

Donate Life Virginia Captain Cardinal Helper (Mascot & Escort) Training



Thank you for volunteering to serve as a Captain Cardinal Helper (mascot and/or escort.) Your support and promotion of organ, eye and tissue donation is life-saving work!

By promoting the Donate Life message, you accept the honor and privilege of representing donors, and the gift of life they so generously gave. You also represent their families and friends and the recipients of those gifts.

Although Captain Cardinal is cute and fun, as his representative we ask that you remain respectful to his mission: to encourage everyone to be an organ, eye and tissue donor.

Thank you!



This training module is divided into four parts:

- **Section One:** Who is Captain Cardinal?
- **Section Two:** Basic Donation Information
- **Section Three:** Understanding the job & rules
- **Section Four:** Program information



Section One: Who is Captain Cardinal?



- Captain Cardinal is Donate Life Virginia's Donate Life Ambassador. He's quite busy around Virginia promoting organ, eye and tissue donation.
- He thinks there's nothing better than saving lives as a donor, and inspires people to register as organ, eye and tissue donors.
- He's soft, warm and approachable!
- Captain Cardinal is a perfect community ambassador, as he provides a non-threatening message. He extends the Donate Life brand and acts as a 3-D promotional message, encouraging Virginians to BE AN ORGAN, EYE AND TISSUE DONOR.



Captain Cardinal's Mission:

To encourage Virginians to be an organ, eye and tissue donor and sign up in the Virginia Donor Registry!



Section Two: Basic Donation Information



How does a Virginian register as a donor?

- As a Virginia resident, you can register your decision to be a donor through the DMV (at a DMV office or the DMV website) when getting or renewing your driver's license or ID card or you can register on-line at DonateLifeVirginia.org.



Quick Facts:

- Donation and transplantation saves lives. There is a critical shortage of organs in Virginia and nationwide.
- One donor can save 9 lives through organ donation and enhance more than 50 lives through tissue and eye donation.
- More than 110,000 people are currently waiting for a life-saving organ transplant in the U.S; more than 2,800 here in Virginia.
- On average, 18 men, women, and children die each day waiting for a life-saving organ transplant in the U.S.
- 3 Virginians die each week waiting for a life-saving transplant that doesn't come in time.
- On average, every 10 minutes someone is added to the waiting list for a life-saving organ transplant.
- About 28,000 organ transplants take place in the U.S. each year, and on average, over 700 of those are in Virginia.



Section Three: Understanding the Job & Guidelines



Doing your job as a Captain Cardinal Helper:

- As a Captain Cardinal Helper, you will appear at public and private events in Virginia and in areas near Northern Virginia to promote donation.
- Captain Cardinal is at an event to entertain the crowd – not himself. He must remain suitable for a family audience. The escort helps verbally to remind the mascot of all these various aspects.
 - Be memorable (for the positive)
 - Be animated (be larger than life)
 - Be funny (it's about the performance & comedic timing)
- Unless specified, Captain Cardinal should be part of the crowd, or off to the side, at an event and not on stage or up front with speakers.



Always remember that Captain Cardinal...

Does not speak. Keep the magic alive! If Captain Cardinal needs help or needs a break, he pats his nose to communicate to his escort. When asked if he's OK, Captain Cardinal gives two thumbs up to his escort.



Always remember that Captain Cardinal ...

Is friendly and approachable. He should not approach a child, because some children are afraid of mascots. Children should approach the mascot! He may need to kneel down to a child's level to make the child more comfortable.



Always remember that Captain Cardinal ...

Physically interacts with the public including shaking hands, sharing high-fives and giving hugs. He can wave, jump up and down in response to something funny, etc.



Always remember that Captain Cardinal ...

Poses for pictures, keeping his hands visible.



Captain Cardinal's Signature Moves:

- Captain Cardinal loves to dance and wiggle about!
- When happy, Captain Cardinal claps and jumps up and down.
- Captain Cardinal likes to wave to everyone and blow kisses.
- When shy or blushing, Captain Cardinal covers his mouth or puts his hands to his cheeks.
- If he's sad, Captain Cardinal lowers his head and covers his eyes.
- Captain Cardinal often points to his Donate Life tee, to ensure the public gets the message!



Remember the escort can ask questions of Captain Cardinal to remind him of all these things!



What is needed for a Captain Cardinal Appearance:

- An escort to help Captain Cardinal get dressed, and guide him through his appearance, and a mascot performer to “play” Captain Cardinal, between 5’ 5” and 6’3”
- Every mascot volunteer **MUST BE IN EXCELLENT PHYSICAL CONDITION**. Age, physical strength, recipient status, etc must be taken into consideration. This decision to perform as the mascot is a mutual one between volunteer and organization. Even those in good physical condition must follow these guidelines carefully to stay healthy.
- It’s helpful if Captain Cardinal and his escort are both male or female, to aide in getting Captain Cardinal dressed, but if you have a secure, private dressing area with a place to sit, gender shouldn’t matter.



Getting Dressed: (These instructions are included with the costume. You may want to allow 15 minutes to get dressed—your escort is there to help you.)

- If you have long hair, you will need a hair tie or band to hold your hair back under the Cardinal head.
- Packed in the costume bag is a cooling vest to be used especially when the costume will be worn when the temperature is 60 degrees +, or whenever you determine it is needed.
 - Break the ice packs, insert in the vest.
 - Put the vest on with the ice packs against your body.
- Packed in the costume bag are several bandanas that you can wet with cold water and secure around your neck. If you do that, you may KEEP the bandanas (you get to wash them!)
- Step into body suit.
- Put on shoes before body is completely pulled up – it's much easier.
- Fasten the shoulder Velcro & zip costume and secure hook at top of body
- Put the Donate Life tee on the body suit and zip up the side.
- Put on Cardinal Head and tuck neck flaps into body of suit.
- Place the green cape around the head and tie the straps behind the head. Ask your volunteer to pin back the sides of the cape so it doesn't drape over the t'Shirt.
- Put on gloves.



Clothing to Wear Under Costume:

- It is recommended the mascot volunteer wear sweat-wicking or breathable clothing – a t-shirt and gym/bike shorts is suggested.
- Wear high socks, to protect feet and ankles in Captain Cardinal's shoes.
- If Captain Cardinal is going to be very active during his appearance (e.g., running in a mascot chase), you may choose to wear your own tennis shoes.
- It may help to change your tee-shirt while on a break so you always have a dry tee under Captain Cardinal's body suit if you will be wearing it for a long period of time.
- You may want to bring a small fan with you too so you're able to cool yourself quickly while on a break (you will find one in the kit, but bringing your own is a sure backup.)



Undressing: (These instructions are included with the costume.)

- Bring your personal toiletries (deodorant, powder etc.) to freshen up after wearing the costume.
- Remove head & wipe interior helmet with antibacterial wipes / spray with Febreeze (both included in costume bag).
- Remove Cape, Head, T-shirt.
- Unzip body and pull body partially off.
- Sit down and take off shoes.
- Pull off body suit.
- Place all items in labeled bags and return per your instructions.



Costume Guidelines for health and safety:

- DO drink plenty of water or Gatorade– take frequent breaks and practice proper hydration!
- DO NOT operate a vehicle while in the costume.
- DO NOT leave your escort– this will ensure you are safe at all times given the limited visibility and mobility of the costume.
- DO NOT wear costume for more than **20-25** minutes. If you wear it longer, be sure to remove the head when you can be private, as long as you keep yourself hidden from the crowd.
- Do not try to wear the costume at multiple places in a short time span (e.g., two hospital visits within a two hour window.) It's a lot of work for Captain Cardinal to get dressed and undressed at each location, and will tire both volunteers out.
- **NOTE:** You must be 15 years of age or older to play the Captain Cardinal mascot. If you are 15-18, your parent/guardian must be the escort.



Mascot Guidelines for costume care:

- Do not wear the costume in poor weather conditions (raining, snowing, wet.)
- Do not attempt to eat or drink while in the costume.
- Do not remove any portion of the costume while in public (in uncontrolled conditions, you can damage the costume).
- The costume must be completely removed for bathroom breaks. This is a sanitary-friendly reminder that future volunteers will appreciate.
- Be mindful of doorways – Captain Cardinal will need to duck!

NOTE: alcoholic beverages cause dehydration, and any volunteer if over 21 years of age should not drink alcohol 24 hours prior to an appearance. The mascot volunteer WILL sweat inside the costume, and sweat smells of alcohol after any amount of consumption.



Captain Cardinal's escorts are:

- Champions for the cause;
- Able to answer basic questions about organ, eye & tissue donation;
- Always directing the public to www.DonateLifeVirginia.org;
- Able to ask Captain Cardinal questions to remind the Mascot of fun; responses: e.g. “Captain Cardinal, are you happy to see these children?”
- Responsible for ensuring Captain Cardinal's safety, direction and comfort levels at all times, including assisting the mascot in dressing in the costume;
- Clean, neat, respectful and appropriate;
- Wearing a Donate Life tee or polo if possible;
- Taking pictures of Captain Cardinal interacting at events for Facebook, websites, and more!



Section Three: Program Information



Scheduling Captain Cardinal:

- Each region is responsible for coordinating the scheduling of Captain Cardinal. Currently, there is a Captain Cardinal mascot in Roanoke (Tammy Campbell-LifeNet Health), Richmond (Andrew Mullins-LifeNet Health), Virginia Beach (Nancy Hurst-LifeNet Health), and Northern Virginia (Rhonda Griffin-WRTC)
- Appearances are subject to availability.
- Either the mascot or escort is responsible for picking up the costume and returning it to the respective office that scheduled the appearance.



Captain Cardinal at work!



Please stand to take the Captain Cardinal Helper Oath!



**I promise to be all I can be
as a Captain Cardinal Mascot or Escort;**

I vow to respect those who have given the Gift of Life;

**And remember that I am representing the entire donation
community.**

I will have fun and make people smile;

With the ultimate goal of registering donors!



**THANK YOU for
being a Captain Cardinal Helper!**

