
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology

1221 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14209
(716) 259-1680



Welcome to **BCAT**

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology -- BCAT!

Thank you for choosing to volunteer your time with us. You are now a very important part of the BCAT Family. As a team, we are committed to ensuring that our adults and youth are welcomed and supported every day that they participate in our program. Your contributions are valued and appreciated. I know you will feel rewarded for your efforts in very special ways.

BCAT depends on volunteers like you to ensure that we operate efficiently and successfully. You will have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities, including mentoring and tutoring, supporting program activities and classes, and helping with events and data management. We will work with you to ensure that your efforts are fulfilling and make the best use of your skills and talents.

This Volunteer Handbook provides 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 BCAT's policies and procedures. If you have questions, please talk with our Volunteer Coordinator.

Again, on behalf of our staff and everyone here at BCAT, we welcome you to our volunteer program. Thank you for taking time to help us build strong futures for our adults and youth.

Sincerely,

Gina Burkhardt

President and CEO

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WHO WE ARE



Our Vision

Improve high school graduation rates

Our Mission

To provide opportunity for careers through the arts and workforce development

Our History

BCAT is based on Pittsburgh's Manchester Bidwell Corporation, a nationally recognized arts and training center founded in 1969 by Bill Strickland. Each Center is modeled after the success of Manchester Bidwell; however, each is adapted to fit the needs of its own community. Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology, Inc. was formed in 2012, and Buffalo became the eighth U.S. city to replicate Strickland's model.

BCAT offers two programs: An afterschool Youth Arts Program for highschoolers from Buffalo Public and Charter schools; and, an Adult Workforce Program providing training in the healthcare field to un/underemployed adults. Both programs are cost-free to participants. Over 75% of our adult participants secure mid-skills jobs in healthcare fields after graduation. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the high school seniors enrolled in BCAT arts programs graduate from high school.

VOLUNTEERING WITH BCAT



Expectations

What You Can Expect from BCAT

- Respect of your commitment, time & confidentiality
- Team based approach to the work
- Ongoing support from everyone on the BCAT Staff
- An inclusive, welcoming culture
- Recognition and appreciation of your work
- Input on projects and tasks you are assigned

BCAT helps our youth access opportunities outside of the traditional high school day. Our arts-focused programming allows high schoolers to explore their talents and creativity in a safe and nurturing environment. We expect youth to put their best efforts into the classes we offer, and we expect our staff and volunteers to fully support our culture, especially in classroom settings.

What BCAT Expects From You

- Honor your commitment to our program
- Cooperate with the BCAT staff and fellow volunteers
- Be prompt and reliable
- Notify us as soon as possible of any changes to your commitment as a volunteer
- Keep all communications with or concerning the youth in our program confidential
- Maintain a respectful relationship with youth
- Have a willingness to engage in youth program-centered activities
- Attend mandatory orientation for volunteers
- Be flexible and adapt to a changing schedule

Our expectations are more clearly outlined in the Policies & Procedures section of this guide on page 8.



Application Process

1. Complete Volunteer Application Form
2. Obtain and Complete Background Check Release Form
3. Interview
4. Attend Orientation
5. Start Volunteering!

Volunteer Positions



Tutors/Academic Mentors

Tutors are an important part of the afterschool programming and their focus is to support and enhance the academic performance of students at their respective schools. Tutoring helps bolster the graduation rates of our participants, especially seniors. Tutors work one-on-one with students for 2 to 3 hours after school. Tutors are also expected to come prepared with materials such as worksheets or books. Your commitment to being a BCAT tutor will require you to spend roughly an hour a week outside of BCAT compiling resources to use with the youth. BCAT staff can help guide this process.

Volunteers interested in tutoring will need to be available from 3 PM to 6 PM at least two days a week during the school year. We would prefer those days to be consistent week to week, but are willing to work with individuals should interruptions in this schedule arise. Consistency is key because of the relationship building that will occur with the youth that are assigned to you.

Classroom Assistant

The classroom assistant allows our teaching artists to have another adult working with them in the classroom setting. Working in this position you can expect your responsibilities to include generally assisting the teaching artist and participating in program activities, and addressing any situation that arises where a student may have to leave the room.

During the school year, classroom assistants are expected to be available from 3 PM to 6 PM. During the summer, classroom assistants are expected to be available from 12 PM to 5 PM. It is preferred that you are available the same days week to week.

The classroom assistant position requires you to promote the mission and culture of BCAT within the classroom. This includes participating in all activities set out by the teaching artist regardless of perceived artistic ability.



Program Assistant

Program assistants are expected to be more flexible and may be assigned a variety of roles. Tasks will vary day-to-day based on the needs of the YAP. Program assistants will be asked to perform tasks such as filing, making phone calls, conducting research, performing data entry, acting as a classroom assistant, helping set up lunch.

We are more flexible with scheduling for Program Assistants' volunteer time. However, it is still extremely important that you notify us of your availability and are in regular communication with the Youth Program Manager. We expect that you are committed to volunteering for the agreed upon dates and times. During the school year, program assistants can volunteer in 2 to 3 hour time increments between 10.30 AM to 6.30 PM. During the summer, these shifts can be scheduled in the range of 9 AM to 5 PM.

Event Volunteers

BCAT hosts a variety of events throughout the year. These include Food is Art, Friends and Family Night, the annual fundraising event, Spotlight on Youth, open mic nights, and our gallery openings. Volunteers will be expected to help with preparation and day-of-event tasks. This will include setting up tables, setting up food, helping carry equipment, helping to facilitate activities, cleaning up, etc. Dates and times vary.

Please Note

Any and all volunteers are often asked to help set-up for and clean up after youth lunch time which is from 3 to 4 PM during the school year and at various times during summer session.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Expectations

Absences and Lateness

Volunteers are critical to BCAT's mission. You are expected to arrive fifteen minutes before your shift begins. If you cannot make your volunteer shift for whatever reason, please notify either the front desk personnel or the Youth Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

Volunteers can contact the following individuals:

Shaunicy Muhammad

Administrative Assistant

716.259.1680

smuhammad@bufcat.org

Brandi Cane

Youth Arts Program Director

716.259.1689

bcane@bufcat.org

Attendance

Sign-in sheets help us track your volunteer hours. Please sign in when you begin your volunteer service and sign out when you are finished. Sign-in sheets are located at the front desk; please be sure to sign in on the volunteer specific sheet.

During the school year or summer, please review your schedule carefully. Should you not be able to attend a scheduled volunteer shift, notify our staff two weeks prior. If a change in schedule occurs that does not allow two weeks notice, you must meet with the Youth Volunteer Coordinator to make alternative arrangements.

Missing two or more shifts without notice, will result in termination of your volunteer role at BCAT.

Orientation



Volunteers are expected to attend the orientation session prior to beginning their volunteer work at BCAT. Should the orientation session conflict with your schedule, you are expected to be in contact with the Youth Volunteer Coordinator and work out an alternative way to receive training.

Dress Code

BCAT has a casual dress code, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. If staff feel your attire is not appropriate to our business, you may be asked to change into proper attire. Absolutely no torn jeans, gym shorts, tank tops, short skirts/dresses/shorts, or low-cut tops.

Flexibility

Volunteers are expected to be willing to help wherever possible. This may mean a program assistant would be expected to act as a classroom assistant, or a tutor to act as a program assistant.

Participation

Just as we expect our youth to be engaged in programming activities, we expect our volunteers to be active as well. Regardless of artistic abilities, being willing to participate in youth programming activities is critical to your role at BCAT. We expect that volunteers will spend minimal or no time on their personal cell phones or technology devices.

Driving

Volunteers are prohibited from providing rides to youth for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate termination.

Confidential Information

We have an obligation to our youth to maintain their confidentiality and respect their privacy. Every youth served by BCAT has the right to confidentiality. Safety concerns should be the only exception to this policy. Should youth indicate that there is concern of physical or mental harm, immediately inform the Youth Program Director.

Background Checks



Volunteers working with youth are required to get a criminal history background check prior to volunteering. If a criminal history is present, minor offenses will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Equal Volunteering Opportunity

Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, 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.

Feedback

An efficient, successful operation and satisfied volunteers go hand in hand. Volunteer grievances are of concern to BCAT, regardless of whether the problems are large or small. In order to provide for prompt and efficient evaluation of, and response to, grievances, BCAT has established a Feedback Procedure for all volunteers. There will be no retribution against or toward anyone for their part in presenting grievances. Under this policy, a grievance is defined as any event, condition, rule, or practice which the volunteer believes violates his or her civil rights, treats him or her unfairly, or causes them any degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness on the job. A grievance may also deal with an attitude, a statement, or an opinion held by a staff person or volunteer.

The Feedback Procedure is as follows:

1. Inform the Youth Program Director

If you feel that any volunteering condition, policy, practice, or action by BCAT is unjust, you should tell the youth program director about it and discuss the matter confidentially and in private with him/her. If for some reason the youth program director fails to offer you the opportunity to discuss the matter, or if the discussion does not lead to a satisfactory conclusion, then proceed to the next step. If the offense is concerning the Youth Program Director you should speak directly with the BCAT CEO.



2. Meet with BCAT's CEO

The agency CEO will review the grievance and ask you to meet with him/her. At this meeting, you should feel free to openly discuss your complaint and substantiate your reasons for feeling the way you do.

Resignation

While we hope both you and BCAT will mutually benefit from your continued volunteering, we realize that it may become necessary for you to leave your role. If you anticipate having to resign your position, you are expected to notify the Youth Volunteer Coordinator as far in advance as possible and make arrangements for an exit interview.

Exit Interviews

In instances where leaving is voluntary, BCAT would like to discuss the reasons for leaving and any other impressions the volunteer may have about BCAT. If you decide to leave, you will be asked to grant us the privilege of an exit interview. We hope that the interview will provide us with insight into possible improvements.

Unacceptable Activities

We expect each volunteer to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. The list below is a description of some of the more serious violations. If a volunteer violates any rules established by BCAT, including the following rules, that person may be subject to discipline up to, and including, immediate termination of volunteer status:

- Violation of security or safety rules
- Tampering with technology used in youth programming or any other BCAT activities
- Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages prior to or during volunteering at BCAT, and/or at any BCAT event with participation of minors
- Possession or use of all illegal drugs or other illegal substances
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism
- Theft of agency property or the property of fellow volunteers or youth
- Breach of confidentiality



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- ❑ Driving a youth participant in a private vehicle

Volunteers are expected to adhere to all BCAT policies as they are essential to the functioning of youth programs. Circumstances will be considered, but as a volunteer you have committed a portion of your time to the programs at BCAT, and we expect volunteers to honor that commitment. Violation of the above policies and procedures can lead to immediate termination.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Gina Burkhardt

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Youth Program Director

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