



Volunteer Handbook

**Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center
156 Prospect Street, Wethersfield, CT
06109**

**naturecenter@wethersfieldct.gov
(860) 721-2980**

www.ebwnaturecenter.org

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Winter 2016

Dear Volunteer and Interns,

The Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center thanks you for expressing an interest in volunteering with us.

The Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center is an ecology education and community center operated by the Town of Wethersfield Parks & Recreation Department in partnership with the Friends of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center. Annually about 12,000 visitors come through the Nature Center.

Volunteers are an essential part of the Nature Center's daily operations. This past year alone volunteers logged over 2,000 hours at the Nature Center. Our summer camps, special event programs, animal care and daily operations would not have been possible without their dedication and commitment. Their combined time has the effect of tripling the Nature Center's staff.

As a new volunteer there are several important roles which you can help to fill. Helping staff care for animals and plants, greeting visitors, assisting with programs and special events, creating displays, etc.

I along with the staff at the Nature Center and the Town of Wethersfield acknowledge your effort to donate your time, knowledge, and skills to be an integral part of the Nature Center and sincerely appreciate your willingness to work along with us, helping us provide visitors with a safe and enjoyable experience.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rachael Sunny
Youth Development Manager/Nature Center Director

Steps to Becoming a Volunteer

If you are reading this handbook, you have expressed an interest in volunteering with the Eleanor Wolf Buck Nature Center. Below please find the exact steps as to how this process happens.

Step 1: You must fill out, and return a Volunteer Application form found at the end of this manual. Please note that if you are under the age of 18 a parent/legal guardian must sign off on your application. Completed applications should be returned to the Nature Center.

Step 2: We require that all volunteers attend an hour long volunteer orientation. During this orientation we go over policies and procedures, volunteer expectations, site orientation, volunteer job descriptions, and emergency procedures. Please contact the Nature Center or check the Parks & Rec Brochure to learn about upcoming orientation dates.

Step 3: After you have submitted the necessary paperwork and completed a volunteer orientation we will work with you to find an appropriate volunteer assignment based upon your availability or schedule preferences. Please note that if you are being assigned to animal care there will be a separate animal care volunteer contract that you will need to sign.

Step 4: Let the fun begin! Now you are a full-fledged volunteer of the Nature Center and an instrumental part of making all of the roles and responsibilities of the Nature Center happen.

General Information

Conduct

While performing activities for the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, all volunteers shall conduct themselves in a professional manner, and abide by the same standards as employees of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center and employees of the Town of Wethersfield. If at any point the Nature Center staff feels that you are not in compliance with the Town's Policies and Procedures of Conduct we retain the right to terminate your volunteer position.

Attendance

Volunteers are expected to show up for the shifts that they have been assigned to. For scheduling purposes, the Nature Center requires volunteers to inform permanent staff at the Nature Center as soon as possible if they are unable to work on their designated day or if there is a change in start or end times. Volunteers are expected to sign in and out of the Volunteer Log (located in the staff room) each time they volunteer (please see the sample volunteer log sheets at the end of the manual).

Dress Code

While there is no official dress code we do expect volunteers to come dressed in an appropriate manner. Shorts are allowed in the summer as long as they are an acceptable length. Full time staff does retain the right to send a volunteer home if they are not dressed appropriately.

Use of Personal Property

While volunteering at the Nature Center use of electronic devices (i.e. cell phones, iPod, iPad) should be kept to a minimum. If you are interacting with the public (i.e. greeter, conducting an outreach event, assisting with a school program) you should not be using your personal electronic devices.

Emergencies

All volunteers are to report any accidents, emergencies or work-related problems as soon as possible to a permanent Nature Center staff. All OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) policies and regulations will apply to all volunteers under the direction of the Town of Wethersfield. The Nature Center director will be responsible for notifying the Parks and Recreation office of any injuries and work related illnesses sustained by volunteers. As a volunteer you are protected by the Town's liability but not worker's compensation insurance.

IN CASE OF A TRUE MEDICAL/FIRE EMERGENCY CONTACT 911.

Damage to Nature Center Property

If a volunteer intentionally damages, or is negligent thus causing damage to Nature Center property, he/she shall be held personally liable. If an accident occurs and Nature Center property is damaged, the Nature Center would be responsible.

Age Requirements

Volunteers need to be at least 13 years old unless accompanied by an adult for select events. Those volunteers that are 21 years old or older are allowed to supervise the center and underage volunteers.

Potential Volunteer Job Positions

Animal Care Assistant Volunteer Job Description

Animal Care Assistants help keep the live animals in the Nature Center's exhibits healthy and ensure their enclosures serve as models of responsible animal care. Responsibilities include providing clean water and food, cleaning cages, exercising and training animals, and helping visitors safely interact with selected animals. Requires love and respect for animals, attention to details, good communication skills, good teamwork, and being at least 13 years old. Training is provided on the job. The assignment typically is 2-3 hours per week for a season on a weekday afternoon or Saturday morning. Specific duties:

- Review the care log for up to date instructions and the day's care agenda;
- Follow the instructions provided in the care instructions binder;
- Wash and refill water and food bowls, including cutting and chopping fresh produce;
- Help plant care assistants weed and water the vegetable garden;
- Help staff do live feedings of crickets, worms, and rodents;
- Sweep shelves, change linings, wash tanks, scoop up feces, and otherwise maintain clean enclosures;
- Mist tanks, adjust lights and heaters, replace toys, and otherwise maintain habitats;
- Help brush, trim nails, bathe, soak, and otherwise groom animals;
- Give animals time on perches, in the log cabin, being hand-held, etc. for mental and physical exercise;
- Teach visitors how to touch animals correctly (e.g. soft touch, no touching head, take turns) and ensure they demonstrate skill and maturity before allowing them to hold an animal;
- Always be sure cages are closed securely and heaters set appropriately;
- Help wash counters, food bins, refrigerator, and sinks to maintain a sanitary work space;
- Handle knives safely, wear cleaning gloves, wear animal handling gloves, put heaters on heat-safe surfaces, and generally stay safe; and
- Immediately report unsafe conditions, animal injuries, or unusual animal behavior to staff.

Special Events Assistant Volunteer Job Description

Special Events assistants help with an array of programs. Examples include birthday parties, Haunted Habitat, CornFest, seasonal events, school vacation programs, and other special projects as arise. Requires love and respect for animals, attention to details, good communication skills, good team player but also able to work independently, and being at least 13 years old. Training is provided on the job. There is no typical assignment. Each event can range from 2-4 hours. For example birthday parties require a 2 hour commitment, shifts at events can vary anywhere from 2- 3 hours.

Greeter Volunteer Job Description

Greeters help improve the visitor experience, increase donations, and free staff for other tasks. Responsibilities include greeting visitors, collecting donations, answering the telephone, checking the voice mail, selling items in the gift shop, and additional tasks as agreed upon. Requires excellent oral communication skills, enthusiasm for animals and children, knowledge of the local area, and being at least 16 years old. Training is provided on the job. The assignment is 2-4 hours one day a week Tuesdays-Saturdays for a season. Specific duties:

Greeting Visitors

We want visitors to feel welcome, to know where they can explore, to learn about other programs and events at the nature center, and to support the nature center with a donation or by joining the Friends of the Nature Center group. We also want to count the number of visitors.

1. When someone enters the Nature Center, greet them by saying something similar to this:

“Welcome to the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center. My name is _____. Are you a member?”

If yes, then say, “Thank you and welcome back. Please let me know if you need any help.”

If no, then say, “The suggested donation is \$3. Members may visit for free. This brochure tells you more about the Nature Center and how to become a member if you are interested.”

2. If it's their first time here, then explain where they may go and what they may do by saying something similar to this.

“You may explore the Nature Center on your own. To the right in the Program Room there are books and games. Next to us in the Animal Room and to the left in the Exhibit Room there are animals and exhibits. Children are allowed to touch things, but a grown up should stay nearby. If you would like to visit with an animal or have questions, please come ask.”

If you have received training in which animals can be taken out and how, then you may help a visitor interact with animals. Or ask for help from other staff or animal care volunteers.

3. When it's convenient, add a little check mark for each visitor in the correct day and time period on the Visitor Log at the front desk.

4. When someone leaves, tell them they may take fliers about upcoming nature center programs and events from the front desk.

5. If a visitor tries to bring a wild animal into the Nature Center, ask them to wait in the entryway between the doors. Explain we don't want to accidentally transfer a disease or pest to our pet animals. Then get help from a senior staff person.

Answering the Telephone

Although we have a voice mail system, often people call just to confirm we are open or ask simple questions. It's more professional to have a live person answer the phone whenever possible, even if it's just to take a message for staff.

1. Answer the phone by hitting the "Line 1" button (and hang up by hitting the "off" button) with a greeting something like this:

"Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, _____ speaking."

2. At the bottom of the phone, in the middle, is the "hold" button. Press the hold button to place someone on hold if talking with staff. Press the "Line 1" button to take someone off hold and return to the call.

3. Frequently asked questions are the visiting hours, address, directions, and admission. Become familiar with those answers from the main brochures at the front desk.

Please note that Line 2 is for the Nature Center Director and does not need to be answered.

Contact Information

Nature Center Contact Information

156 Prospect Street

Wethersfield, CT 06109

Phone: (860) 721-2980

Website: www.wethersfieldct.com/recreation

Email: naturecenter@wethersfieldct.gov

Hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Parks and Rec Department Contact Information

505 Silas Deane Highway

Wethersfield, CT 06109

Phone: (860) 721-2890

Website: www.wethersfieldct.com/recreation

Email: rec.activities@wethersfieldct.gov

Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

Volunteer Opportunities

Winter 2016

Animal Care

We require that you are able to commit to at least 2 hours a week for a minimum of 25 hours over a 3 month period. Available Monday (mornings only) – Saturday.

Plant Care

Both outside and inside. Watering, weeding, transplanting, planting. Available Tuesday – Saturday.

Site Maintenance

Organizing rooms and supplies, creating flyers and promotional items, assisting in creation of exhibits. Available Tuesday – Saturday.

Greeter

Welcoming visitors to the Nature Center, giving visitors a brief orientation, keeping track of the number of volunteers, answering the phones. Available Tuesday – Friday.

Event Assistant

Birthday parties, school vacation programs, weekend programs

- School Vacation Programs – January 18, February 12, February 15, February 16, March 25, March 28, April 11-April 15. 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. Volunteers help supervise children and assist with educational activities.
- EBW Junior Wildlife Rangers – April 23 – May 28. Saturdays 10:00 am – 11:30 pm. Volunteers help staff with weekly program.
- Mill Woods Rangers – April 23 – May 28. Saturdays 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm. Volunteers help staff with weekly program.
- Birthday Parties – Volunteers help staff with animal program part of party as well as assist with set-up and clean-up. Dates and times vary.



VOLUNTEER FORM

Thank you for your interest in helping people share and explore the natural world. Volunteers help care for animals and plants, support education programs, maintain a safe facility, and other important roles. Tell us about yourself so we may match our skills, interests, and availability with appropriate projects. Please note that there is an additional volunteer contract solely for animal care. Feel free to contact us for more information.

Name _____ Birthdate ____ / ____ / ____

Address _____ Grade _____

City / State / Zip _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____ (c) _____

Email _____

Allergies, medications, medical conditions, etc. _____

Emergency Contact Person (must be parent if under 18) _____

Relationship to volunteer _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____ (c) _____

I grant permission for photographs to be taken and used for publicity: Yes No

Waiver

I acknowledge there are certain inherent risks in volunteering. Risks include but are not limited to animal or insect bite, exposure to allergens such as poison ivy, and exposure to germs. I understand these risks may be lessened by handling animals only when authorized, using proper safety equipment, and adhering to safety rules presented during training. I am confident I fully understand the risks involved in participating. I agree to assume the risk of injury which I and/or my child may encounter. I grant permission to seek emergency medical care on behalf of myself and/or child. I further agree not to hold the Friends of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, Town of Wethersfield, or their agents liable for any injuries I and/or my child may encounter.

Signature (Parent if under 18): _____ Date: _____

(continued)

Skills and experiences (e.g. volunteer and paid jobs): _____

Interests and hobbies: _____

Particular volunteer jobs or events of interest: _____

Availability or schedule preferences: _____

How did you hear about our Volunteer Program? (check all that apply)

- Flyer/newsletter Website Participated in program before
 Word of mouth Newspaper Other: _____

Are you a member of the Friends of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center?

- Yes No Not Sure

Office Use: Staff Comments _____
