

## Welcome to Ford's Theatre National Historic Site

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Ford's Theatre National Historic Site!

You have joined an organization that has established an outstanding reputation for customer service. Much of the credit goes to the many volunteers who share their time and talent with the community. It is our hope that your volunteer experience will be a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity.

The Volunteer Handbook will provide answers to many of the questions you may have about the volunteer program. It covers policies and procedures, and our mutual responsibilities. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Volunteer Handbook, and for adhering to the Volunteer Program policies and procedures. If anything is unclear, please discuss the matter with the Volunteer Coordinator(s).

The information included in the Volunteer Handbook may change. Every effort will be made to keep you informed of any changes.

The personal satisfaction gained from a job done well is one reason people enjoy volunteering. Career development, community service, and enjoying the company of others are additional benefits your involvement may bring you. The volunteer program is dedicated to doing its part to assure you of a satisfying volunteer experience.

We extend to you our personal best wishes for your success and happiness as a volunteer with Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

Sincerely,

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## **Receipt & Acknowledgment of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Volunteer Handbook**

The Volunteer Handbook is an important document intended to help you become acquainted with the volunteering at Ford's Theatre. This handbook will serve as a guide to your service to the site; it is not the final word in all cases. Individual circumstances may call for individual attention.

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgement of the Volunteer Handbook.

- I have received and read a copy of the Volunteer Handbook. I understand that the policies, rules and benefits described in it are subject to change at the sole discretion of the coordinators at any time.
- I further understand that my volunteer service is terminable at will, either by me or Ford's Theatre, regardless of the length of my volunteer service.
- I am aware that during the course of my volunteering confidential information may be made available to me. I understand that confidential information must not be released within or outside Ford's Theatre's premises or property.
- I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand the above statements and have received a copy of the Ford's Theatre Volunteer Handbook.

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Volunteer Signature

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Date

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Coordinator of Volunteer Program Signature

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Date

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Coordinator of Volunteer Program Signature

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Date

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## **Purpose of This Handbook**

The Volunteer Handbook been prepared to inform you about Ford's Theatre's history, philosophy, practices and policies. Although no handbook can answer every question, we have attempted to cover the major points of volunteering with Ford's Theatre. If you have any questions about your volunteer experience, you are encouraged to discuss the, with your Volunteer Coordinator(s). Through our person-to-person contact we can get to know each other, express our views, and work together successfully.

Ford's Theatre depends on its volunteers: your success is our success. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work, our employees and your fellow volunteers. We also believe you will find Ford's theatre a good place to volunteer.

We ask that you read the Handbook carefully, and refer to it whenever questions arise.

## **About Ford's Theatre**

### **Mission Statement**

Ford's Theatre's mission is to celebrate the legacy of Abraham Lincoln and to explore the American experience through theatre and education. Ford's Theatre works to present the Theatre's nearly 75,000 visitors each year with a high quality historic and cultural experience. Its work is what makes this vibrant historic site an important tool for promoting the ideals of leadership, humanity and wisdom espoused by Abraham Lincoln.

### **Definition**

A volunteer is any person who is accepted as a daytime volunteer and provides a non-compensated service to Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

### **Background & Partnership**

Ford's Theatre is located in Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, on 10<sup>th</sup> Street N.W. between E and F Streets. Authorized by congress in Public Law: Lincoln Museum (February 12, 1932), Ford's Theatre (April 14, 1865), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (June 23, 1970)

The site was originally a house of worship, constructed in 1833 as the First Baptist Church of Washington, D.C. in 1861, after the congregation relocated to a newly built structure. John T. Ford bought the former church and renovated it into a theatre. He first called it Ford's Athenaeum. It was destroyed by fire in 1862, and was rebuilt the

following year. When the new Ford's theatre reopened in August 1863, it had seating for 2400 persons and was called a "magnificent new thespian temple".

Just five days after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, Lincoln and his wife attended a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre. The famous actor, John Wilkes Booth, stepped into the box where the presidential party was sitting and shot Lincoln (April 14, 1865). The president was carried across the street to the Petersen House where he died the following morning at 7:22 a.m. on April 15, 1865. Booth then jumped on stage, and cried out "sic simper tyrannis" just before escaping through the back of the theatre.

Following the assassination, the United States Government appropriated the theatre, with congress paying Ford \$100,000 in compensation, and an order was issued forever prohibiting its use as a place of public amusement.

Between 1866 and 1887, the theatre was taken over by the U.S. Military and served as a facility for the War Department with records kept on the first floor, the Library of the Surgeon General's office on the second floor and the Army Medical Museum on the third. In 1887, the building exclusively became a clerk's office for the War Department, when the medical departments moved out. The front part of the building collapsed on June 9, 1893, and killed 22 clerks and injured another 68. The building was repaired and used as a government warehouse until 1931.

The restoration of Ford's Theatre to its 1865 appearance, was brought about by extensive lobbying of Congress. A bill was passed in 1955 to prepare an engineering study for reconstruction of the building. In 1964, Congress approved funds of its restoration, which began that year and was completed in 1968.

Since 1968, in partnership with Ford's Theatre Society, Ford's Theatre has been both an active theatre presenting plays and musicals as well as a historic site. The museum, located on the lower level of the theatre, tells the story of Lincoln's Washington as well as the assassination of the 16<sup>th</sup> President. Portions the Oldroyd Collection of the Lincolniana are on display along with items related to the assassination, including the Derringer pistol used to carry out the shooting, Booth's diary and the original door to the Lincoln's theatre box. In Addition, there are a number of Lincoln's family items displayed.

Tours of Ford's Theatre and the adjacent Petersen House are by timed-entry. Tickets can be reserved in advance, and there are also tickets available on the day of the entry on a first-come, first-served basis. Admission is free.

## **What You Can Expect From the VIP Program**

As a volunteer at Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, you can expect:

- To receive a clear, specific job description.
- To be given appropriate assignments according to your skills, interests, availability, and training.
- To be trusted with confidential information if needed to carry out assignments.
- To be given appropriate formal and informal expressions of appreciation and recognition.
- To receive orientation, training, and supervision for the jobs you accept and know why you are being asked to do a particular task.
- To discuss any problem with Ford's Theatre Volunteer Coordinators, and receive prompt attention to any concerns which may arise.
- That personnel records will be kept documenting your volunteer experience including position held, training, evaluations and commendations.
- That your individual rights will be respected, and that all volunteers will be treated with courtesy and consideration.
- To have all these things done in a spirit of friendliness and cooperation.

## **What the VIP Program Expects From You**

Your first responsibility is to know your duties and how to do them promptly, correctly, and pleasantly. Secondly, you are expected to cooperate with the theatre staff and your fellow volunteers and maintain a good team attitude. Your interactions with fellow volunteers, theatre staff and the public, and how you accept direction, affect the success of your personal experience. Consequently, whatever your position, you have an important assignment; to perform every task to the very best of your ability. The result will be greater personal satisfaction for you and improved services for the theatre.

Take advantage of opportunities for personal development offered to you. The Handbook offers insight on how you can perform to the best of your ability to meet and exceed the site expectations. Depending on the nature and duration of your volunteer assignment, you may be eligible to take advantage of valuable training opportunities at no cost to you.

We are dedicated to providing an environment you can discuss any problem or ask any questions of the Coordinator(s) and/or any member of the Ford's Theatre staff. We expect and encourage you to voice your opinions and contribute your suggestions to improve the quality of the volunteer experience. We work as a team, so do not hesitate to communicate your feelings.

Remember that you help create the safe and pleasant volunteering conditions that the volunteer and staff work hard to create. The volunteers and staff need your help in making each volunteering day enjoyable and rewarding. Your experience is important to us.

## Visitor Experience Goals

1. Engage with the story through a broad range of learning styles and modalities.
2. Access the site and programs regardless of physical and mental abilities.
3. Experience a balanced interpretation of park themes.
4. Access learning materials on and off site.
5. Consistently receive factual and accurate information from all staff and volunteers (National Park Service /Ford's Theatre Society /other partners).
6. Understand how Ford's Theatre fits into the greater DC visitor experience.
7. Experience a seamless operation between National Park Service and Ford's Theatre Society and experience the staff working together collaboratively.
8. Understand that Ford's Theatre is a unit of the National Park Service.
9. Learn about Ford's Theatre Society and be invited to become a member of the Ford's Theatre Society and/or become a volunteer.
10. Enjoy their visit through access to advance planning and audience appropriate programming.
11. Have respectful interactions with ALL staff members.
12. Feel welcomed (smiling, ready to answer questions).
13. Experience a safe and comfortable environment and staff.
14. Have a memorable, educational, and informative experience, and leave inspired to learn more or get involved.
15. Experience flexibility from staff during different seasons.
16. Understand why this site's story is still relevant today.

## Interpretive Themes

1. The causes behind the assassination of Abraham Lincoln were many and varied, and are still meaningful today.
  - A. Temper of the times
  - B. Lincoln's speeches and actions—example of Lincoln April 11, 1865 speech
  - C. Choices and actions
    - i. Lincoln's enemies including the conspiracy and conspiracy theories
    - ii. Common people
    - iii. Other people (e.g. Lincoln's Cabinet, Thomas Eckert, etc.)
  - D. Presidential powers and limitation in times of war
  - E. Was the Civil War over? Why kill Lincoln now?
  - F. Race relations and emancipation
  - G. Presidential security
  - H. Lincoln as Commander and Chief
  - I. Conspiracy and man-hunt
  - J. John Wilkes Booth's life and times—who he was as a person
2. Lincoln's assassination and death had far-reaching and profound consequences.
  - K. The passionate response to Lincoln's death

- L. Lincoln’s legacy and mythology as a national and international icon
  - M. Reconstruction
  - N. Ford’s Theatre and Peterson House as National Treasures
  - O. Presidential security
3. Lincoln’s love for the performing arts provides insight as to why Ford’s Theatre was the back-drop for the assassination, and why it is still relevant today.
    - P. Booth as an actor
    - Q. 19<sup>th</sup> Century theatre experience
    - R. Theatre as a respite for Lincoln
    - S. History of Ford’s Theatre
  4. The Lincoln assassination created political, social and personal crises that found their geographical focal point at the Peterson House.
    - T. Peterson House as a boarding house—architectural and cultural significance
    - U. Medical treatment and death/mourning rituals
    - V. Origins of an investigation
  5. During the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, the city of Washington and the Nation underwent profound changes.

## **Volunteering Policies**

As a new or returning volunteer at Ford’s Theatre you will encounter new situations and will need to become familiar with new surroundings. Your fellow volunteers and Ford’s Theatre staff – especially your Volunteer Coordinator(s) – want to help you get off to a good start. Feel free to ask them for help concerning anything you do not understand.

One of the first things you should do is carefully read this Handbook. It is designed to answer many of your questions about practices and policies of the Ford’s Theatre volunteers.

### **Absences and Tardiness**

Volunteers are expected to be reliable in the performance of their volunteer duties. Volunteer attendance is expected to be dependable and punctual.

If you are unable to report to volunteer, or if you will arrive late, please contact your Coordinator(s) as soon as possible. Give your coordinators as much time as possible to arrange for someone else to cover your position until you arrive.

Please email your Coordinator(s) at least 24 hours in advance when possible. If you are unable to volunteer the day of your shift, please call or e-mail your coordinators.



## **Dates of Service**

The first day you report to volunteer is your official start date. The last day you report to volunteer is your official ending date.

## **Attendance**

Time sheets are required of all volunteers. Volunteers will complete their time sheets located in the Ranger Station at the beginning and end of each volunteer shift. The time sheets are needed in order to maintain an accurate record of your contribution to the department in which you work. Your volunteer hours are an important contribution to the National Park Service. The statistics of your volunteer service are used for volunteer recognition as well as evaluating the VIPP. In addition, many companies are accepting volunteer work as qualifying experience for employment. Future employers will need to know detailed information on the volunteer job held including start and end dates, approximate number of hours volunteered, and duties.

## **Background Check**

Due to the nature of the volunteer positions offered at Ford's Theatre and working with the public of all ages, all volunteers will be subject to a background check.

## **Confidential Information**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer. This applies to any information involving a Ford's Theatre employee, volunteer or events and business involved with Ford's Theatre.

Your volunteer service with Ford's Theatre assumes an obligation to maintain confidentiality. As a volunteer, you may be privy to information that is confidential in nature. Such information cannot be shared with your family, friend, or acquaintances.

Volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement and waiver. Compliance with that agreement is a condition of participation in the program.

Although Ford's Theatre business is open to public disclosure, confidentiality is important. Do not discuss the business of the department to which you are assigned with anyone who does not have direct association with a particular transaction.

No one is permitted to remove or make copies of any Ford's Theatre Society or National Park Service records, reports or documents without prior approval.

Because of its seriousness, disclosure of confidential information will lead to dismissal.

## **Customer Relations**

The success of Ford's Theatre depends upon to quality of the relationships between the volunteer, the staff and the visitors. Regardless of your position, you are a Ford's Theatre ambassador.

Here are several things you can do to help give the public a good impression of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site:

- Act competently and deal with visitors and co-workers courteously and respectfully.
- Communicate pleasantly and respectfully with other volunteers and Ford's Theatre staff at all times.
- Follow up on requests promptly, provide businesslike replies to inquiries and perform all duties in an orderly manner.
- Take pride in your volunteer service and enjoy doing your best.
- Volunteers should also expect respectful treatment from visitors. Should you encounter a difficult visitor you should NOT engage with that visitor, but immediately notify one to the NPS or theatre staff who will take appropriate action.

These are building blocks for your success and the continued success of the VIPP.

## **Equal Volunteering Opportunity**

Ford's Theatre provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religion, marital status, political belief, sexual orientation or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job, as well as dependability and reliability once appointed.

## **Harassment**

Ford's Theatre intends to provide a volunteer environment that is pleasant, healthful, comfortable, and free from intimidation, hostility or other offenses which might interfere with volunteer performance. Harassment may include works, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, physical contact, or violence. Harassment of any sort – verbal, physical, visual, will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment may include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, requiring sexual favors as a condition of employment, and other verbal or physical contact of sexual nature which creates an intimidating environment or prevents an individual from effectively performing the duties of their position.

As a Ford's Theatre volunteer, you are responsible for keeping our volunteer environment free of harassment. Any volunteer, who becomes aware of an incident of harassment, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, must report it to one of the Volunteer Coordinator(s) or any staff member you feel comfortable. When Ford's

Theatre becomes aware that harassment might exist, it is obligated by law to take prompt and appropriate action.

### **Introductory Period**

Your first 30 days of volunteering are considered an introductory period. This introductory period will be a time to get to know your fellow volunteers, your volunteer Coordinators and the tasks involved in your job description, and becoming familiar with Ford's Theatre. Your Volunteer Coordinator(s) will work closely with you to help you understand the needs and processes of your job.

The introductory period is a tryout time for both you as a volunteer, and Ford's Theatre. During this Introductory Period, the Coordinator(s) will evaluate your suitability for volunteering, and you can evaluate the Ford's Theatre as well. Anytime during this first 30 days, you may resign. If, during this period, your volunteer habits, attitude, attendance, or performance do not meet our needs, we may release you from your appointment.

### **Job Descriptions**

The Ford's Theatre maintains job descriptions for each volunteer position. You will receive a copy of the job description for your position when you begin your volunteer service. Should your duties and responsibilities change, your job description will be updated.

### **Standards of Conduct**

By accepting a volunteer position with Ford's Theatre, you will have a responsibility to Ford's Theatre and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain rules of behavior and conduct.

The purpose of these rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to maintain a high standard of quality. We also want you to know what conduct is expected and necessary to provide quality services. When each person is aware that he or she can fully depend upon fellow volunteers to follow rules of conduct, then our organization will be a better place to volunteer for everyone.

In all cases, visitors should be treated with respect. Volunteers should also expect respectful treatment from visitors. Should you encounter a difficult visitor, you should NOT engage with that visitor, but immediately notify a theatre employee who will take appropriate action.

### **Dismissal**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules of Ford's Theatre and the policies and procedures of Ford's Theatre, or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment, are subject to dismissal.

No volunteer will be dismissed until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff.

Volunteers may be dismissed without warning for just cause. Ford's Theatre has the right to request a volunteer to leave immediately.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Breach of Confidentiality Agreement.
- Gross misconduct or insubordination.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing a volunteer assignment.
- Theft of property or misuse of Ford's Theatre funds, equipment, or materials.
- Lies or falsification of records.
- Illegal, violent or unsafe acts.
- Abuse or mistreatment of members of the public or co-workers.
- Unwillingness or inability to support and further the mission of the organization and/or the objectives of Ford's Theatre.

### **Disciplinary Actions**

Unacceptable behavior may lead to immediate dismissal without warning. Depending on the nature of the behavior, it may also be addressed by a verbal warning, followed by disciplinary suspension, and ending in a dismissal.

### **Unacceptable Activities**

Volunteers are expected to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. However, to avoid any possible confusion, some more obvious unacceptable activities are noted below. Your avoidance of these activities benefits you and Ford's Theatre. If you have any questions concerning any volunteer or safety rule, or about any of the unacceptable activities listed, please see the Volunteer Coordinator(s) for an explanation.

Occurrences of any of the following violations, because of their seriousness, may result in immediate dismissal without warning:

- Willful violation of any Ford's Theatre rule; any deliberate action that is extreme in nature and is obviously detrimental to Ford's Theatre.
- Willful violation of security or safety rules.
- Negligence or any careless action that endangers the life or safety of yourself or another person.
- Being intoxicated or under the influence of controlled substances while volunteering; use, possession or sale of controlled substances in any quantity while on theatre premises except medications prescribed by a physician which do not impair volunteer performance.

- Unauthorized possession of dangerous or illegal firearms, weapons, or explosives on theatre property.
- Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence, or making threats of violence toward anyone on theatre premises or when representing Ford's Theatre.
- Fighting, horseplay or provoking a fight on theatre property; or negligent damage of theatre property.
- Threatening, intimidating or coercing fellow volunteers or theatre employees on or off the premises at any time, for any purpose.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Malicious gossip and/or spreading rumors; engaging in behavior designed to create discord and lack of harmony.
- Immoral conduct or indecency on Ford's Theatre property.

## **Performance Evaluations**

It is the intent of Ford's Theatre that performance evaluations be constructive, supportive, flexible, and empowering. They should motivate the volunteer to aim for the highest standards and pinpoint where the organization can help the volunteer to achieve their goals. The evaluation procedure should offer the opportunity for volunteers to give ideas and to negotiate any needed changes.

Open communication between you and your Coordinator(s) serves as an informal performance review. Day-to-day interaction with your Coordinator(s) will give you a sense of how you are performing your job functions.

In evaluating job performance, you Volunteer Coordinator(s) will consider the following things, among others:

- Attendance, initiative and effort.
- Knowledge of your job.
- Attitudes and willingness.
- The quality and quantity of your work.
- The conditions under which you work.

The primary reason for performance reviews is to identify your strengths and areas of growth in order to reinforce your good habits and to develop ways to improve your weaker areas. This review also examines how your work compares to the goals and descriptions of your volunteer position.

Evaluations will take the form of ongoing communication between you and your Volunteer Coordinator(s). Should you desire a formal performance evaluation, please discuss it with the Volunteer coordinator and one will be provided to you.

## **Other Policies**

### **Dress Code**

While you are volunteering, you are expected to dress and groom yourself in accordance with accepted social and business standards, especially because your job involves dealing with the public. A neat tasteful appearance contributed to the positive impression you make on customers.

Volunteers will be provided with a Park Service polo shirt to wear with khaki, brown or black pants/long skirt and a partner pin to wear on the shirt. Jeans, flip flops and ripped or torn clothing are not acceptable.

### **Grievances**

If you have a concern regarding your volunteer service, we would like to hear about it. You are always welcome to discuss your concerns with your Volunteer Coordinator(s).

### **Notices**

Notices are the official way of keeping everyone informed about new policies, changes in procedures, recognition items, and special events. Information of general interest is posted regularly on the bulletin board in the Ranger Station. Please read the bulletin board regularly so that you will be familiar with the information posted on it.

### **Resignation**

If you anticipate having to resign your position with the VIPP, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator(s) as far in advance as possible and arrange for an exit interview.

During the exit interview, you can express yourself freely. It is hoped that this will provide an opportunity for a positive departure and provide insights into possible improvements to the VIPP. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

### **Safety**

Safety is everybody's business. Safety is to be given primary importance in every aspect of planning and performing all VIPP activities. We want to protect you against injury and illness.

Please report all injuries to the Volunteer Coordinator(s) immediately, as well as anything that needs repair or is a safety hazard.

### **Cell Phones**

The use of cellular phones while at your post is prohibited. Please excuse yourself and ask a fellow volunteer or staff member to cover your post while you step away and use your phone.

### **Volunteer Benefits**

As a daytime volunteer you will receive a few perks during your time with Ford's Theatre.

- Invitation to Invited Dress Rehearsal of Ford's Theatre Productions
- 20% discount in both the lobby and museum gift shop
- 8 free advance daytime entry tickets for Friends and Family. *Based on availability*
- Field Trips
- Usher Appreciation events
- Invitation to readings and talk backs

### **In Closing**

Your Volunteer Coordinator(s) and the Ford's Theatre staff hope your volunteer experience is pleasant and rewarding. Thanks to you, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site works!!

## VIPP Emergency Contact Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Primary Emergency Contact***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Secondary Emergency Contact***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Other Information***

Birthday \_\_\_\_\_ Anniversary \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies (Food, Insects, Etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_