

A SPECIAL LOOK AT THE LIFE OF A FESTIVAL VOLUNTEER

At the Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS) the guest artists, artist-faculty, staff, and students are all important aspects that allow for an amazing summer. However, there is one group that is often hidden behind the scenes—the volunteers. This is a group of 190 dedicated and hardworking individuals. AMFS volunteers come back every summer excited to pour lemonade, deliver weekly AMFS tearsheets, sell merchandise, and much more.

Each AMFS volunteer deserves appreciation, but today the spotlight is on Dusty Hamrick who has been volunteering for the AMFS for thirty-three years. Up until a year and a half ago, Hamrick held a total of seven volunteer positions around Aspen all at once, now she has reduced that amount to three positions including: the Wheeler Opera House, the Aspen Thrift Shop, and of course here at AMFS. The AMFS is thrilled to welcome many long-time volunteers each summer like Hamrick.

Aspen was greeted with Hamrick's presence a little over fifty years ago. She first came to Aspen not expecting to stay longer than a few months. However, like most visitors to the area, she fell in love with Aspen. "One of my friends at the time offered me a \$25 ski pass, a job, and free housing. It was an offer I couldn't turn down," says Hamrick. At age thirty-one, she ended up moving to Aspen for good.

In 1986, Hamrick first began volunteering for AMFS. "I started at the lemonade stand. I actually built the shelving inside the old ground lemonade stand. After about ten years of that, I switched to working in the kiosk. Then, just a few years ago, somebody asked me if I would take on the role of coordinating volunteers to distribute tearsheets and posters," says Hamrick. Now as AMFS marketing volunteer coordinator, Hamrick coordinates ten volunteers to distribute tearsheet and poster routes.

Comparing all her AMFS positions, Hamrick enjoys her current position the most. "Once my summer position is up and going, there's not too much stress. I really enjoy what I do and who I get to work with." The last AMFS marketing volunteer coordinator held the position for twenty-five years. It's clear that Hamrick would love to give just as much time in this position; however, she notes, "if I make it to twenty-five years in my current position, they'd have to hire a volunteer to start wheelchairs me around, since I'm eighty-one-years-old."

Each AMFS volunteer is committed to their role—it's not uncommon to hear one say they've been volunteering for over fifteen years. Hamrick gathers that volunteers return each summer because of how well they are treated. "Everyone I work with is very community-oriented. I'm already a happy person but working for AMFS adds to my happiness," says Hamrick.

AMFS is not only a welcoming work environment but an inspiring one as well, because of all the talented students arriving from over thirty-five countries. "I think it's great that the young musicians coming here have goals. The students are very dedicated and they seem to be looking into the future without any questions," says Hamrick.

The AMFS is very thankful for each and every one of their volunteers. Whether it be selling a glass of lemonade or scooping ice cream at the Ice Cream Social, the volunteers are greatly appreciated by AMFS for all of their behind-the-scenes efforts. Next time you see a volunteer at the Benedict Music Tent, Harris Concert Hall, Bucksbaum Campus, or even running around town, make sure to offer them your appreciation. Don't forget to look for Dusty Hamrick in her favorite seat, D401, next time you're taking in music at the Tent! —Amy Oldenburg



Dusty Hamrick has volunteered at the Aspen Music Festival and School for thirty-three years.