

--Document Packet--

(1) Sample Letter to Volunteers

May __, 20__

Dear _____,

Welcome to the volunteer corps for General Assembly. _____ has given me your name as one who is willing to work as a(n) (Atmosphere)(Information Services)(Social Justice Project) volunteer. I am delighted and look forward to having you as part of the team.

(You might want to include a paragraph here introducing yourself.)

Our role consists of (**Atmosphere:** ambience, the banner parade and evening events.) (**Information Services:** welcoming UUs to GA, helping them find GA events, staffing the Local Information table, and maintaining a bulletin board for Events/Announcements.) (**Social Justice Project:** primarily staffing a booth in the Exhibit Hall.) You will definitely feel involved in General Assembly.

Offering a friendly hand, answering a question, or giving directions will do much to start our friends' GA experience on a positive note. This job is fun and requires no expertise. It can also be tiring, as you may be on your feet much of the time. Do wear comfortable shoes and let me know if you would have difficulty with this job and would like a different assignment.

Our responsibilities include (**Atmosphere:** setting up/maintaining/taking down specialized spaces, registering/hanging/returning banners, assisting with banner parade, and welcoming/ushering/maintaining order at evening events.) (**Information Services:** two primary activities: 1) sitting at the Local Information table in the convention center and 2) serving as greeters, which involves standing, holding a Greeter/Ask Me sign and providing answers to questions. Most of the time greeters will be in the convention center but some may be asked to welcome attendees at the airport.) (**Social Justice Project:** visiting with people about the SJP and collecting donations.) More detailed job descriptions are attached. I am finalizing your schedule and will send it to you by _____ OR . . . I am enclosing your schedule. Please read it carefully and plan to attend a training session. [If you are not sending the schedule with this initial letter, it is helpful to ask your volunteers in this letter if they have any physical limitations, when they will be arriving and leaving GA, and whether they have any scheduling conflicts such as participating in the choir or as a delegate. You can then incorporate this information into the first draft of the schedule.]

Many of the questions we will be asked are answered in the GA Program book. The program book is now available on line at _____ It will be helpful if you familiarize yourself with the program book prior to the start of GA. Here are the pages to particularly focus on:

1. Program Schedule (page ____)
2. General Information Section (pages _____)

3. Exhibit Hall Floor Plan (page _____)
4. Convention Center Floor Plan (page _____)
5. Information on Greening (page _____)

You must attend a training session in (room _____ of) the convention center. It is scheduled on ____ (day and time)_____.

If for some reason, your plans have changed and you cannot be a volunteer or you cannot work the enclosed schedule, please call me immediately at _____. If you need to make minor adjustments or want to swap jobs with another volunteer, that can be done at the training session.

And finally, a few miscellaneous things:

1. Bring a water bottle and/or coffee cup (re-usable beverage container), comfortable shoes, and snacks. (Convention center prohibits food from outside beyond that for personal use. Food will be available for purchase in the convention center.)
2. When you arrive at General Assembly, please go to the Volunteer Office (room _____ of the convention center) to check in and get your t-shirt.
3. While you are volunteering you can store purses and bags in the Volunteer Office, but not luggage.
4. You will need to wear your volunteer t-shirt when you are on duty. Plan to wear something else when you're off duty so that you don't get lots of questions.

Thank you again for volunteering! See you soon.

Cordially,

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail

(2) Sample Training Session for Volunteers

- **Welcome**

Introduce yourself and the Local Arrangements Task Force Chair, if present. Volunteers introduce themselves. Emphasize working as a team. Review purpose of (Atmosphere) (Information Services)(Social Justice Project).

- **Life as a volunteer**

- 1) Pick up t-shirt and badge in volunteer office if not already done.
- 2) Wear your t-shirt whenever you're on duty. Take it off when you're off duty so you don't get asked questions.
- 3) Can store purses and bags in Volunteer Office, but not luggage.
- 4) Bring water bottle and/or coffee cup, comfortable shoes, snacks. (Convention center prohibits food from outside beyond that for personal use. Coffee makers, pizzas, group donuts, etc. are not permitted; refrigeration is not available. Food will be available for purchase in the convention center.)
- 5) Volunteering can be more enjoyable than being a "regular" attendee—you have a built-in group of comrades, and you can always find a friendly face in the Volunteer Office. Also, there's satisfaction in having a meaningful impact in creating GA.

- **Review Responsibilities of Your Team**

Atmosphere: Ask volunteers to remain flexible and be ready to serve in a variety of ways.

Local Information: Point out location and purpose of Local Information table and materials available. Describe in general where Greeter/Ask Me volunteers will be stationed and the importance of a friendly welcome to GA. Review maps and floor plans and explain that they need to be familiar with the layout of the hotels/convention center. Demonstrate how to give directions and where to refer questions. How to say "I don't know" and not feel bad about it. Direct Greeter/Ask Me volunteers to keep the GA Program book with them.

Social Justice Project: Conducted at site of Exhibit Hall booth.

- **GA Program**

Go over the Program book, especially the Information section. Volunteers may not get around to reading it on their own. Most GA-related questions are answered in the Program.

- **Referrals**

No volunteers are expected to know everything. Chances are, though, someone does know the answer to any question/problem. Guidelines for referral:

- Local Arrangements Task Force functions: LATF Chair
- Policy/complaints about GA: GA Planning Committee feedback table in Exhibit Hall (see GA Program book for hours)
- Program/registration concerns: On-site Registration Office
- Housing problems: Individual hotels; On-site Registration Office

- **Schedule**

Review volunteer schedules. Coordinator for Team makes final assignments or

adjustments as necessary. Each person is responsible for showing up or "calling in sick"; make sure they know your cell phone number.

- **Accessibility**
Hand out the disability etiquette suggestions (provided in the Documents packet) and, if possible, arrange to have the GA Accessibility Coordinator give a five-minute orientation on Accessibility Services. Give location of Accessibility Services desk.
- **Sustainability**
Arrange to have the GA Sustainability Consultant give a five-minute orientation on Sustainability initiatives at GA.
- **Must know answers to FAQs**
 - Where the elevators are —frequently asked accessibility question
 - Location of bathrooms, *particularly gender neutral bathrooms*, and/or water fountains
 - Where to buy coffee
 - Others related to local conditions?—brainstorm
- **Volunteer Office (Room #)**
Lost and found; small first aid kit; signs made; equipment is stored here, e.g. easels for signs; place for volunteers to rest, hang out, eat lunch, talk with friendly folk
- **On Site Registration Office (Room #)**
Registration issues; on-site registration; new name tags; programming issues, such as a speaker didn't show up; this is where you can find GACS staff
- **Dealing with Difficult People**
In “normal” situations, practice empathy, patience, and non-defensiveness. Know that it's not about you—it's about finding a way to deescalate the situation and meet the person's needs. If there are situations that require more, you can contact any UUA/GA staff person. The best person to handle such situations is the chaplain of the day. To reach the GA chaplain, call the 24 hour chaplain cell phone XXX-XXXX.
- **Close**
A big thank you and reminder that GA runs largely on volunteer energy. It is both work AND fun.
- **Tour of Facility**
If there is time, take a short tour to locate major meeting spaces and registration. If the whole group does not do this, *encourage volunteers to spend half an hour or so locating these places for themselves.*

(3) When You Meet a Person with a Disability . . . *Points to Remember*

Dear GA Volunteers:

Did you know that more than 10% of people attending GA require some sort of accommodation in order to make their GA experience successful, even joyful? Accessibility Services provides equipment and services to a variety of people including those with disabilities, health care concerns, and elder members. In your volunteer work at GA, you are bound to meet someone with a disability and, depending on your own experience, may find this tip sheet helpful. Some of these tips won't be relevant for your job, but know that you can bring this back to your congregations as a learning tool. The most important tip, be yourself! And remember, the person is a person first, not her or his disability.

- **When you are with a person who is blind or has vision problems**
 - When greeting a person who is blind or visually impaired, use their name and don't forget to identify yourself. For example, "Hi, Sarah; it's Latisha."
 - Speak directly, not through an intermediary. Use a natural conversational volume and tone.
 - It is really okay to say things like, "See you soon." Feel comfortable using everyday words relating to vision like "look," "see," "watching the video."
 - During a conversation, a person who is blind or visually impaired may not be able to see the expression on your face, so give verbal feedback to let them know you're listening.
 - Don't do tasks for a person that they normally would do. Instead ask if they need help and then be guided by the person's response to your offer.
 - If you see someone who is blind or visually impaired about to encounter a dangerous situation, be calm and clear about your warning. For example, if they are about to bump into a pole, calmly and clearly call out, "Wait there for a moment; there's a pole in front of you."
 - Never hold a person's arm while walking; let the person hold *your* arm. This will let them walk slightly behind you, and the motion of your body will tell them what to expect. Offer verbal cues as to what is ahead when you approach steps, curbs, escalators, or doors.
 - When you leave, say you are leaving. Never leave a person who is totally blind or severely visually impaired in an open area. Instead, lead them to the side of a room, to a chair, or some landmark.
 - Never distract, pet, or offer food to a guide dog without permission from the owner. The dog is working and must not be approached without permission.
- **When you are with a person who is deaf or has hearing problems**
 - Look directly at the person you are speaking to. If you are working with a sign language interpreter, talk directly to the person who is deaf, not to the interpreter. While working, the interpreter is not a participant in the conversation, but a transmitter for the person who is deaf.
 - Don't cover your mouth, and don't create shadow on your face by standing with your back or side to a bright light or window.

- Speak at a slow to moderate rate and don't use exaggerated lip movements. Some people's voices are easier to understand. Individuals with soft or highly pitched voices can be more difficult to understand.
- If there is a misunderstanding about something you've said, repeat the same idea *using different words*.
- Keep paper and pen nearby. If communication is difficult, feel comfortable writing key words or brief phrases – and writing phone numbers or addresses is usually a good idea.
- Don't shout – it won't help. Hearing aids make sounds louder, not clearer.
- To get a person's attention, gently tap the person on the arm or elbow and make sure they are looking at you before you speak.
- Be aware that being able to hear conversation in a crowd and/or with background noise is most difficult.
- **When you are with a person who has a mobility impairment**
 - Look at and talk directly to everyone with whom you converse.
 - If possible, be at eye level with everyone with whom you speak.
 - Ask how you can best help when assisting a wheelchair user to go up or down a curb.
 - Move crutches, walkers, canes, or wheelchairs only with the permission of the user. Return the devices as soon as possible.
 - Ask if and how you can help in buffet lines.
 - Respect everyone's individual space. Do not lean on someone's wheelchair.
 - Allow children to ask questions and allow the person being questioned to answer.
 - Ask "May I help?" when wanting to be helpful. And if given permission to do so, ask "How may I help?"
 - People who use wheelchairs are "wheelchair users," not "confined to a wheelchair."
 - Learn the location of wheelchair-accessible ramps, rest rooms, elevators, doors, water fountains, and telephones.
- **When you are with a person who has an invisible disability**
 - Always assume there is a person with a hidden disability in a group. So always say "Rise if you are willing and able," and always plan quick stretch breaks every 30-45 minutes.
 - If a person says they cannot do something, don't try to coax or cajole or convince them to try anyway.
 - Invite partial participation, and ask what you can do to make participation possible.
 - A hearing impairment can be a hidden disability; always assume there is someone in your group with hearing loss so always face your audience when speaking.
 - Don't judge another person's pain or limitations; accept as true what the person tells you.
- **When you are with a person who has a psychiatric problem**
 - Use an open, caring, accepting manner; find some common ground on which to interact.
 - Be genuine; like anyone else, a person with mental illness can pick up on a false or demeaning approach.

- Try to understand what is being said from the person's perspective; be comfortable even if you feel this person's mind is working in a way that is different from yours.
- Stay calm, keep eye contact, and retain a calm facial expression and body manner; what is most important is to communicate that you care.
- Use simple sentences and short, uncomplicated words. If something you say is not understood, repeat the message, using other words.
- Be a good listener. Don't criticize, lecture, or argue. Try to be supportive. Treat the person with respect.
- If the person is angry, don't take it personally, and don't approach or touch the person without his or her request or permission.
- If the person is willing or indicates a need, offer to get the help of a friend, relative, clergy, or qualified professional.
- Focus on the person's strengths and what has been accomplished, and treat this in a positive way.
- There are clergy on call throughout GA. Ask at the Accessibility Table or the On-site Registration Office.
- **When you are with a person who has multiple chemical sensitivities**
 - Choose personal products that are fragrance-free. Be aware that there are hidden, long-lasting fragrances in detergents, fabric softeners, new clothing, deodorants, tissues, toilet paper, potpourris, scented candles, hair sprays, magazines, hand lotions, disposable diapers, and dishwashing liquids.
 - Use only unscented soap in restrooms, and carefully wrap and dispose of chemical air "fresheners."
 - Designate fragrance-free seating sections for church and community events.
 - Designate smoking areas away from buildings so people don't have to pass through smoke when entering, or have smoke waft in through doorways or windows.
 - Adopt a policy of using fragrance-free cleaning products.
 - Provide adequate ventilation; clean furnace filters frequently.
 - Make sure toxic substances are labeled, tightly sealed, and stored in a separate safe area.

(4) Local Arrangements Task Force (LATF) Member Report

Please use this report as a guide and reminder of information you would like to pass on to your successor, the GA Planning Committee, and the GACS Office. Keep in mind the information you wish you had had before and during GA.

Send copies directly to:

- (1) Local Arrangements Chair
- (2) Dr. Janiece Sneegas, Director
Office of General Assembly and Conference Services (GACS)
jsneegas@uua.org

Submitted by: _____

Coordinator for: _____

Date: _____

NARRATIVE REPORT (organized by the following headlines):

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- 1) What changes would you make in your job description?
- 2) Why would make each of these changes?
- 3) Do you feel that you had too much/not enough responsibility? Explain.

COMMUNICATION:

- 1) Were you given sufficient information to plan for your job?
- 2) How well/poorly did the Local Arrangements Chair (LAC) communicate with you prior to GA? During GA?
- 3) Did you need the help of the staff in the GA office? How helpful were they? Please elaborate with examples.
- 4) Were the LAC and/or the General Assembly Planning Committee (GAPC) responsive to your needs? If not, explain.
- 5) Did you get the materials you needed to do the job?
- 6) Did you ever feel that you received contradictory or misleading information? If so, explain.
- 7) Did you feel that you had sufficient notice when/if plans changed and you or your volunteers were asked to perform an additional task? If so, when did this happen and what was the result?
- 8) Please describe when and how you contacted your volunteers prior to GA. Please attach samples of any letters/faxes/e-mail you used.
- 9) During GA, how did you communicate with your volunteers?
- 12) What changes would you recommend next year to improve communications?

SCHEDULING:

- 1) What criteria did you use in scheduling your volunteers?
- 2) After they were scheduled, approximately how many of them had to be rescheduled?
- 3) Did you have a system for reaching volunteers to reschedule them? If so, what was it?
- 4) What were your major problems (if any) in scheduling your volunteers?
- 5) What suggestions would you have for next year as regards scheduling?

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS:

- 1) Did you have enough/too many/too few volunteers?
- 2) For your particular area, when did you have the greatest need for volunteers? The least? Please explain in detail how the numbers of volunteers should be scheduled in your area.
- 3) We tried to have at least two or three volunteers in the volunteer office who could be reassigned in an emergency. Did you need to use them? How did this work out?
- 4) Did you think your volunteers were kept busy enough? Overworked? Explain.

TRAINING:

- 1) When did you hold training session(s)?
- 2) Was the location adequate for training? If not, what should be arranged for next year?
- 3) How long was the training session? Was this enough time? Too much?
- 4) Who conducted the training?
- 5) What specific items were covered in the training?
- 6) What (if any) printed instruction did you give your volunteers? (Please attach a sample.)
- 7) Did most (all) volunteers attend training? If not, why not?
- 8) What suggestions would you offer for next year regards training?

OFFICE:

- 1) Was the size/configuration of the volunteer office sufficient for your needs? If not, what was missing?
- 2) Were the office hours convenient for you? Why or why not?
- 3) Did the office have the right supplies for your needs? If not, what should we add next year?
- 4) How would you rate the atmosphere in the office? (friendly, helpful, chaotic, goofy?)
- 5) Were the volunteers in the office helpful to you?

SUPPLIES:

- 1) Did you have the appropriate materials/supplies for your volunteers? If not, what areas need improvement for next year?
- 2) When you needed additional supplies, were you able to get them in a timely manner? If not, please explain.

SUCCESES:

- 1) Which areas of your job do you feel went best?
- 2) Why were these areas the most successful?

PROBLEMS:

- 1) What were your biggest problem areas this year?
- 2) Why do you think each problem occurred? (explain separately)

3) What should be done to solve that (those) problem(s) next year?

NURTURING:

- 1) Did the LAC/GAPC provide sufficient moral/physical support to you and your volunteers during GA? If not, what could we do to improve this important area next year?
- 2) What did you do to provide nurturing to your volunteers? What response(s) did you receive for your efforts?

AVOIDING FUTURE PROBLEMS:

- 1) There are always specific problem personalities among the GA attendees who cause considerable disruption to both volunteers and other attendees. Did you experience any of that this year? Please describe. How would you suggest that we prepare next year's volunteers to handle what will, no doubt, be repeats of the same problems?
- 2) If there are specific people who are again likely to cause a problem next year, please list their names. (This information will be held in confidence and shared only with the Volunteer Coordinator and the Director of the GACS. Your name will not be used as the source of this information.)
- 3) In some cases, there were volunteers who were inappropriately assigned or who probably should not be asked to volunteer again. If you had such people in your volunteer group, please list their names and explain what the problem with them was. (This information will be held in confidence and shared only with the Volunteer Coordinator and the Director of the GACS. Your name will not be used as the source of this information.)