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Volunteers Set the Tone

questions. Internet, runners, catering, equipment. Honestly, it's the same template, for the most part, for every single show. So, repetition is really easy. And again, we're already at a level where our skillset is we're trained in it, we've done it."

Stimson said, "I try to explain to people, like, if you're getting up in the morning and you're at home, in your day, what do you want to make you comfortable and productive and get things done? So, you're creating backstage for the tours, or onstage, a comfortable, safe space, first of all. Hopefully, you're providing all the equipment they asked for; everything works. Your crew is not too grouchy. The tone is everything. How you deliver - being nice goes a long way in this business."

"This business is very, very, very, very, very tiny. And so, one guy and one tour will come in, and he'll come in three weeks later on another tour, or they'll come back. I used to have friends who would tell me, like, 'Well, who cares if you're mean to them?' ... They come back."

"And also, it's just a pretty good philosophy on my part to be a good person, and it's nice to know that that does really go a long way. Sometimes it doesn't matter."

Sometimes you're going to get screamed at no matter what. But, if you have internet, equipment, dressing rooms, food - food, food, food, catering, catering, catering - like, imagine yourself in real life. When you're hungry, you're a little cranky, right? If you have the basic bullet lists checked off, then whatever fires, whatever other things come up, first of all, you establish that they trust you, because you've read their rider; you're providing what they asked for. So, they're trusting you."

"Repeat people are always nice, because they've been here before. They remember me, they remember the venue. They remember things. I remember them. It becomes like family."

Stimson recalled a story shared with former Artpark & Company President George Osborne.

"When we started 15 years ago ... my joke is Peter Frampton taught me," she said. "We learned by doing it, and we learned hard, and we fell hard, but we got up and we learned right away. And we had a little get-together and said, 'OK, now these are three solutions. This is how we're going to handle it.' And now we're at the industry standard of how we do things."

Leading patrons around the grounds and into their seats is a team of volunteers. These folks are typically the first to welcome patrons into the park.

Coordinator Francine DelMonte explained, "All shows require volunteers to be ambassadors on behalf of Artpark. Each event and venue has its particular needs, but every event requires a ticket so, at some point, every volunteer needs to learn how to scan tickets using our scanners."

"Amphitheater shows are all outdoors, so volunteers scan tickets, usher patrons in the reserved section, assist sponsors and patrons in the skyboxes, sell 50/50 tickets (at certain shows); direct parking; and drive shuttle. Mainstage shows are inside the theater and have similar needs, but require more ushering of patrons to their seats and handing out programs (if provided)."

"Our 'New Music in the Park' series is held in various locations like the Emerald Grove, Artpark Trails, and Mainstage Theater, so volunteers scan tickets and assist patrons to their seats and/or walk with them. Our popular Strawberry Moon and Fairy House festivals often see volunteers assisting with certain programs and/or crafts in addition to the aforementioned duties."

"In short, I always tell new and veteran volunteers that flexibility is the name of the game, and we are here to make the patron's visit as pleasant as possible."

That's not always easy, especially when the number (and commitment level) of volunteers changes each summer.

"The biggest challenge for Artpark, like so many venues, is having enough volunteers sign up for the many events we host over a season," DelMonte said. "Artpark lost a lot of volunteers after the pandemic, so, as a result, we no longer have the luxury of having volunteers just for Mainstage events and volunteers for amphitheater events."

"Optimally, it would be great if all the volunteers we need for a season signed up in April (when applications and schedule are emailed), but that isn't always the case. People often email me throughout the year expressing interest in volunteering. Some follow through; some don't. We host a volunteer orientation in early-May, outlining the season and expectations. For those volunteers signing up after the season begins, it's a lot of on-the-job training."



She added, "It is a challenge staffing multiple and diverse events over the course of a week but, thankfully, many volunteers have different interests - some volunteer only for concerts, while others enjoy volunteering for the festivals and 'New Music in the Park' events. Many of our volunteers volunteer at Artpark in the summer and other cultural arts organizations in the offseason."

"It's a balancing act, for sure, but somehow it gets done every week. Volunteers are an important cog in the wheel that makes Artpark roll, and all of us at Artpark are very appreciative of their efforts."



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park are very appreciative of their efforts."

A Place for Families to 'Connect with Each Other and the Space'

In recent seasons, family programming has grown at Artpark. "Artpark doesn't stop," Curator of Family Programs Tanis Winslow said. "The majority of our

programming is executed during the summer months; however, we start planning for next season while we are working on the current season. There is much grant writing, reaching out to artists, organizations and performers that we do all year long. We don't stop working in the winter; we get

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