VOLUNTEER USHER
POLICY HANDBOOK
2013-2014
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Fall, 2013

Dear Volunteer Usher,

Thank you for giving your time and energy to the Volunteer Usher Program at the Santa Clarita Performing Arts Center (PAC). You play a vital role in the smooth operation of hundreds of performances which could not happen without your participation.

We are grateful that you have volunteered to ensure that our patrons enjoy their experience when attending a show and that they receive the best possible customer service while they are here.

In the following pages, you will find updated information about policies and procedures, including: expectations of volunteers; job descriptions and duties; show sign up methods; appropriate attire; PAC rules and safety guidelines; as well as volunteer incentives and recognition. Please feel free to contact me if anything is unclear or if you need further clarification or information.

Because there is always room for new ideas and improvements, please also feel free to share any thoughts you have that could make our volunteer program better. We greatly appreciate the commitment you have made to the PAC, and we want you to enjoy being a volunteer.

Thanks again for your gift of time and for being part of a volunteer team that works hard to ensure a pleasant and memorable experience for its patrons.

I’m looking forward to getting to know each of you and to many successful seasons at the PAC.

Sincerely,

Jocey Hogan
House Manager
Santa Clarita Performing Arts Center
College of the Canyons
661-362-5306 office
661-713-4440 cell
Jocey.Hogan@canyons.edu
Volunteer Qualifications and Requirements

Volunteer Qualifications:

- Must be at least 18 years of age
- Must meet requirements of the volunteer bureau at College of the Canyons (www.canyons.edu/Offices/VolunteerBureau)
- Must be able to walk up and down stairs and/or stand freely for periods of up to one hour or longer
- Must be willing to interact with patrons, staff and other volunteers in a courteous and friendly manner
- Must be well groomed
- Must be able to keep calm during emergencies
- Must be able to accept authority and follow directions in a professional manner
- Must be able to work with a diverse group of patrons, staff and volunteers.

PAC management reserves the right to determine who is accepted as a volunteer. Those who do not meet the requirements or who violate policies or procedures will not be eligible.

Although volunteers serve mainly as ushers for performances at the PAC and the Black Box Theatre, they may also perform other duties such as selling concessions, serving as lobby greeters, stuffing programs and assisting at special events.

Time Requirements:

Most shows take place in the evenings and on weekends, however there are occasionally events and performances during weekdays. Dates and times are given far in advance and, ushers sign up to work the shows that meet their schedules.

Ushers must report to the PAC one and a half hours prior to most shows. This allows time for ushers to receive their assignments for the performance, learn show details and any special circumstances before the lobby doors open one hour prior to show time.

Because our volunteer ushers are critical to the efficient and organized operation of our programs, we count on you to be here when scheduled and to be on time. Once an usher has signed up for a show, it is their responsibility to contact the House Manager via phone at 661-362-5306 or email at jocey.hogan@canyons.edu, if they are unable to work the event for any reason. It is preferable to give at least a 24-hour notice to allow time to find a replacement.

The House Manager maintains a record of shows and hours worked as well as “no shows.” Volunteers who do not work at a show or event for a six-month period will be dropped unless they notify the House Manager, in writing, of extenuating circumstances that prevent them from meeting volunteer requirements.
Contact Information:

Show schedules, meeting dates, recognition events and other information is provided to volunteers via email, “snail” mail or by phone. It is crucial that we maintain current and accurate contact information for all volunteers. It is each volunteer’s responsibility to ensure that any changes in contact information, including mailing address, email address and phone numbers, are reported to the House Manager at 661-362-5306 or at Jocey.Hogan@canyons.edu. Volunteer contact information will be kept confidential.

Sign Up Methods

There are several ways to sign up to volunteer for shows at the PAC. Regardless of which sign up method you choose, please be sure you are available to work the entire shift. Please check that you have signed up for the correct date and time that you wish to work, as some shows have multiple performance dates and times with some having two performances on the same day. Also, please include your first and last name so we can accurately keep track of your volunteer hours.

Once you have signed up for a performance, please assume that you are scheduled to work on that date unless you are contacted by the House Manager. You will only be contacted if the staffing is full for a particular program for which you signed up, or if you signed up for repeat performances for which other ushers requested to volunteer.

Staffing schedules will be posted online at www.CanyonsPAC.com and in the HM office on the bulletin board to the left of the door as you enter. A reminder for those scheduled to work will be sent to email addresses (or called, if email is not an option), one week prior to each performance.

How to Sign Up:

1. **In the House Manager’s Office:** Schedules will be available for sign ups two months in advance. The House Manager’s office opens two hours prior to each event, so you may sign up at events you are already ushering.

2. **Online:** Beginning in November, this sign up method will be available 24 hours a day. Show schedules will be posted two months in advance on or around the first of the month. To sign up online, please follow these steps:
   - Go to www.CanyonsPAC.com
   - Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the “Volunteer Usher Program” button
   - Click the “SIGN UP” button under “Usher Resources” on the right side of page
   - Enter your name, personal code (PACVUP13), email address, and phone number in the appropriate fields.
   - Enter your name in the box for the show(s) you wish to volunteer
   - Print a copy for yourself
   - Click on **SUBMIT** at the bottom left corner of the page.
The House Manager will receive your sign up sheet and add your name to the volunteer list for the shows you wish to work.

3. **Email:** This sign up method is available anytime. Simply email your selections for volunteering to the House Manager at Jocey.Hogan@canyons.edu. Be sure to include the date and times of the shows you are choosing. A monthly newsletter, including upcoming show dates and times, will be emailed to those with email addresses.

4. **Phone:** This sign up method is available anytime. Call the Usher Information Line/House Manager’s Office at 661-362-5306. Please clearly state your name and phone number as well as the dates and times of your show selections.

   **Please note:** If you do not have email capabilities, the monthly newsletter, including upcoming show schedules, will be sent to you via regular mail at the beginning of the month.

**Volunteer Usher Job Description and Duties**

When volunteering for an event at the PAC, you will be assigned to work at a specific station. Your assignment will be given to you during the usher meeting held in the 30-minute period preceding the opening of the lobby doors. Each position has its own job description delineated below. However, there are certain responsibilities and expectations that apply to all volunteers, regardless of their show assignments.

**Responsibilities of all PAC volunteers:**

• As volunteer ushers, you are first and foremost the “face” of the Santa Clarita Performing Arts Center—the first people that our patrons come in contact with when they come through the doors. Your attitude, appearance and quality of service all reflect on the PAC. It is important that our patrons feel welcomed and that each contact with an usher is a pleasant one.

• We encourage you to: smile and be friendly with patrons; welcome them to the PAC when they enter and thank them for coming when they leave; help them with their questions; and be sensitive to those with special needs. We want all patrons to leave the PAC with a positive feeling and eager to return.

• Although it may not happen often, there are times when you may find yourself at a loss for how to handle a specific situation with a patron. If there is a case where you do not know the answer to a question, find yourself in an unpleasant or difficult position that you cannot easily resolve, or if you encounter a complaint or a suspicious situation, please contact the House Manager immediately. Please do not guess or assume an answer to a question you are unsure of. Refer that question to the House Manager.

• Similarly, if there is ever a difference of opinion between ushers, please direct your concerns to the House Manager for direction.
• It is important to NEVER touch a patron, adult or child, unless offering an arm for assistance (and only with the patron’s permission) or responding to an emergency.

• Know and learn the locations of:
  ° Restrooms
  ° Drinking Fountains
  ° Concessions
  ° Lost and Found
  ° First Aid
  ° Telephones
  ° Box Office
  ° Fire alarms
  ° All exit doors
  ° Wheelchair access

• Learn the layout of the facility, including seat locations, so you can direct patrons to the proper doors as well as their seats.

• Remember that your reporting time to the PAC is one and a half hours prior to the start of the show, as this is when the pre-show usher meeting takes place and when all of the important information regarding each specific event is given to you. This is also when you will receive your assigned job for the event.

• Be well informed about the event, including running time of the show, length of intermission, whether there are concessions or merchandise sales, if photos are allowed and if the performers will be available for pictures after the show. This information will be given to you during the usher meeting held during the 30 minutes prior to the opening of the lobby doors.

• Check the area you are assigned to work to make sure it is clean and everything is in working order. If you notice that anything is wrong or needs to be fixed, please notify the House Manager immediately.

• When the performance is over, please check your area for trash and programs. If you find any lost or forgotten items, please make a note of where you found them and turn them into the House Manager’s office.

• Although most ushers enjoy watching the shows, please remember that this benefit is not always guaranteed. There may be times when you are assigned to a position that requires you to remain outside the theater for the entire show or part of it.

• Please also remember that when you are ushering inside the theater, it is not always possible to sit down to watch the shows. We do need ushers to monitor the audience, as well as the doors and to be available to seat late patrons or to help those that need to leave for any reason. We may also have “sold out” shows, when no extra seats are available for volunteers and when you will be required to stand for the entire performance. Ushers
may be seated only when there are aisle seats available near them and only after they have checked with the House Manager to be sure they may do so.

• When assigned a position for an event, please remain in that position unless the House Manager gives you a different one. If you need to change positions for any reason, please let the House Manager know so that a replacement can be found for you.

• Please be aware of any physical limitations that may prevent you from being able to fill specific jobs. For example, if it is difficult for you to read small print, please do not accept a position as Ticket Taker. If you cannot walk up and down the stairs, please let the House Manager know. If you cannot stand for at least an hour, please check with the House Manager ahead of time to see if there is a position for you.

• No ushers should be seated in the lobby when patrons are present before the show, during intermission or after the show. This includes Ticket Takers, Pass Door Ushers and Concessions.

• Please do not lean against walls or doors when patrons are in the lobby.

• Ushers should not eat or drink when they are at their assigned posts or in the lobby when patrons are present. Water bottles should not be set out where patrons can see them. It is best to leave them in the House Manager’s office.

• Please remember to return your flashlight to the House Manager’s Office. Notify the House Manager if the batteries are low or need replacing.

• Remember to sign out in the House Manager’s office, before leaving the PAC.

**Specific Volunteer Usher Job Descriptions:**

• **Ticket Takers/Scanners:** Depending on the size of the audience, up to four (4) volunteers will be assigned to work at the lobby doors. After warmly greeting patrons, ticket takers are responsible for checking each ticket to make sure it is for the correct date and time. Until further notice, you will tear tickets at the perforated line and return the larger portion to patrons. Put the smaller segments in one of the black ticket boxes located inside the front doors.

Direct patrons to the House Door (Door 1 or Door 2) that is nearest to their assigned seat. You may also direct them toward a lobby greeter, who will give them a Playbill, or to the bar and concession stand, if they are open. One Ticket Taker must stay at the door until 30 minutes after the show has started to accommodate any late arrivals, and all Ticket Takers must return to their posts at the front doors during intermission. After intermission, Ticket Takers are responsible for counting the tickets that have been redeemed and then turning those tickets into the House Manager, along with the final count.

If tickets are not being used for a show, Ticket Takers will use a tally counter and report the total number of patrons to the House Manager after the start of the show.
Please direct patrons to the Box Office window if they wish to purchase tickets or if they need to pick up tickets at Will Call.

If anyone requests free entry into the PAC and you have not already been informed of this arrangement, please ask them to step aside while you locate the House Manager.

If a patron requests a listening device, please refer them to the House Manager.

**Lobby Usher for Orchestra and Balcony:** Typically, one or two volunteers will be assigned to be Lobby Ushers on the Orchestra level, and, depending on the size of the audience, one will be assigned to the balcony.

These ushers will stand in the lobby and distribute programs to each patron, when available. They will also answer questions from patrons, direct them to the closest doors to their seats and will remind them that food and drinks (except bottled water) are not allowed in the theater, and they must consume them before entering.

One Lobby Usher must remain in the lobby during the performance, but can rotate with ushers that are inside the theater to provide breaks.

**House/Door/Balcony Ushers:** Two ushers will be assigned to stand outside each door to the main theater, immediately after the usher pre-show meeting, and after securing a flashlight. Doors 1 and 2 are downstairs and Doors 3 and 4 are upstairs. As a House/Door usher, you will remain standing outside the door until the House Manager instructs you to open the house doors.

Once doors are opened, you will check patrons’ tickets, help them locate their row and seats and escort them to their seats, if necessary.

Always remind patrons to watch their step, and politely point out to them that there are railings on either side of the theater if they wish to use them.

You may also be required to hand out programs, if there are no Lobby Ushers for that particular performance.

House/Door Ushers will remove strollers, walkers, wheelchairs, and place them in the hallway or under the stairs for storage until intermission or the end of the show.

Please tell patrons that you are placing them in a secure location so they do not cause a safety hazard and that you will return those items to them at intermission, or the end of the show, or whenever the patron needs them. Most patrons with wheelchairs or walkers will be seated in rows E or P. Those in row E will be escorted by the Special Needs Escort Usher. Job description is below.

Remind patrons who have food or drinks that they must consume those items before entering the theater and that only bottled water is allowed inside.

When the House Manager instructs the House/Door Ushers to close the doors, ushers should stand at their posts, inside the door, to be ready to escort any late patrons.
Depending on the show, there will be instructions regarding when and where late-comers may be seated. Those details will be given in the pre-show usher meeting.

Doors should remain closed throughout the performance.

Throughout the show, ushers should continuously monitor the audience for anyone taking pictures or video, eating or drinking, or simply needing assistance. If you see someone taking pictures when it is not allowed, or eating, please politely ask them to stop and inform them that it is not allowed. You must continue to monitor the audience even if you are seated and watching the show. Often, photos are allowed, and you will be notified in advance when this is permitted.

Any patrons who come in after a performance has started or who need to leave during a show, should be escorted with a flashlight. Please be careful to keep the flashlight pointed downward so that it does not distract the performers.

At the end of the show, when the house lights come on, ushers should open the doors, and remain standing there until all patrons have exited. Be sure to thank patrons for coming, and wish them a pleasant day or whatever greeting you choose.

Before leaving the theater, ushers should walk up and down the aisles and pick up leftover programs and water bottles, and check for spilled drinks or forgotten items that must be turned into the House Manager. Make a note of the row and seat number where the lost item was found and report any spills to the House Manager.

Remember to return flashlights and to sign out in the House Manager’s Office.

• **Pass Door Usher:** This usher stands at the Pass Door, insuring that no one, except those needing to use the elevator or those with permission, enters the hallway leading to the greenroom, dressing rooms, etc. Instructions will be given to the Pass Door Usher during the pre-show usher meeting regarding any exceptions. The Pass Door Usher remains outside the main theater for the duration of the show, but may rotate with other ushers, if needed, for breaks.

• **Special Needs Escort Usher:** Escorts patrons, usually seated in Row E or P, who have wheelchairs, walkers, or need to use the elevator to reach their seats.

Patrons needing special assistance will be escorted to their seats by the Special Needs Escort Usher BEFORE the doors open for the general public. The House Manager will let you know when it is time to begin escorting special needs patrons into the theater.

When escorting patrons down the hall to the elevator, encourage them to hug the wall on their right to avoid the doors on the left side which may be opened by people coming out of those rooms at any time.

During the trip down to the patron’s seat, it is nice to introduce yourself, let the patron know if there is an intermission and how long the show is, and to feel free to call on you if they need anything.
If the patron is transferrable to a regular seat, walkers, wheelchairs, or any other apparatus will be held in the alcove outside of the lower left exit door, for safety reasons. The usher will explain to the patron that these will be returned at intermission or at the end of the show or any time patrons need them.

The Accessible Escort Usher may not aid in the transferring of a patron. If a disabled patron appears to need other assistance, you may offer it, but do not do anything before asking them and make sure you have permission to assist them in any way. Be sure to speak to the patron and not just their escort.

**Emergency Door and Accessible Door Ushers:** Ushers stand inside those two doors, helping patrons and making sure that no one goes backstage.

These ushers will stay at their posts during intermission to insure that no one approaches the stage area.

Please monitor audience to watch for people who are eating or using flash photography or recording devices.

**Stairway Ushers Row P and Row E:** Stairway ushers assigned to Row P, will stand at the top of the stairs, near the corners of House Left and House Right. These ushers will escort patrons and help them find their seats.

Stairway ushers will remain standing in their positions and will monitor the audience for people eating or taking pictures and video. If seats are available on an aisle, stairway ushers may be seated during a performance, but must continue to scan the audience at all times.

Stairway Ushers assigned to Row E, will stand at the bottom of the center aisle stairs near Row E and will escort patrons and help them find their seats.

If seats are available on an aisle, these ushers may be seated during a performance, but must continue to scan the audience at all times. If seats are not available, these ushers will be given direction from the House Manager regarding what to do during the performance.

**Concessions:** Occasionally, one or two ushers will be needed to sell concessions before the show and/or during intermission. These volunteers must be able to make change quickly and must be friendly and helpful to patrons. Instructions about specific concession inventory and prices will be given by the House Manager during the pre-show usher meeting.

**Merchandise:** Occasionally, one or two ushers will be needed to sell merchandise for the PAC or to assist a performer’s staff in selling their merchandise, either before the show, during intermission or after the show. These volunteers must be able to make change quickly and must be friendly and helpful to patrons. Instructions regarding specific items to be sold and prices will be given by the House Manager during the pre-show usher meeting.
ATTIRE

Women:
° Black slacks or black skirt with black stockings (no jeans)
° White blouse, dress shirt, or sweater (no t-shirts or sweatshirts)
° Black, low heel, comfortable, closed toed-shoes*
° Black sweater or jacket when needed (required in Black Box)

Men:
° Dark dress slacks (no jeans)
° White shirt
° Dark jacket, if desired (required in Black Box)
° Dark tie
° Dark, closed-toed shoes*

*No open-toed shoes unless it is by medical request and authorized by the House Manager. In this case, dark socks must also be worn.

On occasion, there could be situations when a little creativity with usher attire may enhance the atmosphere of the performance: i.e. wearing cowboy boots, and a bolo tie to the Wynonna concert was fun and appropriate. The House Manager will inform ushers when those opportunities arise.

Performance Day Schedule

• The Box Office opens two hours prior to show time for the Main Stage; one hour prior for the Black Box.
• Volunteer Call Time is one hour and 30 minutes prior to show time.
• Volunteers should sign in on the sheet in the House Manager’s office upon arrival.
• On occasion, volunteer ushers will be asked to stuff programs at this time.
• Pre-show volunteer usher meeting is held one hour and 20 minutes prior to show time. Specific usher positions are assigned. Also, information about running time, intermission, concessions, merchandise sales, handicapped seating, media and special guests, and any other important facts about the performance, is given at this time. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ARRIVE ON TIME AND TO HEAR ALL OF THE INFORMATION SHARED AT THIS MEETING.
• Please be sure to get a drink of water at this time and leave your water container in the House Manager’s office. If you need to get a drink during the course of the event, please return to the House Manager’s office to do so.
• After the meeting, ushers pick up a flashlight and door stops (if needed) and head directly to their assigned posts.
• At the end of the performance, all ushers help clean up theater.
• Return flashlights and door stops to House Manager’s Office.
• There will usually be a short, volunteer usher wrap up meeting.
• Remember to sign out in the House Manager’s office before leaving.
PAC Rules

• No food or drinks are allowed in the theater with the exception of bottled water.
• For most performances, no recording is allowed in the theater, including cell phone recording.
• No flash photographs are allowed for most performances.
• Cell phones should not be used during performances. If you notice a patron with a cell phone on, please politely ask them to turn it off.
• No access to the stage is allowed.
• Doors to the theater remain closed until the House lights are turned on.

Safety

Part of your responsibility as a volunteer usher is to ensure the safety of the patrons of the PAC. It is important to be aware of what is going on around you and to notice any unusual or dangerous situations.

Falls/injuries/illnesses:

• Immediately locate the House Manager or the Theater Manager and notify them of the situation. Do not attempt to handle the situation on your own.
• If the accident involves any blood or other bodily fluids, do not attempt to clean up. Inform the House Manager immediately.

Power Failure:

• Remain calm until power is restored or until advised by theater staff of any further action. Use your flashlight as needed.
• Do not move around or use the elevator.

Building evacuation:

• Remain calm
• Be sure you know the location of all exits in the PAC and can usher patrons to the closest exit in case of an evacuation. In case of an earthquake, do not use elevators.

  °Rows A through I will exit through side doors.
    • Right exit door, if facing the stage, leads to parking lot 4
    • Left exit door – go through double doors and follow exit signs leading outside

  °Rows J through P-- exit through the front doors and go to parking lots 1 or 2.

  °Balcony rows-- go down the stairs, exit through the front doors and go to parking lots 1 or 2.
Parking

Parking permits will be issued to all ushers, allowing parking in Lot 4, below the PAC.

Volunteer Recognition and Incentives

• **Free tickets:** For every fifty (50) hours of volunteer service, ushers will be eligible to receive a free ticket to a show of their choice. Because shows are sometimes sold out and limited seating is available, you will need to submit a list of first, second and third choices for the free ticket. We will do our best to accommodate your requests.

For this season, we will be carrying over points from the past. However, **from now on**, points must be redeemed during the season in which they were earned.

• **Volunteer Usher Name Badges:**

  ° From 0 to 400 points – Silver badge with the PAC logo
  ° From 401 to 800 points – Gold badge with PAC logo
  ° 801 points – Gold badge with PAC logo with your engraved name

We will be creating a committee of several volunteers and PAC staff to evaluate these incentive programs and make recommendations for the future. Volunteers will be selected to serve on this committee at the Orientation on Oct. 9, 2013.

• **Volunteer Recognition Dinner:**

A volunteer recognition dinner will be held at the end of the season to show appreciation for all of the time, hard work and dedication that our volunteer ushers give to the successful operation of the Santa Clarita Performing Arts Center.

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As we begin planning the 10th anniversary season of the PAC, we are so thankful for your participation and support. Stay tuned for anniversary year programs and events, and THANK YOU for all that you do to keep the PAC thriving!
CONTACT LIST

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