

# NIAD ART CENTER

Volunteer Handbook

I like  
art.



# WHO WE ARE

Our mission is...

**To promote creative expression, independence, dignity and community integration for adults with disabilities.**

How we do this...

Every business day we work with approximately 35 adult artists with disabilities. We provide staff in each work area as well as studio aides. We assist our artists in the art making process. We help educate them about art history and contemporary art. We create exhibition opportunities for their art. We sell their art. And we advocate on their behalf.

Volunteers are an essential and valuable part of the Art Center. We're enriched by your skills, talents, and viewpoints. You bring an important and dedicated voice of the community into our conversations. You expand our abilities to work with our artists. We cannot do this without you.

## YOUR SCHEDULE

The studio staff is at the Art Center from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. The galleries are open Monday through Friday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and 12:00 – 4:00 PM on Saturdays. Our opening receptions are the second Saturday of the month from 1:00 – 4:00 PM.

The studio art program operates from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM with a 15-minute break at 10:45 AM and an hour break for lunch at noon, Monday through Friday.

As a volunteer, choose the hours that work for you and then you tell us. We will do our best to accommodate your schedule, but, we cannot guarantee that we can (it depends on other volunteers, our staff schedule or other factors.) We may need to modify your schedule.

The day you are here, check in first with the staff member who oversees your area. Our priorities may have changed since you were last here.

No matter when you volunteer, we request that you let us know as soon as possible if you cannot volunteer as scheduled (call 510-620-0290 or email to [gallery@niadart.org](mailto:gallery@niadart.org)).

As a volunteer, we need to track your hours. Some of our funders want to know about the vitality of our volunteer program. To answer their questions, we need to provide them with data. We get this data by tabulating everyone's donated hours. And we get this information from you. So, be sure to sign in and out on the volunteer sheet at the front desk.

After you begin volunteering at NIAD, we will plan a meeting with you and your area's manager after your first month. At the meeting we will see how your experience with the Art Center is going and check in about any needed changes. Of course, we encourage you to check in by setting up an appointment, if and when you find it is necessary.

At the end of two months, we will have another meeting with you and your manager to fine tune anything. And then we will check in once more after a year of service.

## **A FEW QUICK THINGS**

We ask that you restrict your cell phone use to breaks and lunchtime. To maintain the lower noise levels in the studio, please make your calls outside the studio, in the courtyard or galleries.

The Art Center and our artists love attention, so feel free to post about us on your social media. We only ask that you check with the artists first to see if they mind having their photo taken. A few do, most don't.

Volunteering at NIAD means working with and respecting people. Language is one of the easiest way to show respect. When talking about our artists we try to say "an adult with autism" or "an artist with a developmental disability" instead of "an autistic adult" or "a developmentally disabled teenager." You can hear the difference, right? And, of course, please avoid using profanity for this same reason.

Besides giving you our gratitude for all that you do, we also offer you a discount on your purchases in the gallery. If something strikes your eye, you can have 15% off. The discount doesn't apply to the greeting cards and anything priced under \$20. If you see something big that you want, but cannot afford it at the moment, ask about our layaway plan.

Also, to honor your efforts, we have a special part of our Thanksgiving celebration (in November) dedicated to our volunteers. Heck, we even give one of you a prize for the year's best effort.

## THE BASICS OF THE ART CENTER

A Daily Log is kept in the kitchen. Your observations may be needed to record anything out of the ordinary that happens when you are present. For example, if an artist says that he is ill, wants to go home, had no breakfast, etc. it is reported to one of the staff, who will write it in the log. In fact, any time you notice something out of the ordinary, please check in with a staff member.

If you suspect any artist of being the victim of abuse and or neglect, please tell a staff member immediately. As a mandated reporter, NIAD must notify Adult Protective Services. We will investigate and take the appropriate steps.

A number of NIAD artists have a seizure disorder. Seizures may occur in the studio and will present differently for each individual, for example: some may have a dazed expression or sudden jerky body movements, while others may have vocalizations, tremors and shaking, and falling down. If you see an artist begin to have a seizure, get a staff person immediately. Afterwards, you may be asked for your observations. They will be included in a written report.

For a number of reasons, it is against NIAD policy for our staff and artists to socialize outside the studio. As a volunteer, you must also follow this policy. This doesn't mean you shouldn't say hello if you meet our artists out in the world. It means that you should not plan events with them for after work, visit their home, or email them directly. If a NIAD artist contacts you outside of the Center, please tell us.

NIAD is committed to providing a work environment free of harassment. Harassment is unlawful whether it involves coworker harassment, harassment by a supervisor or manager, or by persons, including customers, volunteers, or artists doing business with or for NIAD. Please tell staff immediately if you experience harassment or discrimination.

## THE BASICS OF THE STUDIO

If you plan to help in the studio, please continue reading. If you are planning to work in another area, you can skip ahead

For more than 30 years, NIAD's philosophy has been to encourage each of our artist's independent art making and creative exploration.

To do this, we ask questions about the art, provide materials, share ideas and challenge the artists.

However, we don't collaborate with the artists nor do we make marks, write or work on the artist's piece. Artists may ask for your assistance on techniques. Feel free to show them as much as you can or if you don't know how to do something, just ask a staff member.

When assisting a NIAD artist, provide choices. Offering choices is not collaborating, but making suggestions is collaborating. Encourage them to look at options and decide what they want to do. Ultimately, the work is their work, not yours.

This does not mean you need to be hands-off in the studio. You can support the smooth functioning of the studio by maintaining an open ear and attentive eye on the environment, particularly the noise level — some artists become anxious as the studio decibel level increases. Feel free to help us encourage artists to be less noisy (if there is an outburst). And please be proactive in matters of safety. If you see someone doing something dangerous, get a staff person involved.

Fieldtrips are essential to our program. Not only do they extend what is experienced in the studio, they allow our artists to interact with other artists, understand the wide variety of artistic expression, and deepen community involvement. When on a field trip, we are responsible for taking each artist's emergency tag and the first aid kit. Staff may ask for your help with this. Consider putting staff phone-numbers in your cell phone, in case you get separated. We, of course, welcome your ideas for field trips.

## **AND ONE LAST THING**

### **We at NIAD value:**

- Diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility
- Open, straightforward communication
- Support, respect, and safe spaces
- Our community and the opportunity to work together
- The environment
- Artistic growth and hard work
- Exploration, change, taking risks, and failing forward
- Trust, mindfulness, and self-ownership
- The needs and perspectives of others
- Humor, fun, and joy!