



V I L A R  
P E R F O R M I N G  
A R T S C E N T E R



# Volunteer Program Manual

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## A Perspective

As a member of the VPAC Volunteer Usher Corp, you directly contribute to making the VPAC a positive experience for our guests. Your appearance, actions and service reflect our commitment to people, service and quality. Show how much you care by smiling enthusiastically, going out of your way to help patrons, presenting your best appearance and following the policies and procedures of this manual.

This caring attitude includes a common sense approach to making people happy. Our success is achieved by consistently doing the basic things to make our patrons enjoy a pleasant experience at the VPAC. By working together as a team we can accomplish this important task.

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## Volunteer Service Standards

A Volunteer agrees to:

- Consider volunteer work as a serious professional commitment and view the position as valid and important.
- Represent the VPAC in an appropriate and responsible manner at all times.
- Act as a member of the VPAC team when working with other Volunteers and the VPAC staff.
- Follow the position description and accept supervision.
- Be prompt and reliable in reporting to work and follow through on all commitments.
- Notify the House Manager line at (970) 748-6643 or email [volunteer@vvp.org](mailto:volunteer@vvp.org) as soon as possible if unable to work a scheduled shift due to illness or an unexpected reason. Note: In order to not have points deducted for missing a shift, you must make contact no less than one hour prior to the start of the show shift.
- Communicate with the House Manager to resolve any problems or concerns.

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## **Orientation**

At different times of the year Volunteer orientation sessions will be held. Many subjects will be covered in this meeting including VPAC management expectations, evacuation of the audience, fire drills and theater policies. You must attend one session per year to continue volunteering.

## **Sign Up**

Approximately 45 days before each season starts you will receive an email with a listing of performances for the season that require volunteers. The amount of show required to participate in the program will vary from season to season. Typically, you will be required to sign-up for between 4 and 7 prime shows, 1 to 2 captain shifts, and 1 to 2 family shows. Volunteers who do not fulfill these requirements will be permitted to volunteer only on an as-needed basis.

Information on sign up for each season can be found at:  
<http://www.vilarpac.org/vpac/info/volunteer.aspx>

The House Manager or his or her designee will process all requests and advise each Volunteer of the shows to which they have been assigned. Assignments will be made according to the Priority Points System described below. There are a limited number of volunteer positions for each show. If you do not receive a requested show, you may ask to be put on the waiting list for that show.

## **Priority Point System (this determines priority for sign-up in the next season)**

Volunteers will be credited with points (according to the table below) for each show worked. Points are tabulated for each Volunteer annually. Volunteers who have higher points totals for the past three years are given priority when shows are assigned each season.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Points</b>
Captain	8 points
Volunteering for a STARS program	8 points
Volunteering for a Family/Children's Show	6 points
Merchandise Sales	4 points
May Gallery Coat Check	3 points
Coat Check	3 points
Usher/Ticket Taker/Programs/Box Ofc/etc	2 points
Bonus Points for last minute	4 points
Late for Meeting	-1 point
No Show - No Call	-5 points
Arrival without proper uniform (and sent home)	-2 points

\*If you call at least 1 hour prior to start of shift no points will be deducted.

## **Dress Code**

The required attire for Volunteers is black slacks or skirt (clean and pressed), black shoes, dark socks, and white long-sleeve shirt (clean and pressed) and your VPAC vest and nametag. Please no jeans or shorts or prints of any kind on your shirt or pants. Also allowable are native clothing (i.e. kilts, Native American attire, etc).

Volunteers who arrive without the proper uniform may be asked to leave for the evening, and will loose 2 points from their bank.

## **Jobs Performed**

You may fill many different positions as a Volunteer. It is not as simple as just tearing tickets or letting people in the door. Sometimes there may be some minor housekeeping. You may be asked to stuff flyers in programs or sell merchandise for the artist. Box office help may be required from time to time as well.

The various positions are described in greater detail below. There are also important general rules set forth after the descriptions. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these rules and to perform the requirements of each position.

Many of our audience members are from out of town. They will need help finding their seats, restrooms or wanting information on future performances. The handicapped may especially need our help in getting to seating areas. However, do not just assume a handicapped person needs assistance - please ask first. The manner in which you treat and speak to people will greatly influence how they feel about the VPAC and how much they enjoy the performance.

Always remember you are an official representative of not only the VPAC, but Beaver Creek as well, and that for many of our audience members, you are the only contact they have with the VPAC family.

## **House Policies. Am I a cop or an Usher?**

A little of both actually. While we don't want our Volunteers to be belligerent with our customers, we can require certain behavior from our guests. Part of your job is helping us enforce these policies in order to allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the performance.

The rules are few, simple and mostly common sense:

**No Flash Photography, Camera Phones or Recording Devices** - If an audience member comes in with this equipment, advise them of the house policy. Most people will be happy to oblige. The House Manager will advise you if there is an exception to the rule. Please ask if you are unsure.

**No Food Allowed in the Theater** - Again, a smile and friendly reminder is normally all it will take. While food is sold by the VPAC at most shows, there is a sign at the bar as well as a sign at each door in the lobbies advising patrons that food is not allowed in the theater. Please ensure that the lobby signs are prominently placed.

**No Backpacks or Large Bags Allowed in the Theater** - These items should go to coat check. If coat check is not open, they may take them back to their cars or leave them with the House Manager who will place them in the volunteer room (although the VPAC will not accept responsibility for loss).

**No Seating in the Aisles** – This is very important as having patrons seated in the aisles is a fire code violation. Please help these customers find a seat.

**No Feet on Chairs or Woodwork** - Advise them not to put their feet on the furniture or woodwork.

**No Placing of Items on Acoustic Shelves** – During certain performances the wall curtains will be lifted to reveal the acoustic shelves. Under no circumstances should items be placed on these shelves.

**No Smoking Inside or Drinking Outside** - Some people may not have seen the sign that it is a smokeless facility. A gentle reminder is usually all that is needed. Ashtrays are located outside the building, but patrons are not permitted to take alcoholic beverages outside since that would violate our liquor license.

**Cell Phones and Pagers Must be Turned Off** - The Executive Director or Theatre Manger usually advises patrons of this requirement during the curtain speech, but it may be necessary to remind them.

### **Seating of Latecomers**

Latecomers are (almost) never seated in their ticketed seats until intermission or a break in the program. It is important that we start the show on time or as close as possible, and at the same time we want to get our late customers in as soon as possible. There are several methods by which to handle this depending on how full the house is and the performance itself. Sometimes the performers have specific instructions that must be followed. If necessary (with some patrons who become upset), you may remind them that the reverse side of the ticket explicitly provides that “latecomers may or may not be seated at the discretion of the House Management.”

**House Not Sold Out** - This is the easiest to resolve. If the house is not sold out you may seat people in the back of the theater or in the balcony. At intermission or between numbers for musical shows they may move to their seats. It is extremely distracting and disrespectful to the rest of the audience and to the performers to seat latecomers in their ticketed seats at other times.

**House Sold Out** - Not as difficult as it sounds. Hold the audience member outside the auditorium until there is an appropriate break in the music or performance. Normally, it is not a problem to seat people between breaks in the music for the first five or ten minutes. Later than ten minutes, bring the person in and offer them a stool in the back of the auditorium. **Do not try to move them to their ticketed seat.** Again, it shows a lack of respect for the rest of the audience (who were timely) and the performer to be seating

people during the show. For persons more than twenty minutes late the House Manager reserves the right to refuse seating until intermission.

### **Children**

A noisy child is one of the most difficult problems for a Volunteer. Crying babies need to be removed, as do chatty children. Normally if you smile, address the parent, and advise them that the child is disturbing the rest of the audience the parent will take some action to stop the problem. If you need to get people out of the theater immediately the best way is simply to tell them there is someone outside that wishes to speak with them.

Advising someone that they need to “get their kid in line, and make him be quiet” normally will only anger the parent. If they understand they are disturbing others, normally, the embarrassment factor will be enough to make them leave.

Children must remain in their seats. If children are running about advise them to return to their seats. Especially be cautious of this in the balcony. None of us want a child to take a fall. Be aware that children crying, or laughing and shouting in the lobby is also a problem as the sound carries into the auditorium.

### **Security**

It is a rare occasion when we need to call for Beaver Creek Security. Before Security is called the House Manager should always be notified. If someone needs to be removed from the facility let the House Manager handle this. No employees or volunteers of the VPAC should ever put themselves in jeopardy or lay hands on any person. NEVER ATTEMPT TO PHYSICALLY REMOVE ANYONE!

### **STARS Performances**

If you are assigned to work a STARS performance, the job duties will differ from normal performances. We will convene in the upper lobby for these performances. Each volunteer will then be tasked with taking an entire class or school to their seats. Staff from VPAC will also be around to help with the seating. You must physically motion each child to their seats for the best efficiency. Then return to the lower lobby for the next class or school. At the end of a STARS performance students that rode on a bus are asked to remain in their seats until their school is called. Before children begin to exit, please be sure that all of the auditorium doors are open. The remainder of the children that arrived in private vehicles will depart at this time. When a school is called for the bus it is the responsibility of a volunteer to bring that school upstairs in an orderly fashion. Continue this process until all students have departed and then check the theater for trash.

## General VPAC Information

### Website

[www.vilarpac.org](http://www.vilarpac.org)

### Mailing Address

Vilar Performing Arts Center  
PO Box 3822  
Avon, CO 81620

### Physical Address

Vilar Performing Arts Center  
68 Avondale Lane  
Beaver Creek, CO 81620

### Phone Numbers

(970) 845-8497 Box Office  
(888) 920-2787 Toll Free  
(970) 748-1396 Fax

### VPAC Staff

Kris Sabel, Executive Director  
Gena Buhler, Theatre Manager  
Theresa Jimenez Anders, Food & Beverage Manager  
Erik Brown, Technical Director  
Dean Davis, Facilities Manager  
Kim Hannold, Administrative Coordinator  
Neal Kerr, Master Electrician  
Larry Matthews, Box Office Manager  
Julie Tomlinson, Marketing & PR Coordinator  
Leslie Cothran, House Manager & F&B  
John Merritt, House Manager  
Charlotte Mintz, House Manager  
Sophie Ozaneaux, House Manager

## General Rules

- Arrive and be fully prepared (i.e., take care of all personal needs including donning your vest with nametag) to perform your duties no later than 45 minutes before show time. Note: Captains must arrive no later than 60 minutes before show time. **It is important to be prompt so that assignments can be efficiently made, programs can be stuffed, and meetings can be held prior to the patrons' arrival.**
- If you fail to sign in, you may not receive credit for volunteering.
- Put into your vest pockets for needy patrons some Ricola cough drops and, for loud shows, some earplugs. Please return unused cough drops and earplugs to the Volunteer Room at the end of the show. Empty vest pockets completely.
- All Volunteers must take and sign out a flashlight and sign it in and return it to its proper place at the end of the show.
- Read the information regarding the show on the white board in the volunteer room.
- Keep the door to the volunteer room closed when patrons are in the lobby.
- Do not open the theater doors (even if they are unlocked) until the House Manager gives the okay.
- If magnetized doors will not stick, notify House Manager immediately so that we might get a door stop.
- Flashlights should only be used to help patrons. When using your flashlight inside the theater, please remember to point it down so as not to shine it in the eyes of patrons or performers. Also, remember to point the flashlight behind you when taking latecomers to their seats. They are not aware of our layout; you should be. The flashlight should never be used to check the time, read the program (or a book or newspaper) or to search for something lost.
- Please do not socialize when you should be working.
- Once the show has started, please DO NOT TALK (even to patrons) when you are in the theater, except in an emergency. You should not have to speak with patrons even when they have arrived late. The Captain should have spoken to them prior to letting them into the theater. You will be advised if there are no captains that day.
- Except for those assigned to sit on stools half way down or at the foot of the stage, all Volunteers should sit or stand in the rear of the theater and be prepared to assist patrons (whether late arriving or just leaving to use the facilities). The Volunteers who sign up to be ushers have the primary responsibility to do this. Remaining Volunteers also have responsibility and must remain alert to give assistance. The House Manager may also place you in the balcony.
- Give all lost and found items to the House Manager or the Assistant House Manager.
- When necessary (before the show or during intermission), advise patrons that they may not take alcoholic beverages out of the VPAC.

- Volunteers may not eat or drink (water being the exception) while volunteering until all patrons have left the theater.
- If you need to leave a performance early please speak with the House Manager before you leave.
- You need to call the House Manager as far in advance as possible if you are unable to work an assigned show. Do not procure your own substitutes.
- Please do not come to the VPAC to volunteer if you are impaired due to illness, injury or the consumption of alcohol or drugs (including prescription drugs) inasmuch as such impairment could result in liability to you and the VPAC in the event of an accident.
- Please do not come to the VPAC to volunteer if you have not been assigned to work that day.
- Please do not bring family members to performances, assuming that they can sit in the back with you to watch a show.
- Occasionally you will be invited to attend a performance as a guest of the VPAC. You may be invited to attend alone, with a significant other, with someone who has never been to the VPAC but who is likely to purchase tickets in the relatively near future after attending this performance, or with some set number of friends or relatives. For this purpose, a significant other is a spouse or “special friend or close relative” (if you do not have a spouse or your spouse is ill or out of town). If you and your spouse or special friend are both volunteers, you may not bring another guest under this provision. Moreover, you must be in attendance at an invited performance with your guests. You cannot send your guests alone.

## Detailed Position Descriptions

### CAPTAINS

- Arrive and be ready to work no later than 1 hr prior to show time.
- Check in with House Manager to see what pre-show tasks may need to be completed.
- Ensure that all volunteers have flashlights.
- Supervise stuffing of programs and ensure that they are placed inside the theater doors (please ask volunteers to place inserts on the proper page, right side up and flush with the top and bottom of the page).
- During the half hour of seating please make sure the program holders are full.
- At all times know your role, ensure that all other Volunteers are performing their duties, and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- During the performance, maintain a presence in the assigned lobby location and assist latecomers and anyone else in need. You may wish to bring a book.
- The Box Office Manager may advise upper lobby Captains that there are Will Call tickets that have not been picked up. The Captain should direct latecomers who need to pick up these tickets that they have been left on the counter in front of the box office. If possible, the Captain should assist the patron in finding the tickets.
- Watch the coats/merchandise during the performance.
- About 15-20 minutes into the show, check restrooms for any cleaning needs, and inform House Manager of any problems.
- If there are at least two captains on your floor, once the foregoing duties have been accomplished, you may alternate with your fellow captain in seeing part of the show.
- Ensure that the theater has been “policed” (for lost objects, programs, bottles and the like, but not tissues or other dirty things) after the performance.
- Find any programs that have inserts stuffed into them, and “de-stuff” them after the performance.
- Report to the House Manager any and all failures by volunteers to perform their duties or follow prescribed rules.

## **LOBBY GREETERS**

- Arrive and be ready for meeting no later than 45 minutes before show time.
- Proactively greet patrons as they enter the theater; don't stand in one place; walk up to guests and be helpful and friendly.
- Upper Lobby position: direct patrons to box office (will call, ticket sales, cash only window) and proper door (balcony/downstairs left/right). Answer questions as necessary. Also watch the revolving doors to be sure that children are not playing within the doors.
- Downstairs greeters should approach patrons and ask them if they know which door to use. Alternatively, you might ask to see their tickets so that you can direct them.
- Downstairs position: watch to make sure no one is leaning against the glass walls.
- When necessary (before the show or during intermission), advise patrons that they may not take alcoholic beverages out of the VPAC.
- At all times know your role and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- Watch performance stools at back of auditorium, but please remember, NO TALKING.
- After the show, thank patrons, say goodnight and answer questions.

## **BOX OFFICE**

- Arrive and be ready for meeting no later than 45 minutes before show time.
- Follow directions of box office manager.
- Distribute will call tickets from the ticket holder advising the patron of the number of tickets and the credit card receipt.
- If the tickets are not in the ticket holder:
  - Check the rear counter for tickets purchased on the internet and the purchase confirmations; ask patron for their copy of the confirmation; if they do not have one, ask to see identification.
  - Check with the box office manager to see if their tickets are complimentary or group sale tickets.
  - Ask them to confirm that their tickets are for the current date.
- At all times know your role and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- Watch performance from back of auditorium but please remember, NO TALKING.
- When all patrons have departed, "police" theater (for lost objects, programs, bottles and the like, but not tissues or other dirty things).

## **LOBBY COAT CHECK & MAY GALLERY COAT CHECK**

- Arrive and be ready for meeting no later than 45 minutes before show time.
- Begin to check coats early until the beginning of the show. (Captains will watch coats during performance).
- Issue a separate check slip for hats and other items.
- At all times know your role and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- Watch performance from back of auditorium but please remember, **NO TALKING**.
- Promptly return to the coats at intermission and after the show. Do not depart until all coats have been returned to owners.
- Give tip money to the House Manager or Assistant House Manager.

## **TICKET TAKER**

- Arrive and be ready for meeting no later than 45 minutes before show time.
- Sign in and take a flashlight.
- Tickets takers will be taking tickets at the following locations: top of stairs, elevator, and both balcony doors.
- Learn theater seating plan.
- Welcome/greet patrons.
- Check show, date and time on tickets.
- Direct patrons to proper door per seat number as follows:

<b>LEFT DOOR</b>	<b>RIGHT DOOR</b>
Boxes 1, 3 & 5 (balcony)	Boxes 2, 4 & 6 (balcony)
Left Seats (odd numbers)	Right Seats (even numbers)
Center Seats 109-116	Center Seats 101-108
Pit Seats 109-116	Pit Seats 101-108
- Be alert to the distinction between rows D and O and rows G and Q. They can be differentiated by the section printed on the ticket. Rows D and G are in the orchestra (ORCH). Rows O and Q are in the parterre (PART).
- Be alert to the fact that there is a Row AA in the Balcony as well as in the Orchestra. When you take a Row AA ticket, make sure the guests are at the correct door.
- At all times know your role and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- Watch performance from assigned position, but please remember **NO TALKING**.
- When all patrons have departed, “police” theater (for lost objects, programs, bottles and the like, but not tissues or other dirty things).

## **PROGRAM DISTRIBUTOR**

- Arrive and be ready for meeting no later than 45 minutes before show time
- Sign in and take a flashlight and pencil.
- Greet patrons at theater doors and distribute programs as directed.
- Guard door against food being taken inside.
- Watch to make sure no one is leaning against glass wall.
- At all times know your role and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- Watch performance from your assigned position, and remember NO TALKING.
- When the black chairs are set up and sold as Row S and EE, be sure to move them forward (or otherwise out of the way) at intermission, at the end of the show, or in the event of an emergency. Make sure the chairs on the end do not block either aisle.
- Open theater doors at end of intermission and performance, but only after house lights come up.
- After the show, thank patrons, say goodnight and answer questions. Note that only staff and people working with the performers should be allowed through the gray door in the lobby.
- When all patrons have departed, “police” theater (for lost objects, programs, bottles and the like, but not tissues or other dirty things).
- Gather any left-over programs that have been stuffed with inserts and de-stuff them.

## **USHER**

- Arrive and be ready for meeting no later than 45 minutes before show time
- Sign in and take a flashlight and pencil.
- Learn theater seating plan.
- Greet/welcome patrons and help to escort patrons to their seats whenever possible. One usher should be half-way down in the orchestra near row J and the other should be at the top of the stairs.
- Be alert to the distinction between rows D and O and rows G and Q. They can be differentiated by the section printed on the ticket. Rows D and G are in the orchestra (ORCH). Rows O and Q are in the parterre (PART).
- Be alert to the fact that there is a Row AA in the Balcony as well as in the Orchestra. When you take a Row AA ticket, make sure the guests are at the correct door.
- When different patrons have tickets for the same seats, examine both sets of tickets to be sure that there is in fact a duplication; i.e., the tickets are identical (and it is not a matter of people who should be in Row Q/O sitting in Row G/D or Balcony AA sitting in Orchestra AA). If there is an actual duplication write the patron name on the back of their respective tickets (ensure you have both of their names) and then take both sets of

tickets to the Head Usher who will then seek assistance from the House Manager or Assistant House Manager.

- At all times know your role and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- Enjoy the performance from your assigned position but be alert and available to seat latecomers when the captain brings them into the theater.
- NO TALKING during the performance. This includes late seating. Be aware that the captains have instructed them to look for you. Take late patrons directly to their seats without talking – use hand gestures if necessary.
- When the black chairs are set up and sold as Row S & EE, be sure to move them forward (or otherwise out of the way) at intermission, at the end of the show, or in the event of an emergency. Make sure the chairs on the end do not block either aisle.
- If there is an intermission, guard the theater against food being taken inside.
- Open theater doors at intermission and at end of performance, but only after house lights come up.
- After the show, thank patrons, say goodnight and answer questions.
- When all patrons have departed, “police” theater (for lost objects, programs, bottles and the like, but not tissues or other dirty things).

## **HEAD USHER**

- Same duties as usher duties above, but with the additional duties below.
- Insure that all ushers on your side of the House are aware of their duties and their positions before, during and after the performance.
- In the event of a double seating, an usher will bring tickets to you. Ensure that names are written on the back of both sets of tickets and then seek assistance from the House Manager or Assistant House Manager.
- Remain in the lobby for 10-15 minutes after the start of each show to help latecomers. Seat the latecomers. If there are no captains, if there are too many latecomers to seat by yourself, or if latecomers can only be seated at certain times, you may need to hand them off to ushers already in the theater. Do this by pulling the usher out of the theater, not by talking to the usher inside the theater.
- When seating latecomers or if patrons have to exit during performance, insure that one set of doors is closed before the next set of doors is opened to make sure that no light “bleeds” into the theater.
- Position yourself at rear of House during performance and watch the theater for any problems (e.g., flash photography, recording, etc.) and notify House Manager or Assistant House Manager of any problems.
- Ensure that air quality remains stable during the performance. If it gets too hot or cold, notify House Manager immediately.

## **MERCHANDISE SALES**

- Arrive and be ready for meeting no later than 45 minutes before show time
- Take inventory of goods to be sold.
- Reconfirm cash in bank.
- Be sure that you know the price of each item. On occasion there may be a discount for Volunteers. Check with House Manager.
- Help sell any merchandise the performer may have before and after the show and during intermission.
- Entrust the bank and merchandise to a captain during the performance or take the cash inside if there is no captain.
- At all times know your role and be prepared to act in the event of an emergency.
- Enjoy the performance from back of the auditorium, but please remember **NO TALKING** during the performance.
- This assignment may make it necessary to stay well after the show ends, especially if the artists decide to autograph CDs, etc.
- Once the selling has finished, take inventory and count cash again.
- Meet with House Manager to settle accounts.

## Customer Service Review

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- Focus on what the customer is really trying to tell you
  - Ask clarifying questions
  - Paraphrase—Using “I” statements
  - Check for emotions behind the message
  
- Avoid placing blame
  
- Put aside your personal problems/biases (stereotypes, it’s “just” a student, etc.)
  
- Totally accept customer’s feelings, state of mind
  - Don’t overreact
  - Don’t try to talk the customer out of how he/she is feeling
  - Don’t try to apply logic if customer is highly emotional
  
- Interact by responding
  - Show verbally and non-verbally that you’re “with” the customer
  - Nod, smile, and verbally encourage customer
  - Use conversation “cues”

### Once We Have Listened Then ...

- Offer solution
  - If needed, ask for assistance from others or seek additional information to help
  
- Give choices whenever possible
  
- Follow up, as needed