

York County Heritage Trust Junior Docent Program 2010



**Program Guidelines and Handbook for Junior Docents at
the York County Heritage Trust**

The Junior Docent Program



The Junior Docent program at the York County Heritage Trust is a unique and one of only a few programs in the area that provides teenagers with the opportunity to volunteer at a historic site, and experience many aspects of work in a museum. The Trust's program is open to high school students who have completed the tenth grade (or requirements thereof). Junior docents work with the Coordinator of Educational Programming at the York County Heritage Trust's Colonial Complex, completing a wide variety of tasks while generally assisting with the daily operation of the site. The Coordinator of Educational Programming is the direct supervisor of all junior docents, and completes their scheduling and work assignments. Any questions about these issues should be raised with the Coordinator of Educational Programming. Please note that this is a competitive program and that not all applicants will be accepted.

Junior Docent Expectations & Requirements

A large part of being a junior docent is having fun, meeting new people, and making new friends. However, there are certain expectations that the York County Heritage Trust has of the junior docents.

- 1) **The Front Line-** Junior Docents are front-line volunteers and more importantly historic interpreters. In museums and interpretation, front-line staff or volunteers are those that work directly with visitors and the public, and are the face of the organization. Front-line staff and volunteers make or break the visitors' experiences and therefore must create a welcoming environment and be as informative as possible. Museums are a customer service oriented industry. It is very important that visitors have a quality and enjoyable experience. In order to survive, like any business, we need visitors to come back, and to tell people about their visit. Word of mouth is one of the most important ways that historic sites are able to advertise. Therefore, you must remember, we are here for the visitors. Keep in mind, visitors contact us when they are happy, and more often, when they are upset. Docents are expected to carry themselves in a courteous and professional manner, giving visitors their full attention.
 - a. If a visitor comes up to you and you are in a conversation with a friend, you stop that conversation to speak to the visitor.
 - b. If you are having a bad day, never take it out on the visitor.

c. You will run into rude visitors; it is part of the job, and something you have to deal with politely- after the tour. However, no visitor has the right to yell at you, use foul language, or make you feel uncomfortable. This has not been a problem in the past, but if one of these situations should come up, you have permission to stop the tour, and get the Coordinator of Educational Programming. Please do not try to handle the situation yourself, by responding. The Coordinator of Educational Programming will take over, and deal with any problems, including finishing the tour.

d. You are expected to act professionally at all times.

- i. Be aware of your conversations, especially when visitors are around, and change it if necessary- If your discussion would not be appropriate in school or other formal settings and situations you should not be having it around a visitor or at the Colonial Complex in general.
- ii. A good rule of thumb is to keep your hands to yourself- at all times and in all circumstances
- iii. Objects in the Living History House should be used according to their intended use ONLY
- iv. Dress Appropriately! Junior Docent T-shirts will be issued as a required uniform. Otherwise, we do not have a dress code, aside from a generally neat appearance. Shorts and t-shirts are fine, but please keep in mind that you will be giving tours to people of all ages and are representing the York County Heritage Trust. Clothing should not be excessively tight or baggy, form fitting, or low cut (shirts and shorts should be of the appropriate

length). Secondly, clothing should not have inappropriate advertisements, logos, symbols, words/names, such as foul language. Again, in general if it is not tolerated in a school setting, you should not wear it at the Colonial Complex.

2) **Stewards of the Colonial Complex and the Bonham House-** Volunteering at a historic site comes with a very important responsibility. As an interpreter you are in care of historic structures and objects. This means that as a tour guide and volunteer you have a responsibility to protect the buildings and the objects, preserving these resources for future generations.

- a. Anyone found to be participating in destructive behavior involving the buildings or the objects will face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.
- b. When giving tours to the public, please tell the visitors not to touch anything, and enforce it, no matter who it is.
- c. Junior docents may from time to time help with the cleaning of the objects in the building or with common collection care and maintenance. No junior docent can help with the cleaning, or touch any objects, until receiving training from the Coordinator of Educational Programming or the Director of Exhibits and Collections. This should not be done without the presence of the Coordinator of Educational Programming.

3) **Tour Guides: The primary responsibility and duty of junior docents is to serve as tour guides for the Colonial Complex. This is not an optional task. This is the main component of the program.** Junior docents are responsible for providing tours of the

Colonial Complex to various public visitors that may include adults, children, and standard tour groups such as schools, camps, bus tours, and etc.... Tours are approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour long, and include the Golden Plough Tavern, the General Gates House, the Bobb Log House, and the Colonial Courthouse. Tours are available on the hour, at 10:00, 11:00, 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00. (Given the ability to provide multiple tours, visitors will be accommodated when practicable. For instance we may honor a 12:00 clock tour depending on the day's schedule). All junior docents must be approved by the Coordinator of Educational Programming before giving a tour to visitors on their own.

- a. Docents are required to review and learn the interpretive manuals and guides related to the Colonial Complex in order to produce an **original** and **accurate** tour. As a measure of progress **before** docents are permitted to conduct tours, docents must pass a written test on the tour material with a 90% or higher. The test will include both objective and subjective (essay) questions. Docents will be allowed to take the written test multiple times until they reach the 90% mark.
- b. While learning the materials, docents will observe multiple tours conducted by YCHT staff and volunteers. When docents (having passed the test) feel ready to conduct tours, they will be observed on their first 3 tours before they are able to conduct tours independently. In general, once docents are approved as guides they are expected to conduct tours individually as this provides the best visitor experience (Exceptions will be made by the Coordinator of Education Programming for specific situations). Docents are permitted to request observers for any tour (either YCHT staff or other docents). Unusual situations or demands

by visitors will always be handled by YCHT staff. Inform YCHT staff of any concerns you may have about a possible tour group.

- c. Docents are expected to actively work toward being a functional tour guide on a regular basis and within an **acceptable time frame**.
- 4) **Living History-** Junior docents also have the opportunity participate in our living history programs or our other special events both throughout the summer and fall. During the summer time frame historic costumes are worn on Fridays and Saturdays.

5) **Expectations for living history, special events, and costumed days:**

- a. No modern clothing or jewelry can be visible (to the extent possible). The only exception to the rule is for shoes, which should be very plain, to pass for period shoes.
- b. Conversations around visitors must be limited to your demonstrations or the tours- please don't talk about the latest movies, etc around them
- c. Try to get the visitors involved and participating in the demonstrations. For instance, ask them if they want to give weaving a try.
- d. Please take care of the living history clothing that we allow you to borrow
- e. Junior docents are not allowed to handle weapons of any kind.
- f. **You MUST attempt to interact with the visitors**

Attendance- the Coordinator of Educational Programming will create a summer schedule for all junior docents. If there is a schedule conflict, you must tell the Coordinator of Educational Programming as soon as possible- otherwise, you will be expected to volunteer that day. Also, please arrive promptly to all events and days you are a scheduled to volunteer as your anticipated presence is of importance. Typically, the daily schedule is 9:45 to 4:00

(Tues-Sat), however docents are always granted a degree of scheduling flexibility. Docents must be available for 8 full weeks during the summer or cannot be unavailable for more than two full weeks. Docents must be available to participate at least two days a week, and must also be available for a minimum of six rotating Saturdays. Saturdays are our heaviest visitation day with all of our tour slots usually being filled. The Trust is open Tuesday-Saturday and open to the public from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. If you will be late, or will not be able to come at the last minute on a scheduled day or event, please notify the Coordinator of Educational Programming by phone at 717- 845-2951, unless we are scheduled to be at the Bonham House, in which case it is 717- 845-2422. Any email notifications must be sent at least three days before the event. Unexplained absences or continual absences without notification will result in termination from the program.

6) **Activities-** In order to introduce the public history and museum field to docents, and provide a background on interpretation and serving as a tour guide Docent's will be required to read *Interpreting Our Heritage*, by Freeman Tilden. Docent's will also be required to pass a written quiz on the book (70%). *Please note that this is a proposed activity dependent upon program funding. It is proposed that program funds be used to purchase the books. The Trust will retain the books; however docents will sign books out for personal use and will be responsible for any lost or damaged books.*

The Coordinator of Educational Programming will assign various activities and projects for the junior docents to complete throughout the summer. These are generally useful in learning new skills and crafts from the 1700s, and may include things such as learning how to make baskets. The junior docents might also be asked to assist with site maintenance such as tending the historic four square garden or helping to move chairs

and or program materials for various events. Routine museum work such as monitoring collections and maintaining site signage may also be asked of docents.

Docents also have the opportunity to assist and participate at the Trust's history summer camps for youth and also possibly at the Trust's and York County Parks Department Archaeology Camps that run for two weeks during the summer.

7) **Project Requirement**

As an independent project, docents are required to read one non-fiction historical monograph focusing on the American Colonial and Revolutionary eras, i.e. the 18th Century (1680s-1790s) of at least 150 pages. As a project docents must write a summary of the book, 2-3 pages double spaced standard font. The Coordinator of Educational Programming will approve all books and periodically discuss the book/topics throughout the summer. It is urged that Docents pick books that will relate to ideas and themes that will assist them as colonial era tour guides. The Coordinator of Educational Programming and the Trust will have various titles that may be borrowed, however, it might be possible for the Trust to purchase books for docents who are unable to do so independently. (*This opportunity is dependent on program funding. The Trust would retain bought books and again loan them out- with docents being responsible for lost or damaged items*). The purpose of the reading and summary is first to expose docents interested in pursuing history at the college level a typical college type "academic atmosphere." Keep in mind docents will have ample to time to read and complete their project while volunteering at the Colonial Complex. A suggested bibliography will be provided to the docents. Projects must be submitted by the deadline – date to be given near the start of the program.

- 8) **Living History Event policies-** If you are planning to come to an event, you **MUST** respond to the Coordinator of Educational Programming. Requests will either be solicited by email or by phone for those without email. Unusual schedules (such as having to leave early) must be discussed with the coordinator of educational programming prior to the event date. Those who show up unexpectedly will be asked to leave.
- 9) **Behavior-** In general the Junior Docent Program has not had major behavioral issues. As outlined in the above and below sections; inappropriate behavior will be dealt with on a situational basis. Major offenses and reoccurring problems will not be tolerated. Uncooperative participants or docents that have continual behavioral issues will be dismissed from the program. It is assumed that Junior Docents *want* to participate in the program, are willing to learn, and will respect and follow all of the program rules, requirements and guidelines.
- 10) **MP3 Players, video games, and Cell Phones:** Junior Docents may bring their MP3 players and cell phones, but there are restrictions. MP3 players and portable video games must stay on the third floor of the Gates House. Cell phones may remain with the junior docents, but they are not to be used unless a parent calls, or in the case of an emergency. **NO TEXTING, PLAYING GAMES, OR PLAYING MUSIC WITH CELL PHONES WILL BE ALLOWED.** The York County Heritage Trust will not be responsible for any electronics brought onto the premises.
- 11) **Junior Docent room-** The third floor of the Gates House is for the Junior Docents to use for eating lunch, changing for living history events, storing personal items, or as a limited work space. The use of this space is a privilege. All food and trash must be removed

from the third floor each day. All materials should be put away neatly, as well. The York County Heritage Trust will not be responsible for any personal items that are lost or damaged while on the premises. Please use good judgment in deciding what to bring. Generally speaking, bring only necessary items. Abuse of the Junior Docent room will result in this privilege being denied to all docents.

12) Signatures acknowledging receipt and review of this handbook- Junior Docents and their parents/guardians must review this handbook and have a signed form on file before their first day of participation. It is strongly recommended that the handbook be reviewed and signed prior to completing a program application. Participation will not be permitted until all paperwork is received.

The Handbook rules, provisions, statements, policies, requirements, and descriptions are subject to change at anytime with or without notice.

I verify that I received and read the Junior Docent Handbook for 2010. I understand what is expected, the requirements, and general provisions of Junior Docents while participating and volunteering at the York County Heritage Trust. I agree to behave according to these expectations, or accept the consequences as detailed in the 2010 handbook.

Signed: _____
Junior Docent

Date

Signed: _____
Parent or Guardian

Date