



VOLUNTEER MANUAL

<https://wku.edu/hardinplanetarium>

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Mission:

Hardin Planetarium's mission is to inspire lifelong learning through interactive experiences that are both inspiring and factually accurate. Our audiences will be encouraged to engage with exhibits and live presentations that further the public understanding and enjoyment of science. Every member of our audience deserves to be treated with respect. We do everything possible to create an atmosphere where each person can enjoy themselves and learn as much as possible.

History:

An iconic architectural landmark at Western Kentucky University, Hardin Planetarium was dedicated in October 1967. The dome shaped building is 72-feet in diameter and 44 feet high. The interior includes two levels encompassing 6,000 square feet. The star chamber seats over 100 spectators on upholstered benches arranged concentrically around the central projector system.

The planetarium is named for Hardin Cherry Thompson [1938-1963], son of WKU president Kelly Thompson, who died during his senior year at the University. In 2012, audiences at Hardin Planetarium first enjoyed the power of full dome digital simulations, when the projection system was re-outfitted with a Digitalis Epsilon digital projector. The original Spitz A3P optomechanical starball still exists in its well at the center of the Star Chamber.

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What Hardin Planetarium offers its volunteers

Volunteers have shared many different benefits from their service. Volunteering gives you a chance to:

- Interact meaningfully with adults, children, people of all ages and walks of life.
- Explore new discoveries in astronomy, physics, optics, geology, chemistry, biology, and engineering.
- Meet other volunteers and foster friendships with people who share similar interests.
- Cultivate talents and skills.
- Explore a career in science.
- Develop leadership skills and self-esteem.
- Acquire practical work experience.
- Earn Community Service credit.
- Attend special events and previews.
- Experience behind-the-scenes operations.
- Participate in our comprehensive orientation and training program.

What Hardin Planetarium expects of you

As a representative of Hardin Planetarium, as well as WKU, volunteers agree to certain things:

- Attend the training required for your assignment.
- Follow all of the planetarium's procedures.
- Maintain your agreed upon volunteer schedule.
- Arrive on time, ready, and dressed appropriately for your task and the environmental conditions.
- Wear your badge and vest while volunteering
- Don't use cell phones or other personal electronics during your shift.
- Provide three days' notice if you are unable to make your assigned shift. Call if you cannot come to work.
- When you complete an assignment and have nothing to do, notify your supervisor.
- Ask questions if you are not sure of any aspect of your work.

Above all, treat your volunteer responsibilities with the commitment of a job.

Operation Procedures for Planetarium Staff

Dress Code:

All volunteers shall present a professional image while on duty. A volunteer's appearance needs to be clean and approachable. All volunteers wear one of the provided embroidered fleece vests over a solid color shirt, with long pants, and closed toe shoes that are all clean and in good repair.

While on duty, volunteer name badges are worn such that the name is easily visible. Each shift begins with the donning of a name badge and one of the provided vests. [Additionally, a disposable mask is provided for you if you do not bring your own proper face mask.](#)

Communication:

The preferred communication with our volunteers will be via **email**. Volunteers should expect to receive weekly correspondence from the planetarium: please check email regularly. It is important that you promptly notify the Planetarium Coordinator if you change accounts.

Attendance Requirements:

Your fellow workers count on you to be here for every shift for which you choose to schedule yourself.



While the best course of action is to thoughtfully check your schedule before signing up for a shift, we understand that last-minute cancellations will sometimes happen. There are two ways that your absence from a scheduled shift may be handled: 1) Notify the Planetarium Coordinator by phone or email *three days before your shift* with an acceptable reason for your absence; and *even better*, 2) arrange for a replacement and notify the Coordinator prior to the start of your shift.

Tardiness, not being readily available during your shift, or leaving without checking with the Coordinator all result in behavior warnings.

Time Commitment:

Volunteers need to attend their training classes, complete projects and conduct themselves according to the standards of the program. All volunteer positions require a minimum commitment of two shifts each month (approximately every two weeks).

Active Status: You are meeting your monthly commitment of volunteer time.

Inactive Status: You will be taking a hiatus for a specified amount of time. It is your responsibility to contact us to have your status set to inactive and to set it back to active within the arranged timeframe.

Shift Cancellations:

You may cancel your own shifts 3 days prior, allowing someone else to sign up for your shift. If you need to cancel with less than a 3 day notice, you must contact the Coordinator. [If you find that you have a fever within 24 hours of a shift, you must notify us and cancel immediately.](#)

Transportation:

Hardin Planetarium and its staff cannot provide transportation. Each volunteer should arrange for their own rides.

Arrival and Departure:

When arriving at the planetarium for a shift, immediately check in with the Coordinator, then proceed to the volunteer room to pick up and put on your name badge and an embroidered vest.

There is no guaranteed parking for planetarium staff, volunteers, or audience members. For the weeknight (after 4:30 pm) or weekend public shows, WKU parking policy allows anyone to park in the following lots – Chestnut Street North, Honors, College Hill and Hub.

At the conclusion of your shift, check with the Coordinator to make sure nothing else needs to be dealt with, then sign out. Before you leave, replace your name badge and the vest you were wearing and collect any personal belongings. If you are leaving the building after dark, please use caution. If you are expecting a ride, please stay inside the building until your ride arrives. If you are taking yourself home by car or bus after dark, please consider walking with others. Always let the Coordinator know when you are leaving the building after the conclusion of your shift.

Atmosphere of Respect/ Policy Regarding Harassment

Hardin Planetarium promotes a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Every volunteer uses discretion to ensure that their words and actions communicate respect for others. Harassment based on race, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender is not tolerated. All reports of harassment are thoroughly investigated. Those found in violation of policy will be subject to dismissal from the program. If you feel uncomfortable about something that happened to you, please report the incident immediately to the Coordinator. We need to be aware of a problem to address it.

Safety

Hardin Planetarium is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment. The safety and health of our guests, volunteers and employees are of primary importance. Safety and prevention of accidents is everyone's responsibility. Unsafe acts – such as, but not limited to, doing something without required safety equipment or acts of horseplay – should never happen. If you are not sure how to do something, then **STOP** and ask a supervisor. If you think that an injury may occur from doing something, then **STOP** and ask a supervisor. No job or activity in the planetarium is so important that it cannot and should not be done safely – free from injury to visitors, volunteers and employees. In this regard, we make every effort to comply with all relevant federal and state occupational health and safety laws.



Responsibilities of all employees, including volunteers, are:

- Exercise maximum care and good judgment at all times to prevent accidents and injuries.
- Observe all safety rules and regulations at all times.
- Report all injuries to a supervisor and seek first aid for all injuries.
- Report any unsafe conditions, equipment, or practices to a supervisor.

Remember, safety is everyone's responsibility, including yours as a volunteer.

Standards for Behavior

We depend on volunteers to make Hardin Planetarium an out of this world experience for our visitors. We have high expectations for all volunteers and are committed to supporting your growth. In your work at the planetarium, we expect you to demonstrate scholarship, professionalism and leadership.

Meets or exceeds our expectations:



Behavior that will be commended and conveyed in recommendations.

- Helping planetarium staff.
- Promptness and consistent scheduling.
- Engaging visitors with demonstrations and activities.
- Familiarity with all our exhibits and programs (and proactively sharing information with visitors).
- Attentiveness whenever staff, other volunteers, or visitors are speaking.
- Conducting oneself in an appropriate manner, including noise level appropriate to your activities.
- Actively striving to keep our public and private spaces clean and organized.

Grounds for dismissal:



Grounds for immediate dismissal from the program include:

- Using, possessing, selling/ giving, or being under the influence of intoxicating or illegal substances.
- Possession of a weapon of any kind while at the planetarium.
- Theft of any kind.
- Violence, harassment, or aggressive behavior of any kind, including intimidation of another person.
- Destruction of property or excessively careless behavior toward property or people at the planetarium.
- Sexual harassment.
- Disregard of safety regulations or otherwise compromising the safety of the planetarium or its guests.

Repeatedly below expectations:



Behavior that is **repeatedly below our expectations** will result in a strike. Three strikes within a four-month period will result in dismissal from the program. Three strikes in more than four months will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- Excessive lateness (arriving 15 minutes or more past the scheduled start of your shift).
- No-show or unexcused absence.
- Use of inappropriate language at any time while at the planetarium.
- Failure to keep your hands to yourself or using disrespectful language or actions.
- Inappropriate conversation, with peers or visitors, while at the planetarium.

Marginal behavior:



Behavior that does not meet our expectations will result in a warning, which can accumulate into a strike toward dismissal when three warnings are given within a three-month period.

- Tardiness (15 minutes or less).
- Lack of professionalism (cell phone use, eating/drinking, uniform violation).
- Disrespecting common spaces or materials.
- Missing in action or failure to sign out.

Audience Assistant

A. When you first arrive (building opening procedure):

- Find the coordinator so they know you have arrived.
- Place belongings in the staff office.
- Put your uniform on.
- Follow the steps in the building opening procedure in Appendix 1.
- Report to the Coordinator when the list of tasks is complete and find out if there are any other special tasks to be done before the show.

B. Pre-show set up in Star Chamber – prop placement

- There will be a *pre-set list* for all props, artifacts or objects used during the course of each show, specifying the exact placement of each item at the start of the show. Set-up includes checking this list to make sure all items are present and in their correct location. If anything is missing, immediately inform the presenter or tech operator.
- Additional inspection of the Star Chamber prior to the show should include checking for what should *not* be there. Extraneous trash on the floor or seats needs to be removed. Items or objects on or near the center console (e.g. possibly left over from a previous show) not on the public show's prop list need to be reported, not removed.
- Before the show, both sets of inner (Star Chamber) doors get unlocked, and the two right hand doors facing the breezeway to Thompson Complex get propped open.
- Just as the show is about to start, both sets of outer (building) doors get locked, the "Open" sign gets turned off, the doors to the Star Chamber get shut, and the sign on the star chamber door gets turned over to "show has started."



C. Interacting with the public and staff

Volunteers are expected to contribute to a *congenial work atmosphere* and make the planetarium a *welcoming public facility*.

1. Always make visitors feel welcome and respected.
3. Treat other staff members with consideration and respect.
4. Always maintain a positive, helpful attitude. You may not always be able to help them yourself, but try to find someone who can.
5. Focus should be on guests rather than other volunteers. If speaking to a volunteer, keep the discussion brief and avoid controversial topics, or topics in no way related to space science or academic study.
6. Any loud displays or negative emotional outbursts are not appropriate. Though the feeling of the planetarium should be one of excitement, and potentially high energy, it is also a contemplative one for many visitors. The Ring Hall functions as a museum and should be treated as such.
7. While on shift, volunteers are expected **not** to use cell phones for either calling or

texting. Please silence the ringer on your phone and encourage others **not** to call you during shifts. If it is an emergency, go to the staff office to make your call out of sight and earshot of visitors.

D. Pre-show interactions with audience in the exhibit ring

- Volunteers should become progressively more acquainted with the displays in the Ring. Knowledge of what is already there is a must. Being able to expand on the material in the displays is a plus.
- One of the hallmarks of our planetarium is **INTERACTIVITY**. Volunteers are asked to and help engage visitors with exhibits.
 1. The audience comes voluntarily to learn what is fun and interesting and within their abilities; we want visitors to come away with a sense of knowing more, and ideally a feeling of wonder and awe.
 2. Transmit your own enthusiasm for a subject to the visitors.
 3. Watch the visitors prior to the show. Be prepared to step up to a visitor standing at a display and engage them in conversation and demonstration, offering new thoughts and questions for them to ponder.Current displays which use interactivity and demonstration include:
 - a. The IR camera/ monitor
 - b. The Lunar Landing exhibit
 - c. The Black Hole
 - d. The Treasure Hunt



E. Interacting with the Audience During the Show

“Ensuring quiet and attention” so that *all* audience members can hear, see, and therefore enjoy the show is the statement exemplifying our approach to monitoring the audience.

1. This is our goal, and we try to gently encourage audience members to abide by it.
2. There are times when disruptions are inevitable: deal with them as outlined in this section.
3. We try to include question and answer segments, and often physical engagement in each show. Other than those planned interactions, there should be no side conversations. Any communications required to maintain safety or to ensure the audiences satisfaction are to be handled quietly and with as little attention-grabbing movement as possible. The presentations are *shows*, and should be treated in much the same was as a professional concert or dance recital. The audience should perceive that you are focused on them and the show.
4. No use of electronic devices during the show!

During those show moments when volunteers are not actively engaged with the audience, **you should be seated** on the stools near each of the two doors to the Ring,

where you can monitor the audience.

Should an audience member need to exit from the Star Chamber, please follow this procedure to ensure minimal disruption of the audience remaining in the chamber:

1. If you should need to escort an audience member out, use only the provided red light flashlights. Red is much less intrusive than any other color light. Flashlights should be pointed at the floor while guiding people.
 2. Escort them through the doors.
 3. Ascertain if they intend to return. If so, explain the procedure for re-entry, and wait for them; either just inside or just outside Chamber doors, depending on the expected wait time.
 4. When reentering use a red flashlight pointed down, and guide them to their seat.
- **Should an audience member become disruptive** please follow this procedure:

There are occasions when we have audience members with **disabilities** who inadvertently are disruptive. We have to roll with this kind of disturbance. Let the presenter take the lead on any intervention necessary. If you have suggestions as to how to handle the situation, we will discuss it after the show.

Very young children are occasionally a problem. Many planetariums don't allow children under a certain age. We purposefully do not have a blanket policy. There are three approaches which we will use, and in this order:

- a. **Spotting a problem before the show starts.** Approach the caregiver and ask if the child will be okay when the Chamber gets dark. Assure the caregiver (regardless of their answer) that if the child becomes disturbed and restless during the show, it will be possible for them to take the child to the Ring Hall during the show. They can walk around and look at exhibits until the show is over, though they cannot reenter the building if they go outside. The approach here is to sound helpful, not like an enforcer about to punish a rule violation.
- b. **Catching a problem during the show.** If a child becomes disruptive, first see if they calm down quickly and/or the caregiver decides to remove them. If the caregiver does decide to exit, be sure to escort them out, as per above. If the caregiver takes no action, and the child remains disruptive, approach the caregiver quietly to ask if the child would be more comfortable outside in the Ring. Again, the initial approach should be to try to be helpful, not to kick anyone out.
- c. **As a last resort**, the presenter may request that you ask the caregiver to take the child outside. If this occurs, surreptitiously approach the caregiver and offer to escort them out of the Chamber. Inform the caregiver who seems most connected to the disruptive child that they must step out of the Chamber to ensure that the rest of the audience be able to fully concentrate on and enjoy the show. Assure the caregiver that there are interesting things to see in the Ring, and that they can reenter if the situation changes. Be firm while gently and emphatically conveying that the expected outcome is that child will exit the Chamber as quickly as possible, with minimal disruption of the show. This

kind of situation should be anticipated before the show by being aware of the audience members, and the presenter should be apprised of any potential problem you see coming before the start of the show. It will always be the presenter's call as to whether someone is asked to leave.

F. After the show

- **Your first responsibility is to the visitor.** If there are people still looking at exhibits, follow the procedure outlined for interacting with visitors before the show starts. The same principles apply after the show.
 1. **Engage with visitors** in the Ring until all have left. Continue to make them feel welcome. We are in no rush to get them out the door. Once they are all gone, join in cleaning the Star Chamber.
 2. Once visitors are all gone, proceed with Star Chamber **clean-up and prop storage**:
 - a. Place all props back where they belong, according to the pre-show set list.
 - b. If an item is to be stowed outside the Chamber, the Coordinator or Student Coordinator will direct you as to where.
 - c. Once props are stowed, the Chamber should be checked for trash or belongings left behind. Bring any left belongings to the attention of the Coordinator, and stow them in the staff office.

G. Post-show building close down procedure

- Follow the steps in the building close down procedure listed in Appendix 2, and report to the Coordinator or Student Coordinator when finished. Ask if there is anything else to be done.
- If everything is in order, the Coordinator will let you know.
 1. Return your vest and badge to the staff room.
 2. Notify the coordinator that you are leaving
 3. You may go home.

Tech Operator

The main function of the Tech Operator is to provide support to the Presenter during a show or other planetarium function.



A. When you first arrive (building opening procedure):

1. Place belongings in the staff office.
2. Put your uniform and name badge on.

B. Pre-show set up in Star Chamber

1. Lighting:
 - i. Turn on the work flood lights
 - ii. Use the computer to up the cove lights, then turn off the work flood lights
2. Digitarium set-up:
 - i. Plug in the two plugs at the center computer (one is for the Digitarium, one is for the projector).
 - ii. Push the red button on the side of the Digitarium computer to boot it up.
 - iii. Take the lens cap off the projector.
 - iv. Use the projector remote to turn on the power to the projector.
 - v. The entire system should boot up in about 45 seconds.
 - vi. Preset the system to the show preset.
 1. Preset the sky to desired show preset.
 2. Preset the media file to desired show preset.
3. Console computer:
 - i. If using digital music, open the music software
 - ii. If needed, preset show PowerPoints and Video files.
4. If using the analog slide projector, turn it on using the white remote.
 - i. Preset to show PowerPoint images, and/or videos.
 - ii. Shutter if necessary.
5. If using CD's or DVD's, preset them in the player. Test.
6. Props:
 - i. Double check special show prop placement when advised by audience assistants that the preset is complete.
 - ii. Double check that all Presenter tools (remotes, pointers) are in place.
7. When preset is complete and all has been checked to your satisfaction, start the opening music and open the house.
8. Unlock the alternate Star Chamber doors.
9. Join the audience assistants in interacting with the audience members.

C. During the running of the show:

1. Take all light and sound cues according to the cue sheet.
2. Assist Presenter in audience involvement activities, as needed (prop distribution, coaching, etc.)
3. At the close of the show:
 - i. Start closing music
 - ii. Raise cove lights
 - iii. Prop open the Star Chamber doors

D. After Show is over and audience has left the chamber:

1. Shut down Digitarium and projector
 - i. Turn off computer
 - ii. Turn off projector using remote
 - iii. Wait for cool down, until the fan slows
 - iv. Unplug chords from central computer and sound system
 1. Keep cables pulled out and hang on the portal, so they don't fall inside
2. Turn off CD/DVD player, if on
3. Turn off white analog projector, if on
4. Finish console computer and close all programs
 - i. Close all media software
 - ii. Set cove lights to 0-black
 - iii. Turn off the console monitor, but not the computer
5. Lock both outside doors to Star Chamber

E. Building Shut-down Procedure:

1. Assist Audience Assistants by:
 - i. Interacting with any remaining audience
 - ii. Cleaning the Star Chamber
 - iii. Shutting down building as per Shut Down procedure (Appendix A)

Production Assistant

The chief function of a Production Assistant is to help in the creation of presentations and displays for the planetarium. In so doing the Production Assistant follows the direction of the Planetarium Coordinator and Planetarium Director. The following functions are common, but not necessarily the only, parts of the Production Assistant's tasks in preparing shows and/or displays:

Scripting:

The Production Assistant is called upon to learn the language of the Nightshade software which operates the Digitalium, and to create scripts which integrate media with sky movements in the planetarium presentations.

Graphics:

The Production Assistant searches for appropriate graphics images and videos as per the direction of the Planetarium Coordinator and Director, alters the graphics as necessary, creates new graphics, and translates graphics into file formats compatible with the Digitalium software (Nightshade scripts).

Sound:

The Production Assistant searches for appropriate sound effects and music as per the direction of the Planetarium Coordinator and Director, edits them as necessary, and translates graphics into file formats compatible with the Digitalium software.

Displays:

The Production Assistant searches for images, media and artifacts which are appropriate for various planetarium displays and creates and assembles display components to add to the planetarium's Ring Museum. The Production Assistant also maintains displays, making repairs as needed.

Presenter

Presenters are responsible for delivering programs and presentations to the planetarium's audiences.

Behind the Scenes

A variety of specialist functions at the planetarium involve different areas of expertise. These may include work in the audio-visual area, construction, archiving, and office coordination.

Appendix 1: Opening Task Checklist

Whenever you Open the Building:

- Get vest & nametag from downstairs office
- Unlock front and side outside doors.
- Turn on 3 banks of lights.
- Turn on “Open Sign”.
- Turn on IR camera and monitor.
- Ensure that all computers are properly running programs – IR video, comet orbit simulation, slide show. Plug in light bulb box in Sun exhibit
- Check for general appearance:
 - No damage or problems in displays.
 - Chairs and tables tidy and in position.
 - Bulletin board and information table organized.
 - Floors clean and free of debris.

Set up the Star Chamber for a Show:

Tech Operator:

- Turn on house work lights.
- Turn on Star Chamber computer and projector, following procedure.
- Turn on console computer.
- Turn on “cove” lights and turn off house work lights.
- Unlock both entrances to the Star Chamber.
- Double check placement (and batteries) of props, remotes and pointers.

Audience Assistants:

- Check placement of all show props.
- Check Star Chamber for cleanliness.
- Check that both entrances to Star Chamber are unlocked.
- At start of show, lock both street entrances.
- Close (but don't lock) Star Chamber doors.

Appendix 2: Closing Task Checklist

After a show

Closing up the Star Chamber:

Tech Operator:

- Turn off Star Chamber computer and projector.
- Turn off console computer *Monitor only*.

Audience Assistants:

- Check placement of (and/or put away) all show props.
- Check Star Chamber for cleanliness.
- Turn off Star Chamber lights.
- Lock both doors to the Star Chamber.

Whenever you close the building:

- The presenter will focus on disinfecting the Star Chamber.
- Lock front and side external doors.
- Turn off 3 banks of lights.
- Turn off “Open Sign”.
- Turn off IR camera and monitor.
- Unplug light bulb box in Sun exhibit.
- Three shallow bay computers shut down.
- Lunar landing display unplugged.
- Check for general appearance:
 - No damage in displays (report if you find any).
 - Chairs and tables tidy and in position.
 - Floor clean.
- Put away vests and nametags downstairs
- Check with coordinator for any additional duties
- Notify Coordinator when you leave

Appendix 3: Procedures for an Emergency

1. Allow the presenter to take the lead.
2. The audience may need to be moved. Be prepared to throw the doors wide open, set the door stops and assist anyone who needs help exiting. If it is a big audience, position yourself outside the Chamber door and encourage audience members to move through and away from the doors into an appropriate direction.
3. If emergency help needs to be called, gather information for emergency responders.
 - a. What kind of emergency?
 - b. Is anyone bleeding?
 - c. Is anyone unconscious?
 - d. Has anyone fallen down and can't get up?
4. City of Bowling Green emergency can be called by dialing **911** from any phone that is *not* part of the campus network. Cell phones will do. Again, specify the location of the planetarium at the traffic light at the corner of College Heights Blvd. and State Street. Stay on the line to answer any questions and provide information.
5. The only landline phone in the building is in the Coordinator's office, which is generally locked during the show. If a landline phone is required, obtain the key from the Coordinator, unlock the door, and dial **911**, remain calm and report the facts, specifying the location of the planetarium at the traffic light at the corner of College Heights Blvd. and State Street. Stay on the line to answer any questions and provide information.
6. If emergency personnel are summoned, you may be requested to stand by the door, or curb and beckon them in the direction of the needed attention with clear simple signals.

Appendix 4

Digitalarium Quick Start Guide

1. Plug in the two plugs at the center computer (one is for the Digitalarium, one is for the projector).
2. Push the red button on the side of the Digitalarium computer to boot it up.
3. Take the lens cap off the projector.
4. Use the projector remote to turn on the power to the projector.
5. The entire system should boot up in about 45 seconds.
6. Preset the system to the show preset:
 - a. Preset the sky to desired show preset.
 - b. Preset the media file to desired show preset.



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Hardin Planetarium Volunteer Agreement

- ☐ I have read and understood the Hardin Planetarium's Volunteer Manual.
- ☐ I understand that I must abide by the professional standards identified in the manual while at WKU. I further understand that, at its sole discretion, WKU may elect to terminate my volunteer service. Likewise, I understand that I may withdraw my volunteer services at any time for any reason.
- ☐ I am freely offering my services as a volunteer associated with the Hardin Planetarium for the purpose of assisting with its operation.
- ☐ I understand that as a volunteer I will receive no compensation or benefits from WKU.
- ☐ I understand that no workers' compensation benefits are available in the unlikely event that I should suffer an injury or illness while serving as a volunteer.
- ☐ I understand and agree to the volunteer service requirements indicated above.
- ☐ I agree to schedule myself for a minimum of two shifts per month and/or a shift every two weeks.

Print Name Clearly: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: (if under 18) _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____