



ART FROM ASHES inc.

empowering youth through creative expression

853 Inca St., Suite 1A • Denver CO 80204-4342 • 303.837.1550 • www.artfromashes.org

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.

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. 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. We hope you find the attached information helpful in explaining how important you are to us. We are asking for information that will enable us to match your talents to specific areas where volunteers are needed and where your skills will best be employed.

With tremendous gratitude,

Catherine O'Neill Thorn, Executive Director
853 Inca Street, Suite 1A
Denver, CO 80204
Office: 303.837.1550



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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 in America, children face enormous events that people of any age would find difficult to endure. For young people the emotional toll is heavy, and often suffered throughout their lives. Imagine the cavernous depth of Carlos's loss. What is our obligation to children 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 poetry and creative workshops to high-risk youth, facilitating expression, connection and transformation among the most neglected and vulnerable segments of our community. Executive Director Catherine O'Neill Thorn has been conducting transformational poetry and spoken word workshops at juvenile detention facilities, treatment centers, and schools—including post-trauma workshops for Columbine High School students—since 1992. When statewide funding for youth programs was cut in 2003, Thorn was motivated to establish a nonprofit to serve struggling youth with a proven process that helps build strong interpersonal skills, encourages literacy, and empowers young people to lead confident, violence-free lives.

AfA has since provided creative workshops with more than 60 partnering organizations for more than 3,000 young people who have survived traumatic events, are victims of abuse, neglect and/or poverty, and are at risk for or engaged in destructive behaviors. Moving beyond contemporary therapeutic models and arts programming, AfA provides a forum through artistic expression for recognizing and acknowledging previous traumas; 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, youth development and behavioral psychology 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 creative 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 other academic disciplines and in social development and cognitive capacity and that learning in the arts helps shape motivation, intense 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. Recent statistics 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

As an example of the expression, connection and transformation process, the Phoenix Rising program combines the articulation of painful events or circumstances in the lives of struggling young people; the opportunity to release the pain and fear of those experiences among peers and mentors; and the guidance that allows youth to use strong, healthy words that encourage an identity based on choice rather than victimization.

Art from Ashes is dedicated to providing creative programs to marginalized youth, many of who have been wounded by abuse, neglect or societal abandonment. Yet despite the apparent disconnection with society and often with their own families, it is our experience that young people maintain an awareness that what they think and feel is important and must be shared. But if a young person has been consistently discounted and devalued, they can end up alone, angry and with feelings of worthlessness. This sense of helplessness and isolation can lead to violence, criminal acts, "lack of conscience," high-risk sexual behaviors, substance abuse and/or suicide. High-risk youth are often resistant to cognitive and behavioral therapies. Many young people resent attempts by therapists to analyze them, and many lack the tools to either articulate their pain or receive instruction and guidance. Isolated and unheard for so long, they now refuse to listen.

Rather than declaring the behavior of high-risk youth an outrage and filling our correctional institutions with discarded young lives, supporting poetry 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 SELECTION CRITERIA

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

Above all our volunteers must:

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

Initial Expectations

- Read history and mission of Art from Ashes
- Fill out the online Application Form
- Complete a Phone Interview
- Attend an Orientation Meeting at the Art from Ashes office
 - ▶ Review the Mission and History of AfA
 - ▶ Review the Policies & Procedures
 - ▶ Review AfA Volunteer Expectations
 - ▶ Sign agency documents
 - ▶ Review volunteer job descriptions and duties, and establish goals
- Meet the Executive Director, Catherine O'Neill Thorn
- Goals for the first two months:
 - ▶ Attend at least one monthly volunteer meeting
 - ▶ Attend a youth workshop
 - ▶ Attend two committee meetings
 - ▶ "Like" the AfA Facebook page and share AfA info with your FB friends
- Work with the Project Coordinator to be assigned a project

Ongoing Expectations

- Support our mission, purpose and leadership
- Be able to clearly articulate our mission statement
- Attend each monthly volunteer meeting
- Articulate one monthly goal at each volunteer meeting and update team on previous month's goal
- Log volunteer hours and proposed monthly goal on wall chart

- Provide opportunities to friends and family members who may be interested in contributing
 - ▶ Send a letter (template and postage provided) requesting support from 10 family members/friends.
- Become involved with a volunteer project within three months of orientation
- Bring a friend to at least two events a year
- Attend one youth workshop a year



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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 an understanding of the organization’s creative process, as well as our core values.

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

ORGANIZATION

- Organize art supplies, paperwork, poems, notebooks, office equipment, etc.
- Stock workshop & volunteer packets, office & kitchen supplies
- Cleaning Duties
- Filing Duties
- Inventory office equipment, workshop & promotional items

TYPING AND FORMATTING

- Type youth poems, format and organize by workshop/session
- Type guest artist evaluations

DATABASE ENTRY

- Organize contacts, gather contact information through phone calls and emails, and enter information into database

COURTESY MANAGEMENT

- Write thank you notes, birthday cards & emails
- Keep volunteers & the public informed about upcoming events

RECRUITING & CONTACTS

- Seek volunteers, donors, board members, and/or agencies with whom AfA can work
- Find venues for youth poet performances

MARKETING & PUBLICITY

- Media Coordinator (set up/write/conduct press releases, articles, radio interviews)
- Design Marketing and Promotional Materials
- Website Development & Design (knowledge of html)
- Manage Social Media sites
- Create & Schedule Promotional Presentations
- Street Team/First Friday Art Walk Publicity
- Letter writing campaign

FUNDRAISING

- Events planning (manage scheduled events, set up new ones and promote)

- Small business donation requests
- Face-to-Face asks (develop relationships with AfA donors)
- Grant writing
- Phone solicitation (follow up requests for donations and update database information)
- Solicitation of business and in-kind donations (write letters, make calls, visit businesses for pickup)
- eBook sales (create promotional campaign, manage sales)

WORKING WITH YOUTH

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