



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION



ART FROM ASHES inc.

empowering youth through creative expression and personal transformation

1310 west 10th ave • denver co 80204 • 303.837.1550 • artfromashes.org • [fb/artfromashes](https://www.facebook.com/artfromashes) • [twitter/artfromashes](https://twitter.com/artfromashes)

HELLO, VOLUNTEER APPLICANT!

Thank you for expressing an interest in becoming a volunteer for Art from Ashes. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization, and we're excited about getting to know you, your passion for youth, and your creative abilities.

Art from Ashes exists to empower struggling youth by providing creative programs that facilitate health and hope through expression, connection and transformation.

Art from Ashes believes that the power of creativity can change lives—that how we express ourselves affects how we think, how we act, and how we interact with others. AfA's values state that the imagination and beliefs of struggling young people—no matter what their experiences or circumstances—should be heard and respected. With guidance and support, young people can find hope and choose a self-determined future through the power of their own creativity.

In keeping with our dedication to respect all people and to honor their giftedness, skills and diversity, Art from Ashes is committed to fostering an organizational culture where all people are treated fairly, valued for their differences, and given equal opportunity to maximize their success while contributing to our mission.

We are continually inspired by our transformative workshops, and once you have witnessed the process for yourself, we believe you will recognize the value of our programs as well.

With tremendous gratitude for your willingness to serve,

Jessica Jarrard, Executive Director



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WHO WE ARE

The Mission of Art from Ashes is to empower struggling youth by providing creative programs that facilitate health and hope through expression, connection and transformation.

“I miss my brother like the earth misses peace”

— Carlos, age 14, in a poem about the shooting death of his older brother

Every day our community's youth face enormous events that people of any age would find difficult to endure. What is our obligation to youth like Carlos who lose family members to violence, alcoholism, or drug addiction? What can we offer those whose lives are fractured by emotional or sexual abuse?

Since its inception in 2003, Art from Ashes (AfA) has provided creative empowerment workshops to high-risk youth, facilitating expression, connection and transformation among the most neglected and vulnerable segments of our community. Founding Executive Director Catherine O'Neill Thorn began conducting transformational poetry and spoken word workshops at juvenile detention facilities, treatment centers, and schools—including post-trauma workshops for Columbine High School students—in 1992. When statewide funding for youth programs was cut in 2002, Thorn was motivated to establish Art from Ashes in order to continue serving struggling youth with a proven process that helps build strong interpersonal skills, encourages literacy and creative expression, and empowers young people to lead confident, violence-free lives.

AfA continues to thrive under the leadership of Executive Director, Jessica Jarrard, and celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2023. Since 2003, AfA has partnered with more than 200 youth-serving organizations to provide our award-winning creative empowerment programs for 18,000 young people who have survived traumatic events, are survivors of abuse, neglect and/or poverty, and are at risk for or engaged in destructive behaviors. AfA complements therapeutic models and traditional arts programming by providing a forum through artistic expression for recognizing and acknowledging negative experiences; removing the barriers that isolate young people from each other, from caring adults, and from society; and allowing youth to experience health and hope rather than the expectation of further victimization.

WHAT WE DO

AfA's creative programs use right-brain techniques and cutting-edge scientific information on creativity, neurology and youth development to address risk factors among struggling young people. Studies show that factors contributing to juvenile delinquency include a lack of activities for youth that provide constructive developmental experiences; disconnect between youth and adults; and the lack of personal resiliency that results from low self-esteem/self-efficacy. Our workshops are focused on positive, interactive activities that are designed to promote healthy thinking and behaviors; offer an opportunity for youth to connect to adult facilitators, poets and artists, each other and the community; and survey results attest to the powerful impact of the program on self-esteem.

WHY IT WORKS

The Report on Community Based Youth Organizations by the Carnegie Foundation found that young people who are involved in after-school community arts programs:

- 🦋 are 4 times more likely to have won school-wide attention for their academic achievement
- 🦋 are elected to class office within their schools more than 3 times as often
- 🦋 are 4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair
- 🦋 are 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance
- 🦋 are more than 4 times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem

Numerous studies also assert that participation in the arts promotes positive outcomes in academics, social development and cognitive capacity, and that learning in the arts helps shape motivation, self-discipline, confidence and perseverance.

Our programs not only have been immensely successful in encouraging transformation and leadership in young people, but also have been enthusiastically welcomed by youth. Results of our work with youth conducted by the National Research Center have shown that of the participants surveyed, 100% of the youth enjoyed the workshops; 73% feel better about themselves; 80% cared more about the feelings of others; and 80% wanted to be more involved in their community.

HOW IT WORKS

The **Phoenix Rising** youth empowerment program uses poetry and spoken word to help youth articulate painful events or circumstances in their lives through the language of metaphor. The process of writing and performing poetry offers an opportunity to release the pain and fear of those experiences among peers and mentors. And AfA's guided writing prompts encourage youth to use strong, healthy words that allow young people to realize their creative power and to choose *that* identity over one of victimization.

The **Drawing on Air** youth empowerment program reveals the power of artistic expression to enlighten and transform through the use of visual metaphor. Similar to Phoenix Rising, Drawing on Air offers guided prompts that employ AfA's three core principles of expression, connection and transformation. Providing a safe and non-judgmental space for youth to freely express their creativity and share experiences, the curriculum helps facilitate the recognition that visual expression can become a vehicle for addressing past struggles while simultaneously developing positive perceptions.

The **Casting Shadows** youth empowerment program utilizes the power of drama and play, providing struggling youth with a safe environment in which to take risks, collaborate, and experiment with current and future conflicts through dramatic structure.

Wingspan, a program that allows expression through dance and movement, is currently in development.

Rather than declaring the behavior of struggling youth an outrage and filling our correctional institutions with discarded young lives, supporting creative programs is a positive and vastly more effective approach. The best way we can show our commitment to youth is to empower them to live healthy and productive lives. If young people feel heard and respected, if they develop a sense of self that is not based on the messages of failure they have received, and if they can relate to the struggles and dreams of others, they can begin to create a positive future for themselves and for their communities.

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VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

Art from Ashes seeks diversity in its volunteers with respect to background, skills and expertise, industry knowledge, and experience, and optimally should represent the diversity of the community and youth we serve.

Above all our volunteers must:

- Be passionate about social change and compassionate about youth struggles.
- Be resourceful in their ability to support Art from Ashes.
- Reflect the values of our organization in their words and actions.

Initial Expectations

- Download and read the history and mission of Art from Ashes.
- Fill out the online Application Form.
- Attend an Orientation at the Art from Ashes office.
- Complete the ArtCurious goals within the first two months.
- Work with the Volunteer Coordinator to be assigned to a team.

Ongoing Expectations

- Support our mission, purpose and leadership.
- Be able to clearly articulate our mission statement.
- Attend monthly volunteer meetings.
- Complete a minimum of six volunteer hours per month.
- Report volunteer hours each month Track It Forward.
- Provide opportunities to friends and family members who may be interested in contributing, including participation in the annual letter writing campaign.
- Bring a friend to at least two Art from Ashes events a year.
- Attend one youth workshop a year.



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HELPING, FIXING, OR SERVING?

By Rachel Naomi Remen

"Fixing and helping create a distance between people, but we cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected."

Helping, fixing and serving represent three different ways of seeing life. When you help, you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. Fixing and helping may be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul.

Service rests on the premise that the nature of life is sacred, that life is a holy mystery which has an unknown purpose. When we serve, we know that we belong to life and to that purpose. From the perspective of service, we are all connected: All suffering is like my suffering and all joy is like my joy. The impulse to serve emerges naturally and inevitably from this way of seeing.

Serving is different from helping. Helping is not a relationship between equals. A helper may see others as weaker than they are, needier than they are, and people often feel this inequality. The danger in helping is that we may inadvertently take away from people more than we could ever give them; we may diminish their self-esteem, their sense of worth, integrity or even wholeness.

When we help, we become aware of our own strength. We feel good about ourselves and boost ourselves up at the expense of others, reinforcing the privilege/oppression dichotomy that silently and consistently suggests that "our" needs (such as the need to feel like a good person) are more important than "their" needs (such as the need to be seen as a whole and complex individual whose identity is more than just weakness or disadvantage).

But when we serve, we don't serve with our strength; we serve with ourselves, and we draw from all of our experiences. Our limitations serve; our wounds serve; even our darkness can serve. My pain is the source of my compassion; my woundedness is the key to my empathy.

Serving makes us aware of our wholeness and its power. The wholeness in us serves the wholeness in others and the wholeness in life. The wholeness in you is the same as the wholeness in me. Service is a relationship between equals: our service strengthens us as well as others.

Fixing and helping are draining, and over time we may burn out, but service is renewing. When we serve, our work itself will renew us. In helping we may find a sense of satisfaction; in serving we find a sense of gratitude

Serving requires us to know that our humanity is more powerful than our expertise. In forty-five years of chronic illness I have been helped by a great number of people, and fixed by a great many others who did not recognize my wholeness. All that fixing and helping left me wounded in some important and fundamental ways. Only service heals.

Service is not an experience of strength or expertise; service is an experience of mystery, surrender and awe. Helpers and fixers feel causal. Servers may experience from time to time a sense of being used by larger unknown forces. Those who serve have traded a sense of mastery for an experience of mystery, and in doing so have transformed their work and their lives into practice.



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ART FROM ASHES VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

An Art from Ashes volunteer must be sensitive to the issues that confront youth — especially those of urban, minority and abused youth — and have an understanding of the organization's creative process and core values.

Volunteers who work directly with youth will be expected to fulfill additional requirements as stipulated in the Facilitator "First Steps" Packet.

Events Team

- A lead representative must attend FunDevelopment Committee Meetings
- Brainstorm ideas for new events
- Research and identify potential corporate and private foundations for event sponsorships
- Develop/maintain event and donor records with help of TechOps
- Manage event donor prospect identification, solicitation, and sponsorship activities in conjunction with the FunDevelopment Committee
- Act as liaison for external events benefiting AfA
- Manage event budget
- Provide regular event information updates to Communications Team
- Communicate with Volunteer Coordinator, if volunteers are needed for an event

Pre-Event

- ▶ Submit a Communications Request
- ▶ Manage event donor prospect identification, solicitation, and sponsorship activities in conjunction with the FunDevelopment Committee
- ▶ Provide regular event information updates to Communications Team
- ▶ Communicate with Volunteer Coordinator, if volunteers are needed for an event

Day Of Event

- ▶ Set up and clean up
- ▶ Supervise volunteers at events

After Event

- ▶ Sort and organize remaining event items and paperwork
- ▶ Create report or results for FunDevelopment Committee
- ▶ Administer post-event surveys to volunteers
- ▶ Send thank you notes to donors

Grant Writing Team

- Research potential grant opportunities
- Write/edit grant narratives
- Obtain up-to-date documents for attachments

- Follow Grant Writing Process

Community Liaison Team

- Seek potential contracts for Phoenix Rising program
- Be initial point of contact with potential partner
- Accompany Program Director/Manager to contract sales meetings with potential partner
- Follow Contract Sales procedure

Communications Team

Roles

- Media Coordinator
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - Editors
 - Writers
 - Graphic Designers
 - Web Developers
- Media coordination: set up/write/send press releases, provide information and interviews for written articles, schedule radio and TV interviews
 - Design marketing and promotional materials
 - Update and develop agency website
 - Manage social media sites
 - Publicize First Friday ArtWalk
 - Create quarterly online newsletter, The Ascent
 - Review all materials for accuracy and clarity before they are disseminated

Funddevelopment Committee

- Strategize and oversee all FunDevelopment Teams and funding streams
- Develop small business donations/sponsorships requests
- Create and schedule promotional presentations
- Set up face-to-face asks (develop relationships with AfA donors)
- Solicit in-kind donations
- Donor management (follow up requests for donations and update database information)
- Manage letter writing campaign

Youth Facilitation

If you wish to train as a youth workshop facilitator, you will be given separate and specific information on the requirements at your orientation.

For those wishing to volunteer independently of a team, we also have the “Get Shit Done” crew, who spend time on various tasks, as needed.

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