture:** Audience size in accordance with guidelines; patrons, volunteers and staff must wear face coverings per the State of Emergency Order. No Touch Entry. Maintain 6 feet distance between audience members/pods.

On May 26, Carney lifted the stay at home order and permitted outside gatherings of up to 250 people effective June 1. Outdoor gatherings (subject to approved plans) must take measures to protect the most vulnerable.

As can be seen from the above, there are a lot of compliance issues to be dealt with in preparing for the season opening — and Stage staff also have several additional compliances related to having a season.

Some of the issues under consideration include, but are not limited to: venue arrangement; venue capacity; possible patron pods with social distancing; food service; food trucks and procedures; restroom configurations; touchless fixtures; sanitization procedures; items permitted in the venue; volunteer staffing needs; modification of volunteer duties; number of returning volunteers; how many scheduled performers are willing to perform; availability of performers to fill in where others have canceled and the list goes on.

The most salient issue on everyone’s mind is how to provide an environment that is safe for returning volunteers, patrons and performers. The forgoing is just a small sampling of what is going on behind the scenes while we await the all clear from the authorities. In the meantime, all eyes are on the State of Delaware to advise us as to the progress of COVID-19 and to let us know when we can move on to opening night. Until then, check your email for updates.

Phil Facciolo
VAC Chair
Volunteer Social Update

Six Feet Apart

Are you keeping connected? Zoom, Facetime, Skype, Go to Meeting — these are all new words for most of us. Socially distancing, six feet apart ... it’s so very hard for most of us. Being social is what Freeman volunteers do and will continue to do in the new “normal” but for now we are keeping the arts alive in our schools, our communities and in our hearts the best way we can — virtually.

On May 21, we hosted our first JMFF Virtual Volunteer Socials with a morning coffee and afternoon Happy Hour. This was a giant step towards getting in touch with all of you as we inch towards a “new normal.”

Maureen Griffith and Paul Tooker hosted our morning coffee for our “early birds” and Molly Williams along with her daughter, Elle, Maureen, and Paul each hosted smaller “Happy Hours” at 5 p.m. In all, about 40 volunteers participated. It was great to connect with current Freeman Stage volunteers. We put faces to names, names to faces, shared background stories, and maybe learned something about you that no other volunteer knows — in my next life I might want to be a hairdresser/manicurist!

Hope everyone is staying safe, socially distant and following the guidelines.

Elena Ripkin, VAC Social Committee Chair

New JMFF Staff

Earlier this year we welcomed five new full-time staff members, including:
- Corrin Harris, Box Office & Programming Coordinator
- Barbara Higgins, Marketing Director
- Darren Silvis, Development Director
- Steve Miller, Food & Beverage Supervisor
- Bob Smith, Human Resource Manager

Student Volunteer Corner by Nicole McDuffie

Student Volunteer: Megan Cathell

What school do you attend: Sussex Technical High School

What year are you in school: Senior; going to be a college freshman in the fall

What year did you begin volunteering: I started volunteering in 2018

What was your favorite Freeman Stage concert you volunteered for and why: Trombone Shorty because I enjoyed the music and I played in marching band!

What would you tell other students who might be interested in volunteering at The Freeman Stage: Working at the Freeman Stage is a great opportunity, you get to see amazing concerts and meet amazing people. If you get the chance to volunteer, you definitely should!

Student Volunteer: Samantha McDuffie (pictured right)

What school do you attend: Sussex Central High School

What year are you in school: Sophomore; going to be a junior in the fall

What year did you begin volunteering: 2019

What was your favorite Freeman Stage concert you volunteered for and why: Colbie Caillat because she was the first recording artist I knew and I enjoy her songs.

What would you tell other students who might be interested in volunteering at The Freeman Stage: As a Freeman Stage volunteer, I am able to help my community in a way that doesn’t feel like community service. It is about having fun and enjoying those around you. My best friend heard me talking about the Stage so much she decided she wanted to be a volunteer. As a student, the opportunity to be a Freeman Stage volunteer is an amazing one!