

# Volunteer Handbook 2024 *for Forging Theater and Community*



**Revised May 2, 2024**  
by the Live Arts DEI Committee  
with review by pro bono Attorney Jim Neale

**123 E. Water Street | Charlottesville, VA | 22902**

## WELCOME TO LIVE ARTS

For volunteers who are new to Live Arts, welcome! For volunteers who have been with us for a while, thank you for your continued commitment to bringing compelling, high-caliber theater to Central Virginia! We are grateful for your talent, hard work, and love of theater!

### **About This Handbook**

We prepared this handbook to help you find answers to questions you may have about your involvement with Live Arts. We'll be updating information on a rolling basis to reflect changing guidelines, laws, and policies.

### **About Us**

Powered by nearly 1,200 volunteers, Live Arts is a national model for engaged community theater. For more than three decades, we've dedicated ourselves to the mission of "forging theater and community" in Charlottesville, Virginia. Our engagement in local communities runs deep, and we happily attract participants and audiences from across the five-county region.

Live Arts is the anchor tenant in a four-story building right off of the downtown mall. In a typical year, we present a compelling season of mainstage plays, musicals, and a three-week WATERWORKS new works festival. We welcome hundreds of people to our year-round education workshops and award-winning youth summer camps. We host the volunteer-led Playwrights' Lab that helps local playwrights develop their work and Readers Circle for people interested in reading plays together. And for more than 25 years, we have provided volunteer tech support to high school and college theater companies performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland.

It takes more than \$1 million annually to run this extraordinary nonprofit theater. More than half of our funding comes from contributed income—from sponsorships, grants, individual gifts, and events. The rest comes from earned income—mostly ticket sales, tuition, and concessions.

## **Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)**

We are committed to centering the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in every aspect of our work. We welcome the active participation of African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA), LGBTQ+, and other marginalized members of the community. For more than 25 years, we have lowered barriers to theater by offering most of our programming on a pay-what-you-can basis. It's one way of giving back and addressing the economic inequities in our community.

We pledge to listen to previously suppressed voices, to create a community of belonging, and to be a more effective ally for all artists who wish to create, dream, inspire, and challenge the status quo. To read about our current DEI initiatives, visit [www.livearts.org/DEI](http://www.livearts.org/DEI).

## **Land Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that we occupy the ancestral home of the Monacan and Manahoac Nations and that we are on stolen land. We recognize them as the original stewards of this land and pay our respect to their elders—past, present, and emerging.

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## SECTION 1: VOLUNTEER PRINCIPLES

### 1-1 Equal Opportunity

Live Arts does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, sex or gender (including pregnancy, childbirth and pregnancy-related conditions), gender identity or expression (including transgender status), sexual orientation, marital status, military service and veteran status, physical or mental disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws and ordinances.

We are committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which all volunteers have an opportunity to participate and contribute to the success of the mission and are valued for their skills, experience, knowledge, self-expression, and unique perspectives. We embrace and encourage your differences in all areas and understand that it is through our differences that we are able to create an inclusive environment in which to forge theater and community.

### 1-2 Non-Harassment

Live Arts prohibits intentional and unintentional harassment of or discrimination against volunteers or interns by other volunteers, employees, vendors, or third parties on the basis of the protected characteristics listed above.

The purpose of this policy is not to regulate your personal morality but to ensure that no one harasses or discriminates against another individual while on Live Arts' premises or on Live Arts business. In addition to being a violation of this policy, harassment or retaliation based on any protected characteristic may be unlawful.

#### **Harassment Defined**

Harassment is legally defined as any unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct or language that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of any actual or perceived protected characteristic or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's volunteer performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive volunteer environment without a legitimate and legal purpose.

Harassment can be *verbal* (including slurs, jokes, insults, epithets, gestures, or teasing), *visual* (including offensive posters, symbols, cartoons, drawings, computer displays, text messages, social media posts, or emails) or *physical* conduct (including physically threatening or bullying another). Because it is difficult to define harassment prospectively, we expect you to behave in a manner respectful of other volunteers, staff, and patrons and consistent with the intended purpose of this policy.

### **Sexual Harassment Defined**

Sexual harassment can include all of the above actions, as well as other unwelcome conduct, such as unwelcome or unsolicited sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, conversations regarding sexual activities, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to that conduct, those advances, or those requests is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's volunteer involvement; or
- submission to or rejection of the conduct, advances, or requests by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting the individual; or
- the conduct, advances, or requests have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's volunteer performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Examples of conduct that violate this policy include:

- unwelcome flirtations, leering, whistling, touching, pinching, and assault;
- requests for sexual favors or demands for sexual favors in exchange for favorable treatment;
- obscene or vulgar gestures, posters, or comments;
- sexual jokes or comments about a person's body, sexual prowess, or sexual deficiencies;
- propositions or suggestive or insulting comments of a sexual nature;
- derogatory cartoons, posters, and drawings;
- sexually explicit emails, text messages, or voicemails;
- uninvited touching of a sexual nature;
- unwelcome sexually related comments;
- conversation about your own or someone else's sex life;

- conduct or comments consistently targeted at only one gender, even if the content is not sexual; and
- teasing or other conduct directed toward a person because of the person's gender.

## 1-3 Grievance and Reporting Procedures

### Grievance Procedure

Problems, issues, or difficulties can arise while working collaboratively with others. This procedure provides a means for addressing these issues quickly and respectfully:

- When you perceive a problem, and you feel safe and comfortable doing so, you should try to address it directly with the individual involved first.
- If you're not comfortable speaking with the individual about the issue, you should present the problem to the stage manager or director, who will try to clarify and address the problem.
- If you're not comfortable speaking with show leadership about the issue, you should present the problem to the artistic director or executive director, who will try to clarify and address the problem.

### Reporting Procedures

If you believe that you have been subject to or have witnessed discrimination or inappropriate conduct, including sexual or other forms of harassment, we encourage you to immediately report the matter (either orally or in writing) to the artistic director or executive director. Similarly, if you observe acts of discrimination toward or harassment of another volunteer or staff member, we encourage you to report this to one of these individuals. If the subject of your report is one of these two individuals, you should contact the president of the Board of Directors. NOTE: Unless an issue directly concerns the conduct of the artistic or executive director, the Live Arts Board would usually not be involved with grievances between and among volunteers and staff. Instead, such matters are typically handled by Live Arts staff.

Frivolous claims that have no merit or factual basis, and are intended to harass, annoy, embarrass, or intimidate the target of the claim, are themselves a form of harassment and will, if determined to be baseless after an investigation, be promptly dismissed. An individual bringing such a claim jeopardizes their ability to continue to volunteer at Live Arts.

## **Investigation Procedures**

Every report will be promptly investigated by the leadership team (unless they are the subjects of your report). All volunteers must cooperate with all investigations related to this policy. The failure to cooperate may jeopardize your ability to continue to volunteer at Live Arts. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We will communicate the timely resolution of each matter to the individuals involved. If we determine, after a good faith investigation, that someone has violated this policy, we will take swift and appropriate corrective action, up to and including dismissal.

## **Retaliation Prohibited**

Live Arts will not tolerate any form of retaliation against individuals who report inappropriate conduct to the leadership team or who cooperate in the investigations of such reports. If you have been subjected to any such retaliation, you should report it in the same way you would report a claim of perceived harassment.

## **1-4 Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace**

To help ensure a safe, healthy, and productive work environment for our volunteers, employees, teaching artists and interns, Live Arts maintains an environment free of drugs and alcohol. This policy applies to all volunteers who are engaged with the organization.

The unlawful or unauthorized use, abuse, solicitation, theft, possession, transfer, purchase, sale or distribution of controlled substances (including medical marijuana), drug paraphernalia, or alcohol by an individual on organization premises, on organization business, or while representing the organization is strictly prohibited. You also are prohibited from volunteering at Live Arts while under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substances which may impact your ability to perform your volunteer job or otherwise pose safety concerns. The exception is when use is prescribed by a licensed medical practitioner and that practitioner authorized the individual to report to work.

This restriction does not apply to responsible drinking of alcohol at Live Arts meetings and related social outings or the lawful sale of alcohol at performances.



Live Arts will strive to make reasonable accommodations to assist individuals recovering from substance and alcohol dependencies, and those who have a medical history which reflects treatment for substance abuse conditions.

## **1-5 Workplace Violence**

Live Arts is strongly committed to providing a safe place to volunteer. This policy is intended to minimize the risk of personal injury to individuals and damage to personal property.

We discourage you from engaging in any physical confrontation with a violent or potentially violent individual. Instead, please exercise reasonable judgment in identifying potentially dangerous situations.

### **Prohibited Conduct**

Threats, threatening language, or any other acts of aggression or violence made by any individual will not be tolerated. A threat includes any verbal or physical harassment or abuse, any attempt at intimidating or instilling fear in others, menacing gestures, flashing of weapons, stalking, or any other hostile, aggressive, injurious, or destructive action undertaken for the purpose of domination or intimidation.

To the extent permitted by Virginia law, employees, volunteers, and visitors are prohibited from carrying weapons onto organization premises.

### **Reporting Procedures**

You should immediately report all potentially dangerous situations, including threats, to a member of the leadership team. All threats will be promptly investigated. Reports of threats will be kept confidential to the extent confidentiality does not impede our ability to investigate and respond to the complaints. All volunteers and staff members must cooperate with all investigations. No one will be subjected to retaliation, intimidation, or disciplinary action as a result of reporting a threat in good faith.

If we determine, after a good faith investigation, that someone has violated this policy, we will take swift and appropriate corrective action, including banning them from the premises.

## 1-6 Reasonable Accommodation for Persons With Disabilities

In accordance with the Virginia Human Rights Act (the Act) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (the ADA), Live Arts employees have the right to reasonable accommodations for disabilities and to be free from unlawful discriminatory practices based on disability. Live Arts endeavor to extend those reasonable accommodations and protections to otherwise qualified volunteers with disabilities. To request a reasonable accommodation, please contact the executive director or artistic director.

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

Live Arts will make a reasonable accommodation for an otherwise qualified volunteer related to an individual's physical or mental disability or sincerely held religious beliefs and practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship upon the organization.

Any individual who needs an accommodation to perform their volunteer role should request one from the artistic director or executive director.

## 1-7 Pregnancy Accommodations

Live Arts will attempt to provide reasonable accommodation to the known physical limitations of an otherwise qualified volunteer related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless that accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the organization. Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not be limited to:

- more frequent or longer bathroom breaks;
- breaks to express breast milk;
- access to a private location other than a bathroom for the expression of breast milk;
- modification of equipment or volunteer seating;
- assistance with manual labor;
- role restructuring;
- a modified volunteer schedule;
- light duty assignments.

Any questions about or requests should be directed to the executive director or artistic director.

## 1-8 Intimacy Training

To protect the emotions and dignity of every volunteer actor during scenes that involve sex, nudity, kissing, or physical interaction, Live Arts engages an intimacy consultant. That consultant adheres to five “pillars” of intimacy training during rehearsals and performances: context, consent, communication, choreography, and closure.

First, the needs of the intimate scene are established. Once these needs are understood, the actors must consent to the specific actions they are comfortable receiving. After the groundwork is laid, the intimacy coach creates a roadmap for how the scene will play out: where the actors can place their hands, how they kiss, etc. This approach is much more effective than simply forcing actors into intimacy without explicit consent and a specific, agreed-to plan. Finally, a ritualistic closing moment is practiced among the performers so the actors know when they are officially tapping out of a scene. This intentional exercise helps the actor establish a distinction between real life and the production. And most importantly, any conduct consented to during the scene does not carry over once the performance is complete.

## SECTION 2 - OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

### 2-1 Definitions

**Volunteers** - People who perform work for Live Arts without the expectation, promise, or receipt of any compensation for their work. Volunteers may receive an *expense stipend* to cover some costs related to volunteering. “Paid volunteers” may receive a modest *production stipend* for their work.

**Leadership Team** - The executive director and artistic director of Live Arts. The executive director reports to the Board. The artistic director reports to the executive director.

**Patrons** - People who give financial or other support to Live Arts or are customers or audience members of Live Arts.

**Employees** - Full-time, part-time, and short-term employees who are compensated for their work. By law, contractors are not considered employees, although we do consider them to be part of the Live Arts team.

### 2-2 Accidents and Injuries

If you incur an injury while volunteering at Live Arts, you must notify the technical director, stage manager, or production & volunteer manager immediately and complete all requested documents regarding the reported injury. Virginia Workers’ Compensation does NOT cover volunteers, and Live Arts assumes no responsibility for injuries that occur as a result of reasonably recognizable unsafe behaviors.

### 2-3 Stipends

#### Expense Stipends and Benefits

To lower financial barriers to participation, Live Arts provides volunteers with parking vouchers for Water Street or Market Street Garage; light snacks; and a meal during all-day builds or rehearsals.

We also provide select show volunteers with “expense stipends” to partially offset the cost of volunteering, including discretionary transportation stipends. The size of the expense stipend

is based on the volunteer's level of involvement and may vary from show to show. Expense stipends are not considered "compensation" and generally are not taxable.

Live Arts does not reimburse volunteers for other personal expenses incurred while volunteering.

### **Production Stipends**

Live Arts provides modest "production stipends" to volunteers taking on significant positions in a production, including but limited to:

- Director
- Stage Manager
- Assistant Stage Manager
- Choreographer
- Videographer
- Music director
- Board operator
- Intimacy consultant

Stipend amounts vary by production and may be considered taxable income.

### **2-4 Confidentiality**

As a volunteer, you are prohibited from using or disseminating Live Arts' confidential business or personnel information. We ask you to take all appropriate steps to safeguard our confidential information, including separating it from personal documents and not allowing other volunteers to access such information.

### **2-5 Benefits**

Volunteers are not eligible for supplemental benefits including paid time off; medical, dental and vision coverage; paid holidays; workers' compensation; and Virginia unemployment compensation.

## SECTION 3 - GENERAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

### 3-1 Volunteer Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

Live Arts requires every production volunteer to sign our Volunteer Bill of Rights and Responsibilities before the start of each production. Non-production volunteers are required to sign it at least once a year. It says that as a volunteer at Live Arts, you have the right to:

- A safe and supportive creative environment free from harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or violence of any kind, including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, and ableism.
- Be treated as a whole person and with respect.
- Ask for what you emotionally and physically need in order to volunteer, and for those needs to change during the creative process.
- Speak up if you witness or otherwise experience harassment, inappropriate or harmful behavior from volunteers, staff members, board members, or patrons.
- Stay home when you're sick.
- Acknowledge how personal, local, or world events are impacting you and your capacity to be fully present in your work.
- Elect to refrain from further volunteer work if any necessary artistic direction, note, role, or suggestion makes you uncomfortable.
- Stop any meeting or rehearsal if you feel something dangerous or harmful could occur.
- Have your stated pronouns at all times in all spaces.
- Have your name pronounced correctly.
- Exercise any of the above without fear of repercussions or impact on any possible future opportunities with Live Arts.

As a Live Arts volunteer, you also have a responsibility to abide by the expectations outlined in your Role Description, which all volunteers sign at the start of every production.

### 3-2 Working With Minors Policy

As a Live Arts volunteer, you may occasionally work with persons under the age of 18. To protect you, the minors, and Live Arts, we require that all production volunteers sign our Working With Minors Policy at the start of every production and abide by it throughout the production. It requires that you:

- Immediately upon arrival, sign in at the designated volunteer sign-in station, or notify another adult that you are in the building.
- Avoid being alone with an individual minor, especially in a bathroom. If you must be alone with a minor, choose the most public space available and keep doors open.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance from minors. This includes a firm “no laps” policy for children over the age of four.
- Set appropriate emotional and physical boundaries when working with minors, based on openness, honesty, and respect for the minor’s personal space.
- Touch minors only when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity, such as a hug that is part of a script. Work with the director, stage manager, and/or show leader in the room to establish an intimacy check-in so that both adults and minors can clearly communicate boundaries needed for any necessary blocking.
- Seek clear, verbal consent from minors whenever possible prior to any physical contact, such as a hug. Better yet, suggest a high five or knuckle bump.
- Choose appropriate language and messages when working with minors. Do not use profanity or vulgar language unless it is required by the script.
- Immediately report any accidents or injuries to the education director or stage manager, who is required to forward it to the executive director.
- Do not distribute or administer medication of any kind unless specifically authorized by the parent/guardian to do so.
- Use positive guidance techniques that favor positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, or criticism. Avoid using humiliating discipline techniques.
- Avoid being drawn into inappropriate, attention-seeking behavior.
- Never allow an intimate relationship to develop between an adult and a minor. This includes intense emotional ties, sexual contact, and excessive physical contact.
- Never abuse a minor, including physical abuse (striking, spanking, shaking, or slapping), verbal abuse (humiliation, degradation, threats), sexual abuse (including inappropriate touching and exposure), or mental abuse. Intervene if you witness any form of harassment or bullying against a minor by an adult or another minor.
- Portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, courtesy, and maturity. Treat all minors, regardless of race, religion, culture, or ability, with respect and consideration.
- Do not contact minors outside of Live Arts without knowledge of and permission from the minors’ parent/guardian. The education director must have written permission\* on file.

- Do not exchange telephone numbers, home addresses, e-mail addresses, or social media handles with minors except when it is required for your role and you obtain written permission from their parent/guardian in advance. The education director must have written permission\* on file.
- Establish an environment where secrecy of any kind between an adult and a minor is deemed unacceptable. Share any concerns that you may have related to a minor's welfare and safety with the education director.
- Do not take, share, or post photographs, video, or recordings of a minor without written permission from the minor's parent/guardian and the education director. All parents/guardians are asked to sign publicity release forms before the start of any program or production.
- Ensure that minors are adequately supervised while participating in Live arts programs or attending Live Arts performances and events.
- Never transport a minor without the written consent\* from the minor's parent/guardian. The education director must have this consent on file. The driver and minor are required to wear safety belts.
- Agree that Live Arts may use the personal information you have provided to conduct a background check and/or criminal background check before you may work with minors.

*\*Written permission includes a signed form, an email, and a text message.*

### **3-3 Punctuality and Attendance**

We ask that you sign in and out when you volunteer so we can track volunteer numbers for grant application purposes.

Like most nonprofit theaters, Live Arts experiences periods of extremely high activity. During these busy periods, we may request additional time from volunteers and staff members. When that's the case, we will strive to provide adequate advance notice.

As with any group effort, producing a play takes cooperation and commitment from everyone. Absences and lateness are disruptive and place an unfair burden on other volunteers, so we expect that you will attend and be on time for meetings, rehearsals, and productions. When an absence or tardiness cannot be avoided, please notify the stage manager as early as possible. (See the Role Description for more details on attendance



expectations.) In the case of excessive or prolonged absences that adversely impact Live Arts, we reserve the right to assess the situation and determine whether you may continue to participate in a production.

### **3-4 Use of Communications and Computer Systems**

No one volunteering at Live Arts may use any communication or computer system in a manner that may be construed by others as harassing or offensive.

Unauthorized duplication of copyrighted computer software violates the law and is strictly prohibited.

Live Arts is a community of trust where we want staff, volunteers, and patrons to speak freely without fear of retribution. To facilitate this community of trust, volunteers are prohibited from secretly recording conversations with patrons, staff, volunteers, or Board members.

### **3-5 Use of Social Media**

Live Arts respects the right of any volunteer to maintain a blog or web page or to participate in a social networking site, including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. However, we require that you follow these guidelines when posting:

- If you mention Live Arts and also express a political opinion, please include a disclaimer that states that the opinion expressed is your personal opinion and not that of Live Arts.
- Refrain from posting material that is discriminatory, obscene, defamatory, libelous, or violent.

### **3-6 Mobile Device Use While Driving**

Volunteers who drive on Live Arts business must abide by all state or local laws prohibiting or limiting mobile device use while driving.

Under no circumstances should you feel that you need to place yourself at risk to fulfill your volunteer duties at Live Arts.

Texting and emailing while driving is prohibited in all circumstances.

### **3-7 Smoking**

Smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes, is prohibited indoors on Live Arts premises.

### **3-8 Use of Equipment and Property**

When using Live Arts equipment and property, we ask that you exercise care and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines. You should notify the technical director if any equipment, machines, or tools appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair. Prompt reporting could prevent possible injury to you and other volunteers.

Materials, including keys and tools, should be returned to Live Arts upon the completion of a show or project. You agree to use Live Arts' equipment and property, including the building in which Live Arts is housed, solely for Live Arts business unless given permission by the executive director or artistic director.

Live Arts is not responsible for any damage to your personal property.

### **3-9 Health and Safety**

To comply with all applicable health and safety laws, Live Arts relies upon you to ensure that work areas are kept safe and free of hazardous conditions. We ask you to be conscientious about workplace safety and recognize dangerous conditions or hazards. Please report any unsafe conditions or potential hazards to the technical director immediately, even if the problem appears to be corrected.

Periodically, Live Arts may issue rules and guidelines governing workplace safety and health, especially during a major health outbreak. For your safety, we require strict compliance.

Any onsite injury, accident, or illness must be reported to the technical director, stage manager, or production & volunteer manager as soon as possible, regardless of the severity of the injury or accident.

### **3-10 Statements to the Media**

All media inquiries regarding Live Arts' position on any issue must be referred to the executive director. No volunteer, unless specifically designated by the executive director, is authorized to make those statements on behalf of the organization.

This policy does not apply to program or event-focused interviews or social media that happens in the normal course promoting a show, program, or event.

### **3-11 Operation of Vehicles**

You must have a valid driver's license in your possession while operating a vehicle off or on organization property. Every volunteer is responsible for driving safely and obeying all traffic, vehicle safety, and parking laws or regulations.

## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgment of this handbook.

**I have received and read Live Arts' Volunteer Handbook, including the Volunteer Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and the Working With Minors Policy, and agree to abide by the policies and expectations contained herein. I understand that the policies, rules, and benefits described in the handbook are subject to change at the sole discretion of the organization at any time.**

Volunteer's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please give the signed original copy of this acknowledgment to the production & volunteer manager.