

Volunteer Handbook

March 2026



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME	3
THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM	4
Volunteer Mission Statement	4
Requirements	4
Volunteer Opportunities	4
Benefits	4
VOLUNTEER POLICIES & PROCEDURES	5-7
Orientation	5
Training	5
Identification & Recording Volunteer Time	5
Recognition	5
Punctuality	5
General Appearance & Attire	5
Conduct	6
Handling Visitor Complaints	6
Volunteer Complaints	6
Volunteer Performance	6
Lost Children/Parent	6
Lost Articles	6
Museum Property	6
Parking, Entering and Exiting Building	6
Resignation	7
Dismissal/Termination	7
3 Strike Rule	7
GUIDELINES FOR MUSEUM'S EDUCATION PROGRAMS	8-9
Expectations in Classroom Setting	8
Modeling	8
Behavior	8
Language and Conduct of Classroom Discussion	9
Handling People with Special Needs	9
EMERGENCIES & SAFETY	10-11
Fire Safety Policy & Procedures	10
Tornado Safety Policy & Procedures	10
Accidents & Injuries	10
Hazard Reporting	10
Power Outage	10-11
Inclement Weather Policy	11
Security	11
THE HASTINGS MUSEUM	12-14

Mission Statement	12
Museum History	12-13
Museum Map	14

Welcome From Our Director

Welcome to the Hastings Museum volunteer program. Volunteers are an essential part of any museum and we are very excited to have you on our team.

Hastings Museum volunteers are the cogs that keep the Museum moving forward. From special programs and events to behind-the-scenes work, volunteers like you make such a difference. No matter how many hours you donate a year, we appreciate every minute that you choose to spend with us. We hope that you, too, find your time at the Museum enjoyable and rewarding.

On behalf of the Museum Board and staff, **“Thank you! You are making a difference.”**

Teresa Kreutzer-Hodson
Museum Director

The Volunteer Program

Volunteer Mission Statement:

The mission of the Hastings Museum Volunteer Program is to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities which enhance and serve the mission, services, programs and activities of the museum.

Requirements:

- Volunteers must be at least 12 years of age.
- All volunteers must pass a background check.
- All volunteers must be able to attend orientation.

As policy the Hastings Museum does not accept volunteers who are fulfilling court ordered community service for the following reasons:

1. The court requires individuals fulfilling court ordered community to be supervised and Hastings Museum volunteers often work unsupervised.
2. The Museum often works with minors who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.
3. The Museum houses numerous artifacts, exhibits, and equipment of great value.

Some Benefits of being a Hastings Museum Volunteer include:

- Free Museum Membership for Volunteer & Museum Store Discounts (after 50 hours worked in a calendar year)
- Free Museum Swag (after 50 hours worked in a calendar year)
- The opportunity to meet others that share interests

To receive these benefits, you must be considered an active volunteer. This means that you have volunteered within the past year for the museum.

Volunteer Procedures and Conduct

The Hastings Museum Volunteer Program utilizes qualified individuals without regard to race, gender, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, veteran or military status.

Orientation

All volunteers are required to attend a brief orientation prior to their first day of service. The orientation provides an overview of the museum's history, practices, policies and procedures and discussions regarding providing quality customer service and interaction with museum visitors.

Training

Hastings Museum staff members will readily provide the necessary tools and information to fulfill assigned tasks. Prior experience is not required. Successful completion of training may be required for certain duties. Training may include attending classes and/or brief training sessions.

Identification & Recording Volunteer Time

All volunteers are required to **record their start time in the Volunteer Logbook**, located on the Visitor Services counter, and wear the appropriate volunteer identification while on duty. Upon completion of their duty, volunteers will **record the time they finished in the Volunteer Logbook** and return their identification. It is important for us to have an accurate record of the time you donate to the Museum. We use this information for accountability in cases of emergency and for grant writing.

Recognition

Each year during National Volunteer Week, the museum is delighted to recognize our volunteers with **a day of free admission** to the museum for a guest and themselves.

Those outstanding volunteers who have provided 50 or more hours of service within the calendar year will be recognized with a **museum membership**, which is reviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator twice a year.

The Hastings Museum participates in the **President's Volunteer Service** award program. Awards are presented during National Volunteer Month each April for service provided the previous calendar year.

Punctuality

Please arrive on time for when you were scheduled. **If you are unable to arrive as scheduled, please inform the Volunteer Coordinator by calling as soon as possible, ideally a 24 hour notice can be given.**

If you are unable to report for an assignment as scheduled or if you are ill, contact the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible and **no later than 2 hours prior to the beginning of your scheduled shift.**

General Appearance & Attire

- Volunteers should practice good personal hygiene.
- Clothing and shoes should be clean, well fitted (neither tight nor sagging), and appropriate for the work environment.
- During Summer Fun camps, volunteers are to wear shorts or leggings under dresses and skirts.
- Tank tops must cover shoulders. No spaghetti straps allowed.
- Visible tattoos are permitted as long as they don't contain offensive language or graphics.
- Hair, beards and mustaches should be clean and well kept.
- Political clothing, hats, keychains, and the like are not allowed while volunteering.

Conduct

Our goal at Hastings Museum is to provide our visitors with an enjoyable learning experience and one in which

they will want to revisit again. Please remember the impression volunteers give to our visitors reflects upon the entire museum. It is important to the museum that our volunteers reflect the professionalism the museum upholds. Volunteers should always smile, be courteous and give our visitors their full attention. Volunteers should be familiar with the different services and exhibit areas in order to answer questions and provide directions for visitors.

To achieve our goal of being the best professional museum possible, the following policies have been made:

- No smoking or tobacco use while on duty.
- Be respectful of museum property
- Avoid using profanity, crude jokes or gestures while working.
- Sexual harassment by or directed toward any volunteer is prohibited as stated in the City of Hastings Ordinance No. 3235 and will not be tolerated.
- Do not leave your position unless properly relieved or told to do so by your supervisor.
- Use of media devices including **cell phones are not permitted while on duty**. If you need to use your cell phone for an **emergency, seek approval from Katie (volunteer coordinator) or Russanne Hoff (Curator of Education)**.

Handling Visitor Complaints

- Remain friendly, helpful and courteous.
- Take immediate action by contacting the Volunteer Coordinator or Visitor Services so that they may address the complaint directly.

Volunteer Complaints

- Volunteers may submit a formal complaint (in writing/e-mail, in person or by phone) to the Volunteer Coordinator.
- The Volunteer Coordinator will meet with the complainant to gather necessary information, discuss the complaint with appropriate staff if necessary, and respond to complainant in e-mail, by phone or in person.

Lost Children/Parent

Escort the child or parent immediately to the Volunteer Coordinator, unless they cannot be immediately located, then escort the child to Visitor Services. Notify Visitor Services so she/he can make an announcement over the museum public address system to aid in locating the lost child or parent.

Lost Articles

Lost articles are immediately turned into Visitor Services.

Museum Property

Museum property such as books, tools, equipment, etc. will not be removed from the museum nor borrowed for personal use. We strongly recommend leaving personal items at home.

Parking, Entering and Exiting Building

To accommodate museum visitors, volunteers are required to park in the southern end of the parking lot. Volunteers use the main lobby entrance when entering and exiting the building. Emergency doors are NOT to be used for regular entry or exiting.

Resignation

The Volunteer Coordinator needs to be notified when a volunteer wishes to resign his/her position.

Dismissal/Termination

- A volunteer, who has not worked during a 2-year period, or cannot be reached by the Volunteer Coordinator, will be considered inactive.
- A volunteer, whose performance or attitude is disruptive or interferes with an activity, may be dismissed from that event or activity by the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator will follow up with the volunteer and staff involved to try to correct the situation.
- Serious violations are cause for immediate discharge/termination. Violations will be brought by the Volunteer Coordinator to the attention of the Curator of Education, who will determine whether to terminate the services of the volunteer.

Three Strike Rule

- If a volunteer earns three strikes, they will be discharged/terminated from the volunteer program.
- A volunteer may get a strike for things such as (but not limited to):
 - Failing to show up to a volunteer job without notice
 - Regularly canceling your volunteer shift
 - Wearing inappropriate clothing. See page 5 for more information on our dress code policies.
 - Inappropriate language. See page 6 for more information on expected language.
 - Stealing
 - Bullying. See page 6 and 8 for what expectations are of our volunteers.
 - Unwelcomed contact. This includes a volunteer initiating behaviors such as having child sit in your lap or giving a hug.
 - Breaking conduct as outline in the manual
- Volunteers will be informed if they have earned a strike in writing

Please note- if a volunteer misses an event due to family emergency, illness, or the like- it will not count as a strike.

Some violations of our policy will result in an automatic termination of your volunteer status. The volunteer will be notified if this happens.

Guidelines for Volunteers Interacting with Children in the Museum’s Education Programs

If you are volunteering to aide a teacher in an educational class and are working with children the following guidelines must be adhered to.

Expectations in Classroom Setting

- A Volunteer is Representative of the museum and in a classroom setting functions as a “Teacher’s Assistant”.
 - Prior to the start of a class the teacher will provide direction and go over with the volunteer what the expectations and needs of the class will be. This includes, but not limited to; setting up activities, crafts, interacting, encouraging and helping with children, preparing snacks & drinks, getting children in a line to enter/leave the classroom, accompanying child to restroom, monitoring children at play outside the museum, clean up, etc.
 - Volunteers should not: be on their mobile phones, have inappropriate conversations with others, leave classroom without teacher knowledge and approval.
 - Communicating with the teacher, assisting with their needs and taking their direction during a class is essential.
- When a volunteer is asked to accompany a child from the classroom to the restroom they should wait for the child outside the restroom and then accompany the child back to classroom. We are open to the public and therefore our classrooms are accessible, so it is imperative that we supervise the children according.
- A volunteer may be asked to accompany children across the parking lot to the park. If so it is also the volunteer’s responsibility to help the teacher in making sure the children are safe during this process by keeping children in order and in a line while crossing the parking lot. It is also expected for the volunteer to aid the teacher in monitoring all the children during the time outside. Volunteers will be provided direction by the teacher in terms of spreading out over the play area to supervise the children as needed.

Modeling

A Volunteer should:

- Always model and encourage cooperation and responsible behaviors among children.
- Encourage positive behaviors among children, including cooperating, helping, taking turns and talking to solve problems.
- Assist children with disabilities to interact according to individual needs.
- Talk with children and encourage them to be involved, and to share experiences, ideas and feelings.
- Speak to children in a friendly, courteous manner.
- Treat children and adults with equal respect, regardless of gender, race, age, language, religion, culture or family composition.
- Use appropriate language at all times

Behavior

- All behaviors should be managed in a positive manner.
 - Example: Student A steals the glue from Student B. The volunteer should tell Student A to return the glue to Student B and either ask politely to borrow the glue or find another glue bottle.
 - Example: Student A hits Student B. The volunteer should tell Student A that hitting is not allowed and that they need to apologize to Student B.
- If there is negative behavior beyond either example, notify a staff member and they will address the issue.

Language & Content of Classroom Discussions

- Again, volunteers are representatives of the museum and therefore need to present themselves at all times in a professional manner including the language and content of conversations with both children and other adults in the classroom.
- If you overhear a child having an inappropriate conversation you should notify the teacher immediately.

Helping People with Special Needs

It is the policy of the museum to treat all visitors with respect and courtesy. Please adhere to these guidelines when helping those with disabilities:

- Look the person in the eye and speak directly to them, not to their companion.
- If the person is struggling, ask if you may help, just as you would with anyone else, and respect their answer, whether yes or no.
- Be patient, if the person has trouble speaking; give them time to express what their mind is saying.
- If the person has trouble seeing, hearing, or moving, again be patient and understanding.

If you have ANY questions regarding any of these (but not limited to) guidelines listed above, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator; Katie Karr (kkarr@cityofhastings.org), or Russanne Hoff; Curator of Education (rhoff@cityofhastings.org) to discuss.

Emergency and Safety

Fire Safety Policy & Procedures

Fire Awareness: Hand-held dry chemical fire extinguishers are located throughout the museum, please become familiar with the location of fire extinguishers in your area.

Memorize all exits!

If you smell **smoke**, remain calm and immediately contact a staff member. They will investigate and if necessary, order an evacuation. If you see **fire**, remain calm and follow these instructions in proper order:

- Pull fire alarm
- Direct visitors to the nearest exit (**DO NOT USE ELEVATORS!**)

If you hear the **Fire Alarm**, volunteers should encourage visitors to follow the evacuation procedures by immediately exiting the building via the closest fire exit. If a visitor refuses to follow these instructions, a staff member must be notified once you have reached safety.

Everyone, staff, volunteers and visitors, will meet on the sidewalk front of the museum by Burlington Avenue after evacuating the building.

Tornado Safety Policy & Procedures

April, May and June are the most likely time of the year for a tornado to occur, however, tornadoes may occur any time. The tornado safe area is located on the lower level of the museum in the hallway across from the maintenance area. Volunteers should familiarize themselves with the following procedures:

- The Visitor Services Supervisor is the Emergency Manager on duty. When a tornado warning for Adams County is issued, the Emergency Manager or Director will initiate safety procedures.
- The Emergency Manager on duty will inform staff, volunteers, and visitors to proceed to **the hall by the maintenance area** in the basement.
- Volunteers, should encourage visitors to follow the evacuation procedures. If a visitor refuses to follow these instructions, a staff member must be notified once you have reached safety.

Do not use elevators during a tornado warning unless a visitor is handicapped or unable to negotiate stairs.

Accidents & Injuries

A variety of accidents may occur in the Museum. All accidents require the completion of an Accident Report, regardless of whether the individual is a staff member, volunteer, or visitor.

Visitors: Ask if the visitor wants you to call for assistance. Immediately report the accident to a staff member. Never discuss the Museum's role in the accident, nor blame the visitor. A Visitor Accident Report must be completed by a staff member as soon as possible.

Volunteers/Staff: Injuries to you, other volunteers or staff, should be immediately reported to a staff member and an Accident Report Form is to be completed by a staff member as soon as possible.

Hazard Reporting

Any and all types of safety hazards should be reported to a staff member.

Power Outage

In the event of a power outage the Visitor Services Supervisor on duty will coordinate all safety activities.

Volunteers will secure their area and report with any visitors to the Visitor Services Supervisor on duty.

Volunteers will follow instructions given by the Emergency Manager.

Incllement Weather Policy

In the event of a blizzard or heavy snowfall, the following will occur:

- A staff member will personally notify you by telephone not to report for work.

Security

Security is everyone's responsibility. Report any unusual or suspicious things to a staff member.

THE HASTINGS MUSEUM

MISSION STATEMENT

The Hastings Museum brings to life the natural and cultural history of Hastings, Adams County and the Great Plains of Nebraska. The museum connects Nebraska to the world and universe through educational programs, exhibits and films, inspiring greater public respect for and understanding of our past and future.

MUSEUM HISTORY

Albert Brooking spent most of his life gathering artifacts and specimens from all over the United States. As much as he enjoyed amassing this assortment of objects, he was not satisfied with just collecting. He dreamed that one day he would be able to house his collection in a Museum and share it with everyone.

Like today, in the early 1900s Hastings hosted many cultural and social events. The idea of building a Museum to add another cultural experience was strongly supported by the Hastings Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber formed a Museum Committee on June 8, 1926. The committee soon petitioned to acquire space in Highland Park for the Museum.

Hastings City Council donated the site in Highland Park for the construction of a Museum. They also agreed to provide salaries for two Museum employees and to heat the building – but the city could not afford to construct a building. Instead, a temporary location was secured in the Hawthorne school building, and Brooking was placed in charge of the Museum. Work began in November 1926.

Hastings Museum opened at this location on January 9, 1927. Visitors were amazed by more than 2,000 mounted birds completed by Brooking, A.T. Hill's nationally known American Indian collection, hallways filled with firearms and more.

The Museum's collections grew rapidly and five years later was bursting at the seams. In January 1932, the Board of Education passed a motion to lend the Morton school building to the city for use as a Museum. The Museum opened at that site on April 17, 1932.

The Great Depression brought public relief programs funded by federal grants. The grants were designed to employ people and aid in projects that would benefit the public. In 1935, the city began applying for federal grants to help construct a Museum building. Funding through the Work Projects Administration (WPA) came in the fall of 1937.

At long last, the collection that Brooking worked hard to gather would be housed in a new and permanent building – and the City of Hastings would have the largest municipal museum between Chicago and Denver.

Long before the building was complete, work began on the detailed animal dioramas. For example, the time consuming task of creating foliage yielded more than 500,000 hand-made leaves! This portion of the dioramas was supervised by Don Karr.

After countless hours of work, the Hastings Museum building was dedicated during Jubilleum Days on

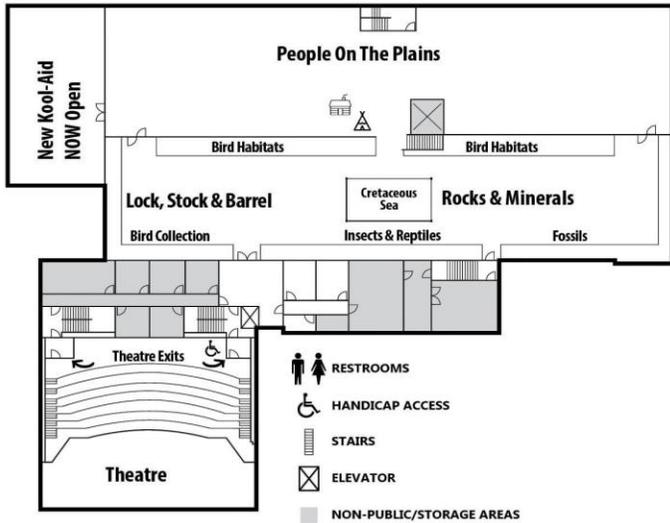
June 15, 1939. A highlight was the dedication speech delivered by Dr. Charles Abbott, secretary at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Abbott's speech was delivered after a grand introduction orchestrated from Washington. Vice President John Garner began the festivities by pushing a button in Washington that set off a charge of dynamite across the street from the new Museum building!

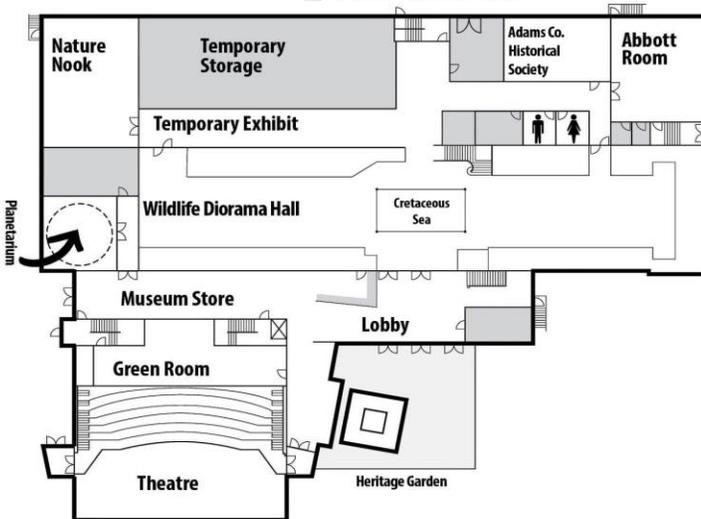
Some may remember Hastings Museum as the House of Yesterday, a name established in 1941 as a publicity promotion but later led to confusion – with visitors expecting to see a house. In 1978, the House of Yesterday promotion was officially abandoned and the Museum's public name reverted to Hastings Museum.

Floor Plan

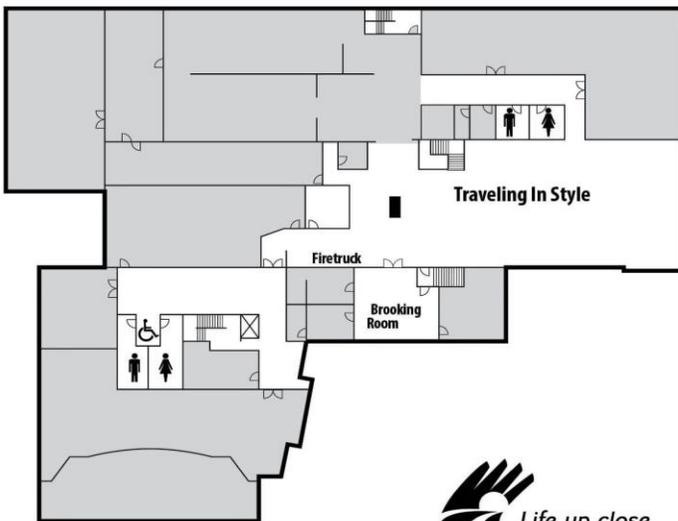
UPPER FLOOR



MAIN FLOOR



BASEMENT



 **All forms of Smoking**
not permitted anywhere



Concessions are available in the main floor lobby. Food and drink may be consumed in the theatre or main lobby. We ask that you help us preserve our collections and not take concessions into the museum.