



**BLUECOATS**

DRUM AND BUGLE CORPS  
CANTON, OHIO

# 2008 Volunteer Handbook



# Welcome Bluecoats Volunteer!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering your time to help the members of the Bluecoats Drum & Bugle Corps become the very best they can be! At the Bluecoats, our number one goal each year is to make every member's drum corps experience an incredible one in which they learn not only to play, spin, dance, and march together but also how to better live their lives. It would not be possible to achieve this goal without the support of numerous volunteers like yourself who so generously take time out of their busy lives to help make our corps one of the very best.

As the following pages will show you, the Bluecoats depend on volunteers to perform many of the corps' most vital jobs while we're on the road every summer. Our volunteers mend, alter, and launder uniforms, prepare meals, provide first aid, run our souvenir program, do grocery runs, fix whatever is broken—you name it, they (you!) make it happen. Make no mistake; volunteering for the Bluecoats can be hard, demanding work! But, we're confident you'll find it to be more than worthwhile when you see the grateful look on a hungry member's face as you hand her a plate of hot food, or the great way the uniforms you altered look out on the field. You'll also have a chance to meet wonderful people from across the country, make lasting friendships, and to be a part of a truly unique and special activity.

This handbook is designed to give you an idea, in words and pictures, of what it will be like to help the Bluecoats this year. Please read on to find out more about the various volunteer positions available, what it's like to travel with the Bluecoats during our summer tour, and how you can sign up to help this summer. We've also included a few tips and guidelines for making your experience (and the members'!) the best it can be. Remember, the Bluecoats can't do this without you—so read on, and join up! You'll be glad you did.



## Who Can Volunteer?

Just about anyone! Our volunteers are parents of current and former members, Bluecoats alumni, fans, and supporters of all kinds.

## How Can I Help?

This is usually the first question a new volunteer has for us. The answer: There is a wide variety of ways to lend a hand. Most of them fall into the categories listed below. Of course, our needs in certain areas are greater than others, so don't be discouraged if your first choice is already full when you sign up—there are some jobs (food truck!) for which we can literally ALWAYS use more help, and these jobs are some of the most rewarding.

### *Sewing Crew*

It takes a LOT of hard work behind the scenes to keep the Bluecoats looking great throughout the summer. The process begins at our winter camps—as members are signed, our sewing crew takes measurements and begins to alter uniforms to fit each member. Helmets must also be cleaned and put together each year, and minor (or sometimes major!) changes to the costume may be required. And that is just the beginning! As the season progresses, alterations become necessary as



members lose weight or add muscle. Buttons fall off, holes appear, seams rip, and plumes detach. Washing and ironing the uniforms once or twice each week also becomes necessary once the corps begins performing regularly in mid June. Our beautiful flags and guard uniforms are also thrown into the mix at this point. While creating and altering these flags and costumes is taken care of by professional designers, we rely on volunteers to help with mending, ironing, and washing throughout the season.

As you can imagine, all this sewing, washing, and ironing takes a lot of time and work. Ideally, we like to have 3-5 people with us during Spring Training weeks and 2-3 people during traveling weeks to help keep all our flags and uniforms in tip top shape. We also need people who can come help just for the day, especially to assist with laundry. While we certainly need some volunteers who are experienced sewers, you don't need to be an expert (or even know how to sew at all) to help! Our experienced volunteer leaders can teach you to do most anything we need—and you probably already know how to do laundry and ironing!

### ***Souvenir Sales***

Our souvenir program is another vital place for volunteers to contribute. Wherever the Bluecoats travel our souvenir vehicle follows, selling Bluecoats merchandise to fans at each show we attend. From t-shirts to ponchos, flip flops to DVDs, we sell it all from our souvie trailer, which is pulled from site to site by a 12-passenger van. We rely on our souvenir sales crew to



drive the trailer from place to place, set up at each show, and sell merchandise to our fans at every competition. Once a show is over, it's time to pack up and get on the way to the next site! The souvenir vehicle sometimes travels with the corps caravan at night, but other times forges ahead—souvenir set up at shows often begins in the morning, long before the corps begin to arrive at a show.

It takes a crew of two to four volunteers to drive, set up, and sell souvenirs, so we're often looking for extra help. This volunteer position requires the willingness to drive a large van with a trailer attached, sometimes traveling independently at night. You'll also need a relatively clean driving record (for insurance purposes).

### ***Medical Professionals***

As you might expect with such a large group of people, each day several members (and staff!) report various ailments, from headaches, colds, and bronchitis to ankle sprains, shin splints, and muscle aches. The corps provides a wide variety of over-the-counter first aid products for sick and injured participants.



We are always looking for doctors, nurses, trainers, EMTs, and other medical professionals who are willing to help us deal with medical situations while we're on the road. Whether you can join us on tour for a few days or are willing to offer your services to members in need when we're in a town near you, we need your help! A healthy member is a happy, productive member!

## ***Chuck Truck Crew***

MEAL TIME! The Bluecoats provide four meals (yep, four!) per day to all members, support staff, and volunteers—that's about 200 people! Meal preparation takes place on our mobile food service vehicle, AKA the "chuck truck". The chuck truck is a full service kitchen built into a semi-trailer, and travels with us wherever we go (we'll have a BRAND NEW cook truck in 2008!).



Volunteering on the chuck truck can be one of the most physically demanding jobs on tour, but it is also one of the most fun and rewarding. Daily tasks include cleaning (dishes, floors, counters), cooking (baking, boiling, chopping, stirring), serving meals, and grocery shopping (lists provided!). You'll be the first up and the last to bed, often with barely enough time for a shower. You'll sweat all day in a hot truck in Mississippi, or freeze all morning in Wisconsin. You might even burn yourself a couple of times, but you'll love it! When you see how thankful the members are for the meal you're providing, or you hear, "thanks, this looks GREAT", you'll see why.

Each day on the chuck truck, one individual will be designated "Head Cook". This will usually be John Lowe, our head cook, or (when he isn't there) Genevieve Geisler, our Operations Director. Genevieve is also responsible for menu planning and food procurement. In the (rare) event neither of them is on tour, Genevieve will designate an experienced volunteer to act as Head Cook. The Head Cook will be responsible for posting the day's menu, assigning jobs to other volunteers, making sure we have all necessary ingredients on hand, and ensuring all meals are prepared properly and on time. Please remember to listen to the Head Cook and follow directions—they know what they're doing! And, if you have to leave the food truck for more than a few minutes, please let the Head Cook know how long you'll be gone.

As you can probably tell, it takes a lot of time and organization to get good, nutritious meals prepared properly and on time each day. But, volunteers don't need to worry about planning menus, finding recipes, or procuring food on their own—we take care of all that. In fact, you don't even need to be a good cook (or even cook at all!) to help. Just bring a positive attitude and a willingness to work hard, and we'll take care of the details. Ideally we need at least 4-6 volunteers to staff the food truck at all times (even more is great!). We can make do with fewer, but the more people we have, the easier and more fun the work! Whether you can help for a day, a weekend, or a week or more, the food truck is a great place for almost everyone to help.

### ***Van Driver***

The Bluecoats have, as part of our vehicle fleet, a support vehicle (minivan) that travels with us across the country to be used for grocery shopping, airport runs, doctor visits, and all of the other errands that life on tour brings us. Drivers of this vehicle are expected to travel with our convoy during the night and sleep during the day—waking up in time for the show each night! We need one volunteer at a time to provide this service; volunteers must have the ability to stay awake while driving at night, a (reasonably) clean driving record, and the ability to stay on tour for at least a week. ***\*\*Please note that this position has already been filled for the 2008 season.***

### ***Help Out In Your Hometown!***

In addition to help with sewing, food preparation, souvenir sales, and medical services, the corps also needs volunteers who can help while the corps is stopped in their area. So, if you are unable to join the corps on tour, there are several great ways you can help when we're in your hometown.

Do you know a local doctor who might be willing to make a last minute appointment for a sick or injured member? Which grocery store has the best price on milk? You're an expert in your hometown, and we need your expertise! You know where the best local grocery stores, Laundromats, and health care facilities are, and we need your help to find them. In addition, everywhere we go, the Bluecoats need volunteers with cars to help with errand like grocery shopping, doctor visits, airport runs (to pick up and drop off staff members), and trips to the hardware store. If you arrive at one of our housing sites with a car, you can bet we'll ask you for a ride somewhere—there is always something we need to do!



Another great way to help while we're in your area is to give members of our touring food truck staff a break. You'll truly be a hero if you offer to do the dishes after lunch or help prepare dinner so that one of them can catch an extra few minutes of sleep or get a chance for a luxurious 15-minute (instead of 5!) shower.

We also often (but not always) need help with laundering corps and guard uniforms. This task must be completed 1-2 times per week, and the more help we have with it the better!

## What should I expect if I decide to tour with the Bluecoats?

Volunteers travel with the corps, usually riding in our support van, or sometimes, if extra space is needed, in the front of the staff bus (except souvenir workers, who will drive and travel in the souvenir van). The Bluecoats administrative staff will let you know where you should ride when you arrive. Your van or bus seat will become your home away from home, a place to store items, make yourself comfortable, and get some sleep while we're traveling. You'll travel with us wherever we go, just like a staff member—don't worry, we won't leave you behind! With the exception of emergency situations, you will NEVER ride on a member bus.

At housing sites, which are usually schools, we set aside special rooms for our volunteers to sleep in, usually one or two classrooms. You'll never sleep in the same rooms as the members, and with rare exceptions, you won't be put in a room



with staff members, either. When we arrive you'll unload your suitcase and sleeping items, set up your bed, and get to sleep. Shower facilities vary from site to site, but are generally group locker rooms.

The day's schedule will be posted on the white board on the chuck truck doors. This schedule will tell you when meals are served and when we're leaving—please remember to look at it each day.

If you need to do laundry, we usually are able to find access to washers and dryers at our housing sites once or twice a week. If you stay on tour for a week or more, you'll also probably have the opportunity to go to a Laundromat during a corps "laundry day".

For any shows that occur while you're traveling with us, you'll be given a corps "staff pass" that will allow you to attend for free. This pass doesn't guarantee you a seat, but you'll always be able to watch the show without having to worry about paying. And, you'll *always* have time to watch the Bluecoats perform, and will often be able to watch some or all of the other corps perform as well.

Be prepared to work! Even if you signed up for a specific job (sewing, cooking, etc.), you maybe be asked to help out in other areas as we need it and as new needs arise. If you've come to sew and we ask you to cook for a few hours, please don't be discouraged—we need your help and appreciate your flexibility!

## **When should I come on tour?**



It depends! You should discuss your availability with Genevieve Geisler, our Operations Director. She is in charge of all volunteer scheduling, and can be reached at 330-433-9115 (office), 330-990-4874 (cell) or [ggeisler@bluecoats.com](mailto:ggeisler@bluecoats.com). WE ALWAYS need help, so whenever is best for you would be great! However, with that said, there are inevitably times when we need more help than others; for instance, we often are in greater need of assistance during Spring Training and the early touring season than during the final month of tour. So, if you have a bit of flexibility in your schedule, let Genevieve know! She has to make sure ALL positions are covered for the entire summer, so she might ask you to come at a different time than the period you initially mentioned. If you can switch, great—if not, just let her know. We'd love to have you whenever you can make it.

## **How will I get on and off tour?**

There are several options for joining and leaving tour. Unless we're staying in one spot for several days (as we do in May and early June), bringing your own car usually isn't possible—it is too difficult to drive at night and then work all day! Most of the time, you'll have to jump on and jump off in different cities, so arranging transportation can be a bit of a challenge.



It is ultimately up to you to find a way to meet us and leave us, but we can certainly help. If you'd like to fly in or out of a city near us, we can arrange rides to and from the airport for you—just let us know in advance the particulars of your travel arrangements. And, please check with Genevieve before you book your flight to be sure that the times and airports you're using will work with our schedule. We also may be able to help with ride sharing if there are other people from your area who are coming to help. One popular way to make your trip easier (and more affordable) is to begin or end your journey in a town near you (where someone can drop you off or pick you up) and then fly going the other way.

## **What will happen when I arrive?**

When you arrive, be well rested and ready to work! Things can get a little crazy during the day, so we might not have time just that minute to introduce you to everyone or give you a huge welcome. The best thing you can do is introduce yourself and jump right in—we'll get to all the details later, don't worry! We greatly appreciate your help, and we'll be sure to show you where to put your stuff and where to go just as soon as things calm down a bit (after the meal is served or when it is time to pack up and leave!).

## **What should I bring on tour?**



Not too much! The best advice we can give is: **DON'T BRING MORE THAN YOU CAN CARRY!** You'll be responsible for loading and unloading your own luggage and sleeping gear, so try not to bring too much. Of course, there are several essential items, some of which you might not think of at first, so here's a list:

- Alarm clock
- Shower shoes (flip flops)
- (2) Towels
- Toiletries (you might want to keep bottles in Ziplock bags to avoid spills)
- Clothes you don't mind getting dirty!
- Clothes for hot weather—shorts, t-shirts, tank tops
- Comfortable pants, socks, sweatshirt, and other items to help keep you warm on the cold bus!
- Watch
- Comfortable shoes
- A couple of nicer outfits to wear to shows
- Air mattress (you'll be glad you have it!)
- Sleeping bag and/or blankets (housing sites can be cold, so bring enough to keep warm!)
- Pillow
- Camera
- Sunscreen
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- A positive attitude!

## How much time will I get to spend with my child?

If you're a parent, you'll find that your child is extremely busy all day, with little time to talk. Of course, you'll be very busy too! You'll get a chance to say a quick hello to your son or daughter at meals if you're helping on the food truck, and might get a chance to talk for a few minutes after a show. If we have laundry time or a free day while you're on tour, you might get a chance to spend a little more time together, but please be aware that these opportunities are few and far between. Just know that your child is glad to have you there!

## Are there any rules or regulations for volunteers?

While we don't really like to refer to them as "rules and regulations", there are a few guidelines that will help ensure you and those around you have the best possible Bluecoats volunteer experience.

- Be on time! When the posted schedule says the bus leaves at 6:00pm, we mean it. Staying on schedule is vital to a successful drum corps operation. Please don't make us wait for you!
- Be respectful of others' space. Space on the van, in the bus, and at housing sites is very limited, so please don't take up more than your fair share—your travel companions will thank you!
- No drinking or smoking is permitted on school grounds, in the food truck, in the corps support van, or in the souvenir van or trailer. **This really is a rule, and usually a state law for school campuses.**
- Please address any problems or concerns you have with Genevieve rather than directly with any other volunteers or staff members. If she is not on tour, call her, or speak with another member of the corps administrative staff like Asst. Corps Manager Joe Beitman.
- If you are a parent, please remember that your child's primary responsibilities are to learn the show and complete all assigned jobs and tasks. He or she may not have much time to talk, and we ask that you don't interfere with the learning process in any way by distracting your child. Trust us, your member will be VERY glad you're there, even if he or she doesn't get a chance to tell you that every day!
- Please stay out of the members' sleeping area (usually the gym) and off member busses! There may be times when you need to cross the member gym to access the showers, but other than that, you shouldn't have reason to spend time in their private areas. Remember, those areas are like bedrooms, and are where members change clothes, sleep, and store personal items.

- Please be aware that for certain volunteer positions you may be asked to sign a responsibility agreement, submit your driver's license, and/or provide your social security number or other personal information for insurance purposes. All such information will be kept strictly confidential.
- If you aren't sure, ask! There are no stupid questions.

## **What are the benefits of volunteering?**

We believe that volunteering is the absolute best way—next to marching!—to find out what drum corps is all about. Volunteering with the Bluecoats gives you a chance to be a part of something truly special, and makes you an extremely important part of the Bluecoats team. It can also be an incredibly rewarding experience. You'll receive a thousand "thank yous" a day for your hard work, and you'll get a chance to meet and interact with wonderful people from across the country on a daily basis. Most of all, you'll become a part of the Bluecoats family, and you can take great pride in the contribution you've made to making 2008 another great year. When you sit down to watch the Bluecoats perform after a long day of working and traveling, you'll see what we mean! And, if you plan to tour with us, don't forget that you'll be able to attend all DCI shows free of charge while you're traveling with the corps.

## **How do I sign up?**

To sign up, please contact Operations Director Genevieve Geisler:

Office: 330-433-9115

Cell: 330-990-4874

Email: [ggeisler@bluecoats.com](mailto:ggeisler@bluecoats.com)

She is responsible for scheduling volunteers for all programs, and can help you find the best way to help. Before you call or email, please think about what days or time periods you're available. We are usually in particular need of help early in the season (May and June), so if you're able to help then, please consider it. Genevieve is responsible for making sure each day or tour is properly staffed with volunteers, so after you've signed up she may ask you to switch to another time if you can. Of course, we always want your help whenever you can make it, but if you can be flexible, it will help us immensely!

## Other questions?

If you have any other questions about volunteering, how to sign up, or anything else Bluecoats-related, please feel free to contact Genevieve anytime (see contact information above)!

**THANK YOU!!**

