

## **PROGRAM PARTICULARS: Tidewater Arts Outreach programs – artist information**

This section outlines how Tidewater Arts Outreach staff work with artists in creating great programs, monitoring program quality and providing excellent customer service to artists and location staff.

### **Confirmations, Directions and Arrivals**

#### **Confirmation Letter**

Your e-confirmation letter will tell you:

- Description of your program as it is being described to the location
- Date, time and place
- Name, address and phone number of location
- Contact name (usually the activities director)
- Link to Google maps for the location
- Description of the location population, general audience size and room information
- TAO cell phone number in case of emergency

We make confirmation calls to both artist and location contact one or two business days before each program. We need to confirm to a live person, not voice mail.

#### **Directions and Location**

Make sure you know where you are going, and allow a few extra minutes to get there. Because it takes a lot to get residents to and from a room, and there are always meals, meds, therapy and other considerations, it is very important that you begin and end your program on time. If something unavoidable happens and you find yourself running late, please call TAO, using the numbers provided on your confirmation letter. We will notify the location and other volunteers or visitors we may have scheduled.

Some buildings require more advance direction to get to your program space. Hospitals, medical centers and health campuses require more direction than MapQuest can provide. We ask artists to carefully read and understand our written confirmations to you, so you are able to conveniently move your equipment and materials to the room where you will present your program.

Some artists choose visit a location prior to their program. Activities directors may not have much extra time to spare, but they will carve out what they can, and they do appreciate your taking the time to become familiar with their location and clients beforehand. Musicians will want to consider room size and amplification needs; most locations benefit from at least a little amplification. Artists will want know the table placement and client numbers as they plan for supplies and numbers of volunteers needed for a particular project. TAO works with artists individually to determine needs and make specific program arrangements. If you are at all unsure of any arrangements, please email or call TAO with questions, and we will gladly get you the information needed.

#### **Tidewater Arts Outreach Program Host**

TAO staff recruits community volunteers to serve as a Program Hosts. The program host is there to interface with location staff, to help you with supplies, to help you find water if you need it, help get clients to and from the program room, to introduce you and TAO to the group prior to your program and to engage with clients and residents throughout your program. Feel free to call on this Program Host for support.

## **Building Participation**

We send program flyers to promote your program to staff, clients, family members and visitors. We can give projected attendance figures at a given location, but there is no way of knowing exactly how many people will arrive for a program, unless we've pre-arranged for a limit, such as in the case of a visual arts program. There are things you can do to help boost attendance at your programs:

### **Evening and Weekend Programs**

Weekend and evening artists and musicians arrive at nursing homes and assisted living facilities after most, if not all, activities staffs are gone for the day. Recruit a friend or a spouse if you can, and be prepared to help get participants to and from your program. To do this, go to nurse's stations and ask staff there if they think anyone might be interested in attending. Look to staff for direction on who to ask and who can be safely transported. Use your judgment and be friendly and encouraging, but not forceful.

This part of your outreach can be a rewarding experience that can foster relationships and provide you with valuable feedback.

### **Engaging Clients, Staff and Others**

Before you begin your program (as you are setting up), we encourage artists to let the folks around you know what your program is about. Introduce yourself and find out what's been going on that day, what kinds of music, art or activity is a favorite pastime at this location, and so on. Keep the conversation going throughout your program, which should involve both giving information and soliciting feedback. We suggest that performing arts groups, such as musicians and dancers, spend about 70 percent of their time in program delivery and 30 percent of their time in talking with the group and engaging with them. You want to ask questions and create conversation. Good openers might be to talk about the weather if the music or dance is about sunshine, or otherwise expand on the topic of song or dance to elicit feedback from individuals about their experiences and background (who here is from west of the Mississippi?' if you're singing a song about the West; 'who is a grandmother?' if you're singing about kids or parents; 'has anyone served in our armed forces?' when singing patriotic songs. It is good to present a variety of material, and not dwell on the too high-pitched, too sad or too slow. Too many love songs are overkill, unless you are singing each one to a different audience member! Songs that have a beat and are danceable are great, as are those songs that introduce different rhythms. Explain a "waltz" or a "samba" if that's what you're doing, or ask if anyone wants to explain it to the group and invite them to join in.

There should be a staff person present at your program at all times in nursing homes/rehabilitation centers. This is not always the case at assisted living locations.

Don't be too put off by people who fall asleep during your program or don't seem to be involved. Do look to the staff person for cues as to response levels. Some clients who have been nonverbal for months have decided to sing with our artists. Many are medicated and easily drift off. Some just lack the energy to move and groove with you. Some have diseases, such as Parkinson's or have suffered from a debilitating health condition, such as heart attack or stroke, and simply are not able to participate physically. Mentally, however, they might be right with you. If, during the course of your program, you see anyone who is agitated to the point of disruption, or who you think requires staff attention, for any reason, do not hesitate to call attention to the situation.

Prepare for the unforeseen with lots of flexibility, humor, good cheer and \*gentle\* hugs. Your program might not go without a hitch, and often through no fault of your own. On occasion, we've had alarms sound and nurses rushing through activity rooms in the middle of a song. Activities directors take ill or are called away during a program, leaving an artist fending for him/herself. Residents do appreciate a smile, a greeting, a gentle touch on the shoulder or back of the hand. If you reach for a hand, be extremely gentle. Older artists know this, but younger people need the reminder that bones are fragile and seniors

need to be handled with extra care. Some will come up to hug you. Some will tear up when you speak to them and share eye contact with them. It's because they're happy to see you and delighted that you care enough to be there, with your stories, songs, smiles, art and exuberance.

## **Attire and Hygiene**

**Attire:** Please make sure your clothing is presentable in the following ways:

- Clothing: The key word is "PROFESSIONAL." Free of holes, tears or stains, covering all body parts and areas.
- Remember – You may be *bending down* and moving in many ways and your body needs to be reasonably covered in all areas.

**Women:** Cover the majority of your decolletage/cleavage area. You can use the measurement of placing your palm under the 2 points of the collarbone. Anything lower than the bottom of your palm or little finger, is most likely too low! As for your leg/bottom area, 1 palm above the knee is a good measure as well. Keep your style, but keep it professional! Bra straps should be seen only by you.

**Pants** for Women and Men: Pants should fall between the belly button and hip bone. A belt looks very neat. Your underwear is meant for your eyes only. Keep this in mind when choosing your clothing for volunteering with us

- Shoes: Casual, good condition, and comfortable. you may be standing or moving the entire program. Keep this in mind when choosing footwear.
- Tattoos: If your tattoo has any profanity, or nudity, we ask that you cover the tattoo, as you may be working with children. It is also a distraction when a tattoo sparks unwelcome remarks or conversations from participants.

## **Hygiene:**

Most of the locations we serve are healthcare facilities, where people have compromised immune systems and medical conditions that require us to be aware of what we are exposing them to. We engage community artists and program volunteers who come to our programs from all walks of life. **We expect that all artists & volunteers practice good to excellent personal hygiene** and come to programs looking fresh and in clean clothes that are well mended. *Do not go to a nursing home or long-term care facility if you there is any chance you could be spreading cold, flu or other contagious illnesses.* We recommend you wash your hands as you enter and as you leave any TAO program location. If you share instruments and you plan on using them again within 48 hours, it is recommended that you clean handles with anti-bacterial wipes. If you present programs regularly for TAO, getting a seasonal flu shot is a good idea.

## **Attitude**

TAO artists tell us it usually takes one or two times at a location before they feel comfortable in their surroundings. For that reason, it's a great idea to visit a location prior to your first program there.

TAO programs are a time to be friendly, cheerful, and outgoing. Your smile, your gentle touch, your eye contact and your genuine warmth are treasures to the vast majority of the people we serve. The people we serve often are lonely and depressed. They are cut off from the everyday society that we take for granted. Through your creativity and your compassion, you are giving a precious gift that will be remembered long after you are gone. Make sure you do everything in your power to make your time with the residents and clients a pleasurable and even joyful experience.