

Northwest Children's Theater

Volunteer Handbook



Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Northwest Children's Theater! We would be unable to offer our current level of interaction and support to our patrons without you. We are thrilled to have you on our volunteer team and grateful to have so much community support. This volunteer resource packet contains information about our organization and includes all the info you need to be successful at your volunteer shift!

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NWCT MISSION & HISTORY

The mission of Northwest Children's Theater and School is to educate, entertain and enrich the lives of young audiences. NWCT produces up to five Mainstage shows per year and administers one of the largest theater schools on the west coast.

NWCT was founded in 1993 by three visionary leaders who saw a need for more arts and educational programming for youth in the Portland area. From humble beginnings led by dedicated volunteers, NWCT began its first season by offering classes to a handful of students, and producing our very first show, *Winnie-the-Pooh*. More families came to plays, and more children took classes. As patronage increased so did programming; the company began scheduling weekday matinees for student field trips and offering theater classes in area schools. NWCT's artistic quality was recognized with numerous awards and quickly became one of Portland's most respected and beloved arts institutions for children.

Because NWCT's artistic model included casting children in Mainstage shows, the company attracted huge interest from children with talents for acting, dancing and singing. NWCT started special audition-only classes for these young performing artists, and another level of programming took flight. The first of these was Kid's Company NW. Recent years have seen the development of Interns NW, Studio NW, and Studio Jr. NW. Today, these programs and more comprise NWCT's Second Stage, providing professional training and performance opportunities to advanced theater students. Many of the region's most talented youth performers are alums of NWCT Second Stage programs, and the theater has become a second home to thousands of young performers.

To date, Northwest Children's Theater and School has provided high-quality theater arts and education experiences to over one million children, families and students. The company continues to grow and change to meet the needs of the communities it serves. A long-term lease on its historic home further ensures NWCT's place in the city. Unprecedented regional awards and national recognition are a testament to leadership dedicated to pursuing the highest artistic and educational standards in the company's history. The mission, however, remains the same: To educate, entertain and enrich the lives of young audiences. NWCT is not just about plays or classes. It's about the next generation of creative thinkers. It's about future teachers, civic leaders, artists, professionals, craftspeople, entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, parents, and arts patrons. It's about preserving Portland's arts legacy. This future is the driving force behind NWCT's mission; it is the heart and soul of the company that will keep NWCT thriving.

LOCATION

NWCT's central location is The Judy Kafoury Center for Youth Arts (lovingly called "The Judy"), located at 1000 SW Broadway Portland, Oregon 97205 in the iconic Broadway Building between SW Main and SW Salmon in Downtown Portland.

The Judy contains:

The Stage - A 240-seat, proscenium-style theater with raked seating. Most volunteer opportunities will happen in The Stage.

The Black Box - A flexible performance space with up to 120 seats, The Black Box can be configured however the director prefers. Some volunteer opportunities will happen in The Black Box.

The Cinema - A movie theater that shows second-run, family-friendly films, The Cinema is available for birthday party and small performance rentals.

The Studios - The Studios are three classrooms that host theater classes and rentals.

NWCT is typically open Monday-Saturday 10-6 and Sunday 11-6 (show days only), with extended hours during holiday show times. NWCT is closed in observance of New Year's Day, Independence Day (July 4), Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

The top three goals of the NWCT front-of-house are
safety, friendliness, and speed.

Safety is the #1 front-of-house priority at NWCT. As volunteer representatives of NWCT, it's our responsibility to set expectations of safety, be safe role models, and lead all of our patrons in safe activities. Safety may look differently for a preschooler than for a grandparent, and may look differently for a school group than for a family. As volunteers, make sure you recognize and support the diverse safety needs of our patrons.

Friendliness is the next most important goal of NWCT front-of-house. It's important to smile, greet, and thank patrons. That being said, we also constantly look for new opportunities to engage with patrons, share our excitement about NWCT, and provide patrons with a space to share their experiences, too!

If we're safe and we're friendly, the next most important trait for working NWCT front-of-house is to be fast! Hundreds of patrons watch every NWCT Mainstage show. No one likes to wait. Make sure you're completing your task effectively and dividing your time wisely between guests.

Every volunteer ages 10+ will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement at the start of their first volunteer shift. The agreements outline specific expectations of safety, friendliness, and speed, along with other expectations including cleanliness and professionalism. A copy of that agreement can be found at the back of this manual, but please note that the exact content may change slightly. Volunteers will sign a new agreement each year and can note any changes at that time.

SCHEDULING VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

Volunteers can schedule volunteer shifts by visiting the volunteers page on the NWCT website, nwcts.org. Simply click the link that says “Sign up for a volunteer shift today!” You’ll be directed to a calendar that will display all current volunteer opportunities. You may need to click the arrows to change the month shown on the calendar to see more opportunities.

Once you find a volunteer job that you’d like to sign up for, click the job. The next screen will ask you to confirm which shift you’d like to sign up for. Find the date and time that works for your schedule, then click “sign up.” The website will prompt you for information. Once this is completed you will receive an automated email confirmation. If you do not receive an email confirmation or have any trouble signing up for a shift, email the volunteer coordinator. You can also schedule volunteer shifts by emailing the volunteer coordinator directly.

Scheduling is done on a first come first serve basis. Certain shifts may fill up quickly so please be patient, flexible, and most importantly, proactive, about scheduling. While we want you to be scheduled doing the tasks you feel most comfortable and enthusiastic about, we reserve the right to change scheduling based on the needs of the organization. The volunteer coordinator and/or house manager may change volunteer assignments as needed at any time.

If you are unable to make it to your scheduled volunteer shift, please contact the House Manager by email (housemanager@nwcts.org) as soon as you know you have a conflict. If the shift is less than 24 hours away, please also call the Box Office at (503) 222-2190 to inform them of your absence.

PARKING & TRANSIT

There is a paid parking garage in the 1000 Broadway Building. NWCT doesn’t own the parking garage and is not in control of its schedule or fees. There is also paid street parking available around the building. Please plan at least 15 minutes to find parking.

The Judy is easily accessible through public transit. It’s on several bus routes and only a short walk from the MAX trains at Pioneer Courthouse Square.

Volunteers may bring their bicycles into NWCT. Talk to the box office to learn where they may be safely parked. We do encourage cyclists to bring locks, even for bikes parked inside.

VOLUNTEER ROLES

Usher

Ushering can be used as a blanket term when describing any volunteer assisting with shows. However, Usher specifically refers to the volunteer role of assisting patrons with finding the seat assigned to them on their tickets. Ushers will greet patrons as they enter the auditorium and offer their assistance. "Welcome. Would you like a hand finding your seats?" is a perfect way for ushers to greet patrons and make it known that they are there to seat folks.

Ushers should also be familiarized with the house rules for conduct, know whether we are allowing photography for a particular show, and be informed if there are offstage entrances/exits so they can help keep the aisles clear of belongings. Ushers need to know how longer the show is, if there's an intermission and when, and where the bathrooms are.

Ticket Checker

Ticket checkers position themselves in the lobby leading into the auditorium. Patrons will line up at the stairs to enter and the checker will make sure their tickets are for the correct show, **date & time**. Once the tickets are checked, the ticket checker will give the tickets back to the patron.

Will-Call Assistant

Patrons come to will-call to pick up their tickets. Tickets are arranged alphabetically by last name. If a patron's ticket isn't in the box, ask the patron first if the ticket could be under a different name. If not, direct the patron to the Box Office. Some patrons will have coupons or comp passes they need to exchange for their tickets. That information will be listed on their ticket receipt. Collect any necessary documents from the patrons.

Concessions

Concessions volunteers help set up and tear down concessions. This volunteer needs to know policy on check/credit, costs and our menu for each production. Concession helpers may also be positioned at the entrance to the theater with ziplock bags during concessions to encourage families to return to the show.

Stage Guard

Stage Guards position themselves on or near the steps leading up to the stage and prevent patrons from getting onto the stage. Kids will often try to play on stage and parents will ask if kids can be photographed on the stage. This is a safety issue. They can be photographed in front of the stage (copyrights permitting) or sitting on the steps up to the stage (copyrights permitting).

EVERYONE

After a show, everyone helps clean up. Trash is thrown away, seating cushions are restacked, and handouts are sorted for reuse. After the auditorium is clean, volunteers may participate in the post-show, cast meet-n-greet.

QUESTIONS PATRONS MAY ASK YOU

Do you validate for parking?

No. At this time, NWCT does not validate parking.

How much are tickets?

Tickets are \$25-\$35.

Cash-only rush tickets are available for \$15 each before most shows. Availability is not guaranteed.

NWCT also participates in the Arts the All program. Patrons can show their Oregon Trail / SNAP card for up to four \$5 tickets.

I forgot/lost my ticket!!!

Don't worry. Tickets are digital. If for whatever reason a patron can't access their ticket, direct them to the box office where staff can print them one.

What if I'm late for the show? Can I still be seated?

Our House Manager will do their best to seat late patrons who arrive after the show has begun. We ask all volunteers who help in seating late-comers to use flashlights. Depending how far the show has progressed and other factors, like actors in the aisles and where the patron's seat is located, the patron may be asked to take an alternative seat or wait temporarily in the back of the house. We recommend all patrons plan to arrive at NWCT at least a half-hour before show time.

What is the address?

NWCT holds most shows in The Judy, located at 1000 SW Broadway, Portland, OR 97205 between SW Main St. and Sw Salmon St. in Downtown Portland.

I have a comp ticket, what do I do?

Comp tickets need to be processed through the box office. Any ticket without a date or seat assignment on it is likely a comp pass. Politely direct patrons with comp passes to the box office.

I am early and I need coffee/food?

NWCT's concession stand is open extended hours and open to everyone regardless of if they have a ticket.

I'm very early and my kids need to run around. Where can I go?

Patrons can walk across Broadway, between the Schnitz and Winningstad to the park blocks. Children are welcome to run in the grass. Adult supervision is strongly recommended.

Where is the bathroom?

The main bathrooms are on the mezzanine. There are also single-occupancy bathrooms on the lower level behind concessions.

Is there an elevator?

Yes! Patrons can use the elevator themselves. After entering the building, it's to the right. It lets out by The Studios downstairs. The elevator does not go to the mezzanine.

When can we go into the show?

Generally, the house opens 15 minutes before the show starts. The House Manager will make an announcement to all patrons when the house is opened.

I have my tickets on my phone or printed my tickets at home. Do I need to wait for will-call?

Nope! Mobile and printed tickets are both accepted. Patrons should show one page for each ticket. However, if the patron only printed the confirmation page of their email (i.e. only has one sheet of paper), that doesn't work. Kindly ask them to look at the attachment of their email for the tickets.

SAMPLE EXPECTATIONS FROM THE VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Expectations:

- **Safety**
 - Never be alone with a child or children who are not your own for any reason.
 - Never touch a child or children who are not your own for any reason.
 - Use a flashlight when guiding patrons in the dark.

- **Courtesy**
 - When interacting with patrons, give them your full attention.
 - Avoid discriminatory language and behaviors including swearing.
 - Please put your cellphone away while patrons are present.
 - If you need to correct patrons, politely instruct them once.
 - *If the situation escalates or they need to be addressed again, find your supervisor.

- **Professionalism**
 - Be on time by arriving 40 minutes before a show starts.
Call or email the House Manager in advance if you will be tardy, miss a shift, or will need to leave early.
 - Put on a NWCT vest when volunteering to be easily recognized by patrons.
 - Communicate any problems to your supervisor.
 - Concessions items are discounted for volunteers. Water is free. Ask a concessions worker before removing anything from the concessions area.

- **Cleanliness**
 - Clean all spills immediately.

- Report any major bathroom cleanliness issues to the House Manager.

Duties:

- Everyone:
 - Learn and follow the responsibilities of your designated job. (Usher, program passer, etc.)
 - Direct patrons to various theater amenities.
 - Assist with intermission and help clean up after the show.
 - Be prepared to perform other duties as needed.
 - Familiarize yourself with the NWCT Volunteer Handbook