Volunteer Voice

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

Freeman Stage Update

In two weeks, we will celebrate Thanksgiving, a time of year to appreciate and come together with family and friends. We are grateful you have chosen to support us with your volunteer time and talent, whether you committed to our 2020 season or hope to join us again in 2021. With this final 2020 issue of the Volunteer Voice, our staff wishes you an enjoyable holiday season.

Your Volunteer Advisory Committee will see six of its members move on and we look forward to welcoming six new members in January. A tremendous thank you to those individuals who have worked on your behalf: Trudy Albrecht, Bob DiPalma, Diane Gilner, Elena Ripkin, Linda Thetford and John Tiberi. Our student representative, Nicole McDuffie, is off to college as well. I look forward to introducing you to the new VAC members in the first newsletter of 2021.

The Joshua M. Freeman Foundation hosted its 14th annual golf tournament on the grounds of the new Bayside Resort Golf Clubhouse on Saturday, Oct. 3. We welcomed 34 foursomes, and were delighted to host a safe event, which included meeting our revenue goals for the tournament! Thank you again to the volunteers for working so hard to make sure our vendor partners out on the course were comfortable and tended to in what was a very long day. The combined effort of staff and 33 of our volunteers made this the most financially successful JMFF golf tournament to date!

Feedback, evaluation and reflection are critical processes that any organization must build into their practice. Here at JMFF, volunteer feedback is ongoing throughout the performance season, with our key tool being the Annual Volunteer Survey. In September, we surveyed our 2020 volunteers as we do at the end of each season. Of our 97 volunteers, 62 volunteers took the time to give their feedback and the positive comments this year were overwhelming. The words “safe or safety” were highlighted throughout the survey responses. Thanks to everyone who took the time to assist us in this important work.

The Freeman Stage family wishes you and your family a relaxing and wonderful Thanksgiving holiday.

Paul Tooker,
Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Jack and Martha Csicsek

Jack and Martha Csicsek have been attending performances at The Freeman Stage from nearly the beginning. The first performance they can remember attending was the Mid-Atlantic Symphony where patriotic music was featured. Jack and Martha have been volunteers at The Freeman Stage since 2016.

You can find them volunteering at many performances during the seasons over the years — where they have filled many roles: crier, parking attendant, scanner and sponsor bar. Martha also enjoys being an Arts and Education attendant where she has assisted in the schools as well as the Saturday morning Young Audience Series.

Jack and Martha met while they were studying at Ohio University and have been married for 42 years.

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They raised a family in North Baltimore — they have two sons — Jeff lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., and Alex and his family live in England. The Csicseks relocated from North Baltimore to their home in Bayville Shores in Fenwick Island.

Prior to moving here full time, Jack ran several small businesses, which included food services and retail stores specializing in Halloween attire while Martha was a schoolteacher and worked in a library assisting with the children’s programming in Baltimore City.

The Csicseks enjoy volunteering all around Sussex County — Jack helps out at the Botanical Gardens as well as a newly formed golf program, “First Tee,” teaching children integrity and values while playing golf. Martha — who learned of the Stage’s volunteer program while attending a Zumba class at a local gym — volunteers at South Coastal Library in Bethany Beach and “Read Aloud.”

When they are not volunteering, you can find them enjoying the splendors of Delmarva’s great outdoors — hiking, biking, and kayaking. Traveling is part of what keeps them busy and they love spending time with their family which also includes two grandchildren.

Martha’s favorite part of volunteering at The Freeman Stage is seeing people happy while enjoying the arts and loves working with children. Jack said he appreciates The Freeman Stage as an important foundation for arts and music in Sussex County.

“Volunteering at The Freeman Stage has been a very fulfilling and rewarding experience,” they said. “We have the added benefit of meeting all of the great staff and volunteers. We are very grateful for the opportunity to help further The Freeman Stage’s mission.”

Maureen Griffith, Captain & VAC Secretary

Volunteer Advisory Committee Update

Now that the season has concluded and the stage is broken down for storage, we cast our eyes toward the 2021 Season. Plans for next season are in the works as this article is being printed. Before we turn the page on the 2020 season, I’d like to share some final thoughts.

On Jan. 1, I anticipated another great season at The Freeman Stage. The last thing I expected on my radar screen was COVID-19. For weeks it looked as though the season was in doubt. On June 4, we received clearance for a limited opening and the rest of the story is history.

All of us can agree this was certainly an extraordinary and challenging season. Ninety seven volunteers stepped forward when we got underway. It was remarkable to see our transformation as the season progressed, from tentative individuals to a confident team dedicated to the success of our 13th consecutive season. This was due in no small part to the safety protocols implemented at the Stage. We had no COVID cases amongst the volunteers or staff. We celebrated the end of the season at our volunteer social held on Sept. 13. In the true character of the season, it was held outside on the green and in pods.

Pins were awarded for years of dedicated volunteer service:
- 33 volunteers received a pin for 5 years of service or more
- 11 student volunteers received a pin for reaching high school senior or older with 2 years of service
  - Special shout out to Marc Grimes! Marc received pins for five and ten years of service, in addition to being awarded pins for 11, 12 and 13 years of service.
- All volunteers who participated this season received a pin celebrating how we pulled the rabbit out of the hat and completed a magical season.

Please note the pin recognition for years of service is an ongoing program established by the VAC Recruitment and Recognition Committee. For all the members of our volunteer corps who did not participate this year, your prior years of service will be counted for recognition upon your return to active status next season.

As I complete my term as VAC Chair, I’d like to say it has been a privilege to work with my fellow VAC members and serve as your volunteer advocate. Thank you all for the efforts extended to make this past season a success.

Remember, the VAC is your voice through which we continually strive to improve the volunteer program. If you have a suggestion, please don’t hesitate to approach a VAC member and let your thoughts be known. We have six vacancies on VAC for the 2021 season. VAC members serve for three-year terms and advocate for the volunteer corps. Also, we have openings for volunteer captains. Captains also serve three-year terms. If you are interested in serving in either capacity and would like to be considered, please reach out to Volunteer Coordinator Paul Tooker at volunteer@freemanfoundation.org no later than Friday, Nov. 20.

Stay safe and healthy. I’ll see you on the green!

Phil Facciolo
VAC Chair
Volunteer Captains' Corner

The 2020 Freeman Stage season has come and gone and what a season it was due to COVID-19.

Safety and public health were at the forefront of the Stage, creating and maintaining a safe and “COVID compliant” venue. This endeavor brought a lot of changes to venue policies such as clear bags only, no “bring your own chair,” cashless venue, no printed programs, etc. With all of these necessary changes, The Freeman Stage was able to open its doors and successfully bring the arts and music to all patrons and volunteers in a very COVID safe environment.

During the Captain’s After-Action Meeting held on Sept. 12, everyone praised the venue changes and how safe the volunteers felt during the season. It was also brought out that some of these venue changes are “norms” at large venues and sporting events (i.e. clear bags only). The captains also discussed how extremely positive and successful the volunteer recognition program was this season, and how we look to continue that positivity into the 2021 season.

This 2020 season was a different one but also a successful one, so whatever 2021 shall bring us, we remain firm in looking forward to having another successful, safe, and positive volunteer experience.

Come join the Captains Crew! To all volunteers, we are looking to fill a couple of captain vacancies in 2021, so if you would like to be considered, please let Paul know by Nov. 20. Check out the description below to learn more about this role!

Here is the Role Description of Captain: Volunteer Captains are the appointed leaders of the volunteer corps at a Stage performance and will serve a 3-year term. The Volunteer Captains act as a day to day liaison between the Volunteer Coordinator and the volunteer corps. The Volunteer Captains must be able to interact with patrons, volunteers, artists and JMFF staff and carry themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Volunteer Captains will be the first point of contact, should an issue arise with a patron. Along with the Volunteer Advisory Committee, Captains are expected to help the JMFF staff recruit, train, recognize and retain new and existing volunteers. The Captains will also provide additional training and/or feedback during a performance to volunteers as needed.

Mary Pineda, Captain and VAC Member

Volunteer Social Update

The 2020 Toys for Tots holiday season is in full swing and needs our help. The Foundation and its volunteers will again support Toys for Tots in 2020. Toys need to be new and unwrapped. We are told there is a great need for gifts for 15 year old boys and girls this year. Since we are not gathering in person, here’s how it will work.

New this year, we are offering contactless pickup at your home if you would like to contribute but would prefer to donate without leaving your house. Please email Paul Tooker no later than Friday, Dec. 4, to arrange a pick up on Dec. 9. Any volunteer who would like to donate but is not available on our Toys for Tots dates should contact Paul.

TOYS FOR TOTS DROP-OFF
WHEN: 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 8
WHERE: Carl M. Freeman Foundation Office at Bayside, 31255 Americana Parkway, Selbyville DE 19975 (new white building across from the Bayside welcome center)

TOYS FOR TOTS AT HOME PICK-UP
WHEN: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9
WHERE: Contactless pick-up from your home

The VAC Social Committee and JMFF staff will also host a Virtual Coffee Hour at 9 a.m. and/or a Virtual Happy Hour at 5 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 10. The good news is that virtual gatherings check all the boxes:

- Calorie-free
- Cost-free
- Engaging
- Fun
- Mask-free
- Socially-distanced

CLICK HERE to let us know if you are interested in joining a coffee or happy hour.

The VAC Social Committee wishes you and your family a safe holiday season and we sincerely hope to be back together face to face (maybe still wearing masks) in the new year.

Elena Ripkin, VAC Social Subcommittee Chair
Marketing Department Update

In a year when we all saw our share of challenges brought about by the global pandemic, the role of marketing for The Freeman Stage took on a whole new dimension this season. Instead of planning our highly anticipated Season Reveal press conference in mid-March, we were issuing press releases about having to hit the pause button, like so many other organizations in hospitality, entertainment and performing arts. Our support for the foundation’s Arts Access Initiatives had to quickly pivot from the classroom to the internet. In conjunction with Arts Access Coordinator Denise DiSabatino Allen, we created a “Weekly Dose of the Arts” online program with grade-appropriate arts activities for K-12 (and shared other Arts in Education initiatives whenever possible). We reached out to local and regional musicians and bands, offering them the opportunity to showcase their talents to our 30,000-plus Facebook followers through “The Stage is Yours” program.

And when the time came for us to finally launch our “Special Season of the Arts,” the marketing team was tasked with developing educational materials (videos for social media and the website, venue posters, etc.) about all of the safety protocols in place at the Stage to set people’s mind at ease and encourage them to attend performances under strict CDC guidelines.

With the significantly reduced seating capacity due to our 97 pod seating arrangement, revenue from ticket sales was also significantly reduced as well. That meant our advertising/marketing budget had to adjust accordingly.

Thanks to the great relationships developed over the years with the local weekly newspapers, we were able to use “in kind” advertising dollars (basically space donated to the organization) for ads about upcoming performances.

In addition, we developed and submitted feature stories to showcase upcoming acts, which these papers graciously ran.

And of course, we depended greatly on our large following on our social media platforms to get the word out on a minimal budget. While we started out slow, this grassroots marketing gained traction and we ended up with mostly sold-out shows after the first few weeks.

This fall, we are excited to be working on a brand new website, which will be unveiled — along with our new ticketing platform — in early February. I’m grateful to have talented and dedicated team members in Alyson Cunningham (Communication/PR Manager) and Corrin Harris (Programming/Box Office Coordinator) and look forward to continuing to enhance our marketing efforts for 2021 and beyond. Our commitment to the mission and values of JMFF remains steadfast, regardless of what the world throws our way!

Barbara Higgins, Marketing Director

Student Volunteer Corner by Nicole McDuffie

Student Volunteer: Carly Young

What school do you attend: Worcester Preparatory School

What year are you in school: Senior

What year did you begin volunteering: 2019

What is your favorite volunteer role and why: I really enjoy being a scanner at the shows. I’m able to scan the patron’s ticket to confirm their attendance and at the same time welcome them with a friendly smile and attitude. I always feel happy when seeing a patron who is genuinely excited for the show and can’t wait to get checked in.

Of the concerts you volunteered at, what was your favorite and why: I honestly can’t choose a favorite. All of them were equally fantastic in their own unique way. All of the tribute and cover bands were amazing and they all sounded like the artist. Even the artists that I’ve never heard of really took me by surprise.

What would you tell other students who might be interested in volunteering at The Freeman Stage: Go for it, you definitely won’t regret it. It’s a great and fun way to hear songs and genres that you haven’t heard of before. I can confidently say after attending many shows this 2020 season there are at least 30 new songs in my playlist on Spotify. Everyone at The Freeman Stage is extremely helpful and friendly. Before the show starts is a great time to get to know one another and make new friends. I really enjoy every minute I spend at The Freeman Stage and I’m sure anyone who joins the team in upcoming summers will say the same.
Volunteer Recruitment & Recognition

Beginning this year, milestone service pins were awarded to volunteers in good standing after the fifth year of service and five-year intervals after Year 5. Anyone who serves beyond 10 years now receives an annual pin. Student volunteer milestone recognition pins were awarded for at least two years of volunteer service so long as the student is a high school senior or older.

Below are the recipients of the 2020 Volunteer Milestone Pins:

- **Marc Grimes**: 13 years of service; awarded 5-, 10-, 11-, 12-, 13-year pins
- **Bob Katz**: 9 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Carla Briccotto**: 8 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Nancy Nims**: 8 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Joyce Pool**: 8 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Maureen Griffith**: 7 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Ron Lewis**: 7 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Elena Ripkin**: 7 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Patsy Miller**: 7 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Diane Gilner**: 6 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Nancy Lowe**: 6 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Mary Pineda**: 6 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Mark Banaszak**: 6 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Robert Fries**: 6 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Mark Kronenberg**: 6 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Jack Csicsek**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Martha Csicsek**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Barbara Facciolò**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Phil Facciolò**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Amy Linzey**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Sandra Peck**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Wayne Saulsbury**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Chris Thompson**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Mike Thompson**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Lisa Hudson**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Pamela Marquess**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Deborah Rice-Spellman**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Rick Stack**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Michele Thrift**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **Edna Tiberi**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin
- **John Tiberi**: 5 years of service; awarded 5-year pin

**Student Volunteers**
- **Nicole McDuffie**: 4 years of service
- **Sarah Buoni**: 3 years of service
- **Megan Cathell**: 3 years of service
- **Lizbeth Cortez-Galindo**: 3 years of service
- **Maeve Donahue**: 3 years of service
- **Sophia Ludt**: 3 years of service
- **Jacob Slabonik**: 3 years of service
- **Julia Buoni**: 2 years of service
- **Carly Young**: 2 years of service

Based on feedback we received from the 2019 volunteer survey, captains and staff awarded recognition pins immediately this season to volunteers upon observation of exceptional service.

Captains acknowledged the volunteer in the next huddle, thanking the volunteer for the specific reason for the pin awarded. 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 summer.

This year’s on-the-spot pin recipients were: Mike Bosco, Sarah Buoni, Julia Buoni, Trish Cassidy, Patrick Cassidy, Lynette Catha, Kathryn Chapdelaine, Lizbeth Cortez-Galindo, Jack Csicsek, Phil Facciolò, Robert Fries, Tom Gairy, Marc Grimes, Bob Katz, Anne Kerr, Mark Kronenberg, Gail Launay-Tarlecki, Ron Lewis, Kim Littman, Wayne Saulsbury, Lynda Schoeninger, Susan Senecal, Dottie Teixiera, Mike Thompson, John Tiberi and Carly Young.