

Audio Description Across Minnesota Trainings

Trainer: Celia Hughes, VSA arts of Texas

Funder: the Minnesota State Arts Board

Coordinator: VSA arts of Minnesota

Rochester – December 1-2, 2009

Minneapolis – December 3-4, 2009

Duluth – December 6-7, 2009

Fergus Falls – December 9-10, 2009

To register, fill out the form below or contact:

VSA arts of Minnesota, 612-332-3888 or 800-801-3883, ext. 2

528 Hennepin Ave., Suite 305, Minneapolis, MN 55403

E-mail: jon@vsaartsmn.org; Website: <http://www.vsaartsmn.org>

Purpose: *Audio Description Across Minnesota* aims to make arts activities (plays, concerts, art exhibits, etc.) more accessible to people who are blind or of low vision by training individuals and arts organization representatives in the techniques of **Audio Description**.

What is Audio Description: Audio Description uses words to create pictures for people who are blind or of low vision. Originally developed by the late Margaret and Cody Pfanstiehl of the Metropolitan Washington Ear, it is now used to describe theatre performances, museum exhibitions, parades, films, TV programs and other cultural events. Describers, without injecting their own opinions, pass on exact information about the visual aspects of a production. Listeners use a receiver the size of a transistor radio and earphones to hear these essential visual elements being described and can then form their own impressions and conclusions. Audio Description Standards and a Code of Professional Conduct have been developed by the Audio Description Coalition (<http://www.AudioDescriptionCoalition.org>), of which our trainer is a founding member.

Background: Since 1996, VSA arts of Minnesota's *Access to Performing Arts* Project has promoted and publicized accessible performances in theatre, music, dance, opera, etc. through services such as Audio Description, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting, Captioning, Large Print and Braille programs, tactile tours, etc. Many community and professional arts organizations in the Twin Cities have made strides in increasing access, but many – particularly in Greater Minnesota – have not yet been able to make these services a consistent part of their programming and as a result have not included people who are blind or deaf among their audiences or performers.

In the year ending June 30, 2009, 105 Minnesota arts organizations offered 357 “accessible” events, 262 ASL-interpreted, 207 Audio Described and 16 Captioned. Many events offered one or more access services. Of these organizations, 90 were from the 7-county Twin Cities area; 15 were from Greater Minnesota or Fargo.

No state does better. BUT, only two groups outside the Metro area offered audio described shows. With about 1100 theaters, art centers, museums and arts service

organizations in the state, we can do better for people with vision and hearing loss.

Our goal is to improve quality and quantity of Audio Description for both visual and performance arts by training new Audio Describers to serve Greater Minnesota and low-income, volunteer-run groups to whom description is virtually unaffordable. Previously trained Audio Describers (in the 1990s at the Guthrie or in 2004 by VSA and the ELA Foundation) will also get a refresher training on the new Audio Description Standards.

By training more people in Audio Description techniques and standards, we can enable patrons who are blind or of low vision (and their friends and relatives) to enjoy the tangible and intangible benefits of participating more fully in the arts. The "I don't know if we can do that" barrier can turn into a "can do" model of "Sure, join us – we'll call our Audio Descriptor and plan a date."

Free Loanable Equipment: The grant to the State Arts Board providing these trainings also will provide FOUR sets of new Audio Description equipment to be shared among arts organizations (similar to how the Guthrie has loaned free equipment for many years). They will be housed at sites around Minnesota. We are thrilled!

"It was a revelation to be able to know exactly what was happening on stage.... I enjoyed it thoroughly."

Presenter: Celia Hughes, executive director of VSA arts of Texas (www.vsatx.org), is a trained audio describer whose organization created a series of audio description training tapes. She has been active for many years with Audio Description International (www.adinternational.org), the Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability Conferences (www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/education/lead/conference.html) and the Audio Description Coalition (www.AudioDescriptionCoalition.org).

Who Should Participate: The best candidates for audio describers will have good verbal and visual skills, a pleasant vocal quality, and interest in using your love for the arts to help patrons with vision loss experience a greater enjoyment of the arts. Knowledge of performing arts terminology and relationships with theatres or other performing arts organizations is encouraged but not necessary.

Participants will receive:

- * Audio Description training and resource materials
- * Newly-updated Audio Description standards
- * Access to Performing Arts resource materials
- * Sample hands-on experiences in Audio Description
- * Assignments in Audio Description and instructor feedback
- * Snacks, beverages and lunch
- * Post-workshop support, feedback and networking opportunities

Evaluation: Trained Audio Describers will complete an evaluation form on the project and the trainer. The trainer will evaluate how her expectations for the training were met. Access to Performing Arts staff will follow up with new describers to provide continuing support, description opportunities, publicity and patron feedback.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION TRAINING SCHEDULE

Rochester – Tuesday, Dec. 1, 1:00 - 9:00 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 2, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Rochester Civic Theatre, 20 Civic Center Drive SE (located within the Rochester Mayo Civic Center complex on the corner of Civic Center Drive and East Center Street), 507-282-8481; <http://www.rochestercivictheatre.org> ; [View Map](#)

Bloomington – Thursday & Friday, Dec. 3-4, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Bloomington Center for the Arts, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road, in the north end of Bloomington Civic Plaza, is the home of a number of arts organizations including the Bloomington Theatre & Art Center, which recently involved the merger of Bloomington Art Center (with its Gallery Players, <http://www.bloomingtonartcenter.com>) and Bloomington Civic Theatre (<http://www.bloomingtoncivictheatre.com>). From I-35 take 98th St. west a half mile; access free parking lots from either James or Logan Avenues. Link to [MapQuest](#). For bus transportation options, link to [Metro Transit](#).

Optional audio described “*The Seafarer*” 7:30 Thursday at Jungle Theater; \$10

Duluth – Sunday, Dec. 6, 1:00 - 9:00 pm; Monday, Dec. 7, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind, 4505 W. Superior St. (near I-35, south of downtown), conference room; 218-624-4828, 800-422-0833; www.lighthousefortheblind-duluth.org

Fergus Falls – Wednesday & Thursday, Dec. 9-10, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
A Center for the Arts, 124 W. Lincoln Ave. downtown, <http://www.fergusarts.org/>, 218-736-5453 (south of Detroit Lakes & Moorhead, northwest of Alexandria & St. Cloud)

These Audio Description Across Minnesota Trainings are made possible by:

VSA arts of Minnesota (<http://www.vsaartsmn.org>) provides staff and publicity. With a mission to promote quality, accessible arts experiences for people with all disabilities, it stands for "Vision of an inclusive community, Strength in shared resources and Artistic expression that unites us all." Its *Access to Performing Arts Project* helps arts organizations pay for describer and interpreter costs, reduced-price tickets for patrons, resource materials and publicity through voicemail recordings, websites, brochures, other media and direct e-mail or mail to patrons. (Contact Jon Skaalen, Program Coordinator, at 612-332-3888 or 800-801-3883, ext. 2, voice/TTY)

The **Minnesota State Arts Board** has promoted accessible arts opportunities at Minnesota arts organizations funded by the State Arts Board. It is carrying out a national grant to help provide additional audio description and captioning equipment and training across the state. Its Accessibility Coordinator is Erin McLennon, 651-215-1626, Erin.McLennon@arts.state.mn.us . <http://www.arts.state.mn.us>

Minnesota Association of Community Theatres (www.mact.net) has provided Audio Description and ASL Interpreting at state play festivals since 1995 and is eager to expand use of these services throughout the state. www.mact.net

The **Guthrie Theater** in Minneapolis has provided free loan of Audio Description equipment and has set the standards for description by trained describers for many years. They provide the only consistent captioned performances in Minnesota for people who are hard of hearing, and they do at least one ASL-interpreted show of every production. www.guthrietheater.org Hunter Gullickson is Access Coordinator, 612-225-6243 or HunterG@GuthrieTheater.org

REGISTRATION FOR AUDIO DESCRIPTION ACROSS MINNESOTA

The cost of this two-day training is only \$30, and includes:

- * Audio Description training and resource materials
- * Newly-updated Audio Description standards
- * Access to Performing Arts resource materials
- * Sample hands-on experiences in Audio Description
- * Assignments in Audio Description and instructor feedback
- * Snacks, beverages and lunch
- * Post-workshop support, feedback and networking opportunities

Advance registration is required, and **SPACE IS LIMITED** -- we can accommodate a maximum of 10 people per training. If you have questions, please call ASAP. WE WILL CALL YOU upon receiving your registration or inquiry.

Fill out the form below (or on our website, www.vsaartsmn.org) and send it **IMMEDIATELY** to VSA arts of Minnesota, with a follow-up call/email to confirm:

I wish to attend the following Audio Description Training:

___ Rochester – December 1-2, 2009 – **Space still available**

___ ~~REGISTRATION FULL in Bloomington~~ – December 3-4, 2009

___ Duluth – December 6-7, 2009 – **Space still available**

___ Fergus Falls – December 9-10, 2009 – **Space still available**

___ optional audio described performance of “The Seafarer” Dec. 3 – **extra \$10**

Name: _____

Arts Organization represented (if any): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Special Needs (food accommodations, etc.): _____

Main interest: ___ describing performances ___ describing visual art ___ both

Other comments/questions: _____

Enclosed is \$___ (\$30 per person, payable to VSA arts of Minnesota)

Please mail to (or fill out payment form on www.vsaartsmn.org):

VSA arts of Minnesota

Attn: Audio Description Training – Jon Skaalen

528 Hennepin Ave., #305

Minneapolis, MN 55403

Fax: 612-305-0132

Email: jon@vsaartsmn.org

FMI: 612-332-3888 ext. 2 or 800-801-3883 voice/tty; www.vsaartsmn.org

CELL: 651-336-8206