



VSA Minnesota
Arts Ambassador Program
Roster Application Instructions

School Year 2013 - 2014
(September 1, 2013 – August 31, 2014)

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* Visit our website to download the **Application Form**.

VSA Minnesota General Information

Mission

VSA Minnesota's mission is to create a community where people with disabilities can learn through, participate in and access the arts. We are a non-profit organization, founded in 1986, that provides programs and services that make the arts available and accessible to Minnesotans with disabilities.

Values

VSA Minnesota is dedicated to ensuring that music, theater, dance, creative writing, visual and media arts play a part in the lives of all people. In addition, VSA Minnesota believes that experiences in the arts enhance personal growth, increase educational achievement and enable career success. Participation in the arts promotes acceptance and inclusion in all aspects of life.

History

VSA Minnesota is an affiliate of VSA - The International Organization on Arts and Disability, in Washington D.C. Each year millions of people participate in VSA programs through a nationwide network of 48 U.S. affiliates and in 68 affiliated organizations around the world. Formed in 1974 by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, 18 years before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, VSA was originally known as National Committee - Arts for the Handicapped. VSA has played a significant role over the years in changing society's attitudes toward people with disabilities. With that change, the organization has regularly looked at its own identity to ensure it is consistent with current attitudes and language used by the disability community.

VSA is not an acronym for our former name Very Special Arts nor for the other phrases we used such as Vision, Strength & Access. Words such as 'special' and 'handicapped' do not reflect current language trends in the United States and many other countries. Rather, VSA, VSA Minnesota and all of the other affiliates will acknowledge our former names and our history as being part of what brought us to where we are today and what informs our current composition.

The Evolution of the VSA name:
1974: National Committee - Arts for the Handicapped
1985: Very Special Arts
1999: VSA arts
2010: VSA



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Arts Ambassador Program

The Arts Ambassador Program is designed to bring professional artists with disabilities into classrooms to engage people of all ages and abilities in a presentation that discusses the Ambassador's art form, disability and work as a professional artist. Through this program, participants gain experience, knowledge and understanding about:

- various art forms including Dance, Literary Arts, Media Arts, Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts;
- the disability culture;
- the importance of and need for inclusion of people with disabilities in the arts; and
- the similarities that connect the human spirit of us all.

Arts Ambassadors presentations will offer new options to participants who have had limited exposure to particular art forms. Participants will be reminded of the capabilities of people with disabilities. The length of each presentation will be generally between 45-60 minutes which will include:

- The Ambassador speaking about or demonstrating their particular art form with time allowed for student questions and/or participation.
- A representative from VSA Minnesota will share information about artists with disabilities and will draw on materials available through organizational resources.

Each participant attending the presentation will be asked to complete a brief post-survey to assess their general awareness of disability, of the activity of people with disabilities in the arts and of their feelings about people with disabilities.

Presentations are scheduled according to requests as well as Ambassador availability. Requests vary in artistic disciplines, dependent upon the needs of site. VSA Minnesota's Arts in Education Coordinator (AEC) will work with designated staff to determine what (if any) presentation accommodations will need to be made based on age, disability and/or setting. Ambassadors design the presentation along with administrative support from the AEC. Visit our website to find out more about educational or community program settings eligibility.

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Arts Ambassador Roster

The Arts Ambassador Roster recognizes professional artists with disabilities as active, producing members of the Minnesota arts community. Each applicant is asked to state the nature of his/her disability. VSA Minnesota defines disability according to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

The Arts Ambassadors Roster will be assembled in a digital format (print upon request) and sent to Minnesota educational and community program settings in order to promote the program. This Roster is also listed online making it more efficient and accurate to address the needs of each setting who wish to utilizing presenters in their programming. Visit our website to view this **Roster**.

- The primary purpose of this Roster is to identify and promote **high quality professional artists with disabilities**. The Roster is intended as a resource for educational or community program settings seeking public speakers, workshop presenters or performers who address the topic of arts and disability. While VSA Minnesota will promote the Roster, there is no guarantee of work associated with this resource listing.
- The Roster has a secondary purpose to **increase participants' awareness of the importance of and need for inclusion of people with disabilities in the arts**.

Eligibility and Commitment

The Arts Ambassador Roster is for individual artists with disabilities. There is no specific eligibility requirement in terms of numbers of years of experience, or any stage of career including emerging to mature. However, applicants should understand that this Roster is designed to promote individuals who demonstrate past experience and success as a public speaker, workshop presenter or performer for educational or community program settings.

Arts Ambassador Roster applicants must be:

- 18 years of age or older;
- a resident of Minnesota;
- professional artists with expertise in one or more arts disciplines; and
- comfortable working with youth and teachers in educational settings.

Arts Ambassadors accepted to the Roster:

- will remain on the Roster indefinitely, contingent on annual update (see below);
- are independent contractors for VSA Minnesota and, as such, are responsible for his or her own taxes, and property and workers' compensation insurance.

Assignments for presentation are determined by several factors, including, but not limited to:

- the ambassador's level of experience;
- stated interests;
- time availability;
- self promotion through our program;
- location of the request; or
- arts discipline requested.

While there is no set presentation format, there are still general principles and goals for Arts Ambassador Presentations:

- Venues and details will be determined and organized by VSA Minnesota staff, although Ambassadors are encouraged to promote themselves to educational or community program settings through VSA Minnesota;
- Requesting sites will be required to pay a \$125 fee to assist in covering a small portion of program expenses. The majority of programming expenses will be covered by VSA Minnesota;
- Following a request, Ambassadors will work out details of the presentation with VSA Minnesota staff;
- Ambassadors will be accompanied by VSA Minnesota staff to all presentations.
- VSA Minnesota staff will be available to transport the Ambassadors to and from the site;
- Presentations will include an introduction by VSA Minnesota staff highlighting information about VSA programs and services, (a maximum of 10 minutes);
- Ambassadors will deliver a 45-60 minute presentation which should include a brief demonstration, performance and/or participation in a hands-on arts based activity;
- VSA Minnesota staff will be responsible for the evaluation of each presentation and overall project;
- A simple contract between VSA Minnesota and the Ambassador will precede each presentation;
- When an Ambassador's travels extends over meal time and/or overnight, expenditures will be paid for by VSA Minnesota;
- Ambassadors will get paid \$75-\$100 for metro based presentations.
- Ambassadors will get paid \$100-\$150 for Greater Minnesota presentations.

Annual Update

Accepted Ambassadors will remain on the Roster indefinitely, contingent on the submission of an annual update. The update will consist of a current resume and evidence of pursuing career advancement or creation of new work. The purpose of the update process is to verify that Rostered Ambassadors are remaining active in the field.

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Application Materials

Applications will be accepted on an on-going basis in the disciplines of Dance, Literary Arts, Media Arts, Music, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts. Artists may apply in more than one discipline. There is no minimum or maximum number of Ambassadors selected for a particular discipline or for the Roster overall, it is at the discretion of VSA Minnesota.

There are FOUR components of the application form; these pages are designed as fill-in forms, to be completed on a computer, and may not be reformatted. In addition, there

are FIVE supporting components to be enclosed (one optional). Visit our website to download the **Application Form**.

Application Forms

1. **Cover Pages.** Contact information, other basic details.
2. **Area of Experience.** A chart to provide an overview of your experience and expertise.
3. **References.** References should include at least one educator or a staff member at a cultural organization or others who can attest to your work.
4. **Narrative Questions.** These questions present an opportunity to express your personal approach and your expertise.

Supporting Components

1. **Biographical Statement.** The biographical statement should read as a quick introduction to who you are as an artist, a person with a disability or include a brief summary of your professional/educational background. No more than 125 words.
2. **Sample Presentation.** Your presentation outline should be no more than 2 pages long, and should include the following elements:
 - topic(s);
 - purpose/learning goals/outcomes;
 - make clear what you want audience *to know* and *be able to do* by the end of the presentation, as well as how you will assess these learning goals;
 - include lists of vocabulary/skills/concepts to be addressed, and other related educational elements as appropriate;
 - how will you address your education/training, professional work;
 - how will you address disability education and awareness; and
 - logistical details and requirements, i.e. grade level(s), time frame, materials, space, visual aides, etc;
3. **Resume(s).** Resume should address your training and experience as both an individual artist and a presenter. You may submit two separate resumes or one resume that addresses both areas. Resume(s) should be 1-2 pages in length.
4. **Work Sample(s).** A work sample that demonstrates your abilities and achievements as an individual artist. Optional: An additional work sample to demonstrate your work as a presenter in a K-12 classroom. Work samples will be accepted in the following formats:
 - Videos files attached or on DVDs or– 3-5 minute segment, note selected track(s) Accepted video formats include .wmv, .flv, .mpg.

- Audio files attached or on CDs or– 3-5 minute segment, note selected track(s). Accepted audio file formats include .mp3, .wav, or .wma.
- Digital images attached or on CDs/DVDs – up to 10 images. Accepted digital image formats include .jpg, .gif, or .pdf.
- Digital text documents attached or hard copies of literary work – up to 10 pages. Accepted digital text formats include: doc., .rtf, or .pdf.

Work Sample Notes:

- Performing artists are strongly encouraged to submit video rather than still photos.
- Do not submit original manuscripts or artwork.
- Work samples should ideally show current/recent work.
- All work samples should be clearly labeled with the name of the artist, the title of the work, the date of recording/date of work, and, if applicable, the specific role of the artist within the piece.
- Please include a **work sample description**, the title and date of the work, and one or two sentences to provide additional description, i.e., materials used, or context or purpose of the work, etc. If the work sample demonstrates a collaborative effort, please be very clear about your personal contributions to the work. These notes about appropriate work samples are guidelines – ultimately, the point is to demonstrate a high level of artistry and quality.
- Work samples are returned after final action only if a self-addressed, postage-paid mailer is included with your application materials. The return postage and size of return mailer must be correct or the work sample cannot be returned.
- If you have a work sample that is available online, you may include the web link with the work sample description.

- 5. Photographic Image.** Images should be a CURRENT publicity photo of yourself or your group, and ideally would show you “doing” or “teaching” your art. You may submit up to three digital images. High-quality digital images are preferred.

Supplemental Material (optional). You may submit one or two additional documents, with a combined total of no more than 2 pages, to support your application. Examples include:

- Letter of recommendation;
- Newspaper or other media review of your work (as an artist);
- Documentation of work with students (a program from an event; written assessments; etc.)

Formatting and Preparation

Submitted materials (non digital format) are preferred to be typed on 8½” x 11” white paper, standard, easy-to-read font (Arial, such as this), 12pt. or larger and a 1” margin.

Please include your name and date at the top of each page, and do not exceed the number of pages allowed for each section.

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Evaluation Process

VSA Minnesota will determine eligibility of applications received, based on the criteria listed below. In some cases, the applicant and/or the applicant's references may be contacted for additional information or follow-up questions.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation of Roster applications will include the following criteria:

Artistic Excellence & Experience

- Level of quality/mastery in one or more artistic disciplines (e.g. skill, technique, innovation, purpose), as shown in written responses and in work sample;
- Experience as an individual artist;
- Artistic training, both completed and ongoing.

Presentation Excellence & Experience

- Experience and skills working as a public speaker;
- Experience and skills working with children, youth or adults with and without disabilities;
- Ability to develop a complete and comprehensive presentation;

Communication & Organizational Skills

- Clear and informative narrative responses;
- Ability to communicate effectively with both students and teachers;
- Overall quality and completeness of application.

Additional Application Criteria

- Credible and appropriate references;
- Unique skills, abilities, or qualities not addressed above.

Notification

We recommend that you allow sufficient time to review the contents of your application. All applicants will receive notification as to the status of their application within one week following the interview. All applications must include all the required information and materials to be accepted for review by VSA Minnesota.

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Assistance

The AEC is available to answer questions about these guidelines and provide assistance regarding the application process: contact Craig Dunn directly at 612-332-3888, 800-801-3883 or email: info@vsamn.org. If you have extensive questions, or would like to have a draft of your application reviewed prior to submitting it, please plan to schedule an appointment.

Checklist

One set of the following application materials, assembled in the following order:

- Application Forms: Cover Page, Experience/Expertise Chart, References, and Narrative Responses (4 pages max.)
- Biographical Statement (125 words max.)
- Presentation outline (2 pages max.)
- Resume(s) (1 or 2 resumes, each resume 2 pages max.)
- Work Sample(s) (optional: include postage-paid, self-addressed mailer for work sample returns)
- Work Sample Description (100 words max.)
- Photographic Image (3 images max.)
- Supplemental material (optional; 2 pages max.)

Deadline & Delivery Instructions

There is no deadline; completed **Arts Ambassador Roster Application Forms** are processed on-going. Applications forms are accepted via email, mail, or fax. A digital copy of the application sent as an email attachment is preferred but not mandatory.

- Email applications to: info@vsamn.org
- Mail applications to:
Attention: Arts in Education Coordinator
VSA Minnesota
528 Hennepin Ave., Suite 305
Minneapolis, MN 55403
- Fax applications to: 612-305-0132
- Applications may also be hand-delivered to the VSA Minnesota office at the address above during normal business hours 8:00AM – 5:00PM, Monday – Friday, please call 612-332-3888 or 800-801-3883 in advance.

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VSA Minnesota provides equal employment opportunity to all applicants and employees without regard to race, color, gender, marital status, age, national origin, veteran status, sexual orientation, disability, status with regard to public assistance, political affiliation, membership or activity in a local commission, creed, religion or testing positive to any communicable disease that medical evidence indicates poses no health or safety threat to others and that does not interfere with fulfilling job duties.

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