

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
ART INFORMATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

Mission Statement of the National Gallery of Art

The mission of the National Gallery of Art is to serve the United States of America in a national role by preserving, collecting, exhibiting, and fostering the understanding of works of art, at the highest possible museum and scholarly standards.

Art information volunteers assist the public on behalf of the National Gallery of Art and must accept and be guided by the mission set forth above. From the information desks in the Gallery's West and East Buildings, volunteers provide information to visitors about the Gallery, its permanent collections, special exhibitions, and public programs. The highest standards of interaction with the public contribute to the Gallery's critical roles of exhibiting and fostering the understanding of works of art.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Communication Skills

Art information volunteers are expected to exhibit strong interpersonal and communication skills and to keep in mind at all times that their goal and purpose is to enhance the experience of the Gallery's visitors.

While performing their duties at the desks and representing the Gallery in any capacity, volunteers must be friendly and courteous, communicate clearly, and provide visitors with accurate information about the Gallery's permanent collection, special exhibitions, public programs, and facilities. All questions should be considered seriously, with priority given to questions about the National Gallery and its collections, but with a willingness to help with questions about other museums and the city, when possible.

It is essential that volunteers work well with colleagues and staff, pay close attention to detail, and welcome problem-solving opportunities.

Attendance

Reliable, consistent, and punctual attendance is a basic responsibility and requirement for a successful art information volunteer.

There are four categories of art information volunteers:

Candidates have applied and been accepted into the preparatory program leading to certification. They are expected to commit to at least 2 years of service to the National Gallery of Art.

Active volunteers have successfully completed all education and certification requirements and commit to a regular weekday or weekend shift, or in rare instances, to substitute on a regular basis. To remain “active” a weekday volunteer should complete at least 46 shifts per year, and a weekend volunteer should complete at least 23 shifts a year. This can be accomplished by working the regular shift or by substituting when needed.

Reserve volunteers have requested and been granted an extended leave of absence from the program, greater than two months but not to exceed two years. They are encouraged to attend enrichment and training opportunities and to act as substitutes when possible, but must understand that they will receive no credit toward years in service for their time on reserve and no guarantee of returning to their previous shift assignment.

Emeritus status may be requested by a volunteer who retires in good standing after a minimum of ten years of active service. This entitles the volunteer to invitations to selected enrichment activities, the Quarterly Meetings, and the Annual Volunteer Award Ceremony.

Established shifts are outlined below. Volunteers are expected to arrive promptly and stay until the designated end of the shift.

Shifts: Weekday volunteers work a four-hour shift each week and weekend volunteers a four-hour shift every other weekend.

Monday-Saturday shifts:

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Sunday shifts:

10:30 am – 2:30 pm

2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Shifts are designed to allow a half hour for incoming volunteers to review the clipboard and weekly sheet, check supplies, restock from the storeroom if necessary, and quickly look at a new exhibition before they begin to interact with the public. This is a critical aspect of the schedule and must be respected.

Late arrivals, early departures, and absences without adequate notice place a burden on other volunteers and cause great disruption to desk coverage and staff workloads.

Late arrivals: Despite all best efforts to arrive on time, if you anticipate that you will arrive late, call **202-842-6275**, weekdays and weekends. If you do not reach a staff member, please leave a message and also call the Main Desk at **202-842-6188**.

Unanticipated (Emergency) Absence: If you cannot report for your shift because of a last-minute emergency, call **202-842-6275** as soon as possible so that desk assignments can be adjusted. If you do not reach a staff member, please leave a message and also call the Main Desk at **202-842-6188**.

Anticipated Absence: Volunteers who entered the program prior to 2010 must inform staff **in writing** about the dates of a planned absence at least **three weeks in advance**, and, if at all possible, before each ten-week schedule is prepared. This can be done by email to the supervisor of volunteers, with a copy to the coordinator of the art information program, or by completing the appropriate form provided at the information desks. **Verbal notification is not adequate.**

Volunteers who entered the program in 2010 or after are expected to arrange their own substitutes for a planned absence and to notify staff of the change with an email copied to and acknowledged by all involved.

Making up Absences: Volunteers are expected to make up their absences by being available to substitute as their schedules allow, recognizing that substitution makes it possible for the program to accommodate vacations and other absences when necessary.

Knowledge

The art information volunteer assumes responsibility for making sure that he or she is well-prepared, well-informed, and possesses the information needed to assist Gallery visitors.

As a foundation for this effort, the staff provides an initial orientation course of lectures, discussions, tours, an examination, and a final review session. The orientation includes sessions devoted to the history of the Gallery and its permanent collection, the Gallery's web site, National Gallery public policies and the policies of the Art Information Volunteer Program, the administrative organization of the Gallery and of the Education Division, the physical plan and facilities of the Gallery, and a discussion of the extensive reference resources kept at the Art Information desks.

A successful candidate will:

- know the Gallery's collection well enough to direct visitors or orient them on the floor plan.
- be familiar with and able to navigate the Gallery's web site www.nga.gov.
- be familiar with the Gallery's *Calendar of Events*, *Film Calendar*, and the daily schedule, memos and other material on the Art Information desk clipboard.
- be familiar with the public programs and resources available to visitors and understand how they differ from each other.
- know where all public facilities are located.
- understand National Gallery policies and administrative structure well enough to direct inquiries to the appropriate office, or to art information staff.

Staff Support: Ongoing staff support is provided in several ways. Staff members are accessible at all times and provide information about gallery and program changes on a daily basis. There is a computer at each information desk with access to www.nga.gov for information on Gallery policies, collection information, program information, and

calendars. Weekly schedules of both public and appointment tours, and memos alerting the volunteers to National Gallery events and policies, are kept at the desks, along with reference books and other resources for use in responding to public inquiries.

Continuing Education: As part of the professional development program, four Quarterly Meetings are held each year for information volunteers. They are typically held on a Wednesday and then repeated on the following Saturday, to accommodate all schedules, and consist of a brief business section to address new developments as well as a special lecture or program to enhance the volunteers' knowledge of the Gallery's collections and ability to assist the public. Volunteers are **expected to attend**.

In addition, enrichment opportunities are scheduled throughout the year, including training on using the Gallery web site.

Volunteers are expected to regularly participate in and be familiar with the following NGA activities:

- Volunteer enrichment tours and lectures
- Gallery talks
- Regularly scheduled public tours, lectures, or symposia
- Audio tours
- Films related to the Gallery's collections and exhibitions

Volunteers should also be familiar with the collections and exhibitions at the Smithsonian and other area arts institutions.

Standards of Conduct

As representatives of the National Gallery of Art, volunteers are expected to conform to the standards of professional conduct established for all Gallery officers, employees, and volunteers in Circular 36 of March 2005, as described in the Volunteer Handbook.

Each volunteer represents the Gallery as part of a team in the service of our public, and this standard should be kept in mind at all times. Volunteers must conduct themselves in a cordial and professional manner, with courtesy, honesty, integrity, and impartiality in dealing with Gallery staff, other volunteers, and the public.

Volunteers may not accept gifts or gratuities and must respect the confidentiality of privileged Gallery information. Commercial or charitable solicitation is not permitted, and NGA property and facilities must not be used for non-Gallery purposes or private gain.

Desk Responsibilities: To the extent possible, weekly desk assignments rotate to foster familiarity with all areas of the Gallery.

On arriving at their assigned desk, volunteers should carefully review the daily clip sheet in the notebook to familiarize themselves with events for the day and new developments.

They should also review the weekly sheet to learn what tours, gallery talks, lectures, films, etc. will be taking place that day.

They should also ensure that there are adequate supplies of information materials in the visitor bins and in the desk's backup supply areas, restocking from store rooms if necessary.

During slow periods, volunteers are encouraged to use the time to enhance their knowledge of the Gallery by reading exhibition catalogs, taking online tours on the NGA web site, reviewing desk reference works, etc.

While on desk duty, volunteers are expected to refrain from personal activities, such as making personal phone calls, using personal electronic devices, reading materials unrelated to their work at the desk, and using the NGA computer for personal reasons (checking email, personal research, etc.).

Food and beverages are not permitted at the desks.

At the end of the shift, the volunteer should leave the desk well-stocked and neat.

Breaks: Volunteers are encouraged to take breaks (30 minutes or less) provided that coverage is maintained at all desks and that Main, Constitution, and East desks are staffed commensurate with the visitor traffic being experienced at the time.

When there is a shift captain, he or she should coordinate breaks; otherwise, shift mates should coordinate among themselves.

Attire: The Gallery's spaces are handsome and elegant. In such settings, volunteers should dress in appropriate business attire, in keeping with their role as representatives of the National Gallery of Art.

Security and Access: Electronically-encoded photo ID badges are issued to volunteers, to be passed over a badge reader when the volunteer enters or leaves the Gallery and worn at all times while a volunteer is in the building as a representative of the Gallery.

Volunteers may enter gallery areas normally open to the public 30 minutes before public hours; however, this privilege does not extend to personal visitors of volunteers.

If a volunteer brings a visitor into the Gallery before public hours, he/she must accompany the visitor at all times and refrain from entering the exhibition galleries and non-public areas of the buildings. Prior to public hours, volunteers and their visitors are welcome to use the cafeteria, where breakfast is served for staff after 8:00 am on weekdays.

When a volunteer ceases to be actively engaged in the program, the badge must be returned to the Gallery.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Art information staff members will evaluate the performance of all volunteers, keeping foremost in mind that we are all here to serve the Gallery's public. Primary consideration will be given to the four main areas discussed above: ability to communicate, reliability of attendance, knowledge of the National Gallery and its collections, programs, and facilities, and adherence to the prescribed standards of conduct.

Should a problem arise, a staff member will meet with the individual volunteer to discuss the issue and make every effort to find a solution and to avoid dismissal.

We are grateful for your commitment to the National Gallery of Art and its mission.

Please sign below to indicate that you have read both the above and the NGA Volunteer Handbook, and agree to abide by and be bound by the terms and conditions of the above and of the NGA Volunteer Handbook.

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____ Class of _____