



Eleanor Buck Wolf
Nature Center

Volunteer Handbook

Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center
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06109

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www.ebwnaturecenter.org

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Dear Volunteers,

The Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center would like to thank you for expressing an interest in volunteering with us.

The Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center is a nature 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.

For the new volunteer, we have several important roles that you can help to fill. Helping staff care for animals and plants, greeting visitors, special projects, and assisting with programs and special events.

The Nature Center staff, the Town of Wethersfield, and I 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 and help us provide visitors with a safe and enjoyable experience.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Patrick Telman
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 you will find the exact steps you need to take to join us as a volunteer.

Step 1: You must fill out, and return the 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 meeting. 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 scheduling preferences. Please note that if you are being assigned to animal care there is 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 required to show up for the shifts that they have committed to. For scheduling purposes, the Nature Center requires volunteers to inform permanent staff at the Nature Center 24 hours in advance 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. Animal Care volunteers are required to leave their devices in the staff room kitchen, or in the office. If you are interacting with the public (i.e. greeter, conducting an outreach event, assisting with a school program) you may not use your personal electronic devices unless it is necessary in an emergency.

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 by 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. 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. Tasks include providing clean water and food daily, cleaning cages daily, exercising some of the animals, and helping visitors safely interact with selected animals. This 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 (summer scheduled times can be in the morning) or Saturday morning. Specific duties include:

- Review the care log for daily instructions and the day's care agenda;
- Follow the instructions provided in the care instructions binder;
- Wash and refill water and food bowls, that may include cutting and chopping fresh produce;
- Help plant care assistants weed and water the vegetable garden;
- Help staff do feedings of crickets, worms, fish, and thawed rodents;
- Sweep shelves, change linings, wash tanks, scoop up feces, and otherwise maintain clean enclosures on a daily basis;
- 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 and light fixtures on heat-safe surfaces;
- Be aware of your surroundings and stay safe!
- 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 may include birthday parties, Eleanor Buck Wolf Day, CornFest, seasonal events, school vacation programs, and other special projects as they arise. This requires love and respect for our animals, attention to details, good communication skills, being a 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.

Greeting Visitors – All Staff and Volunteers

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 _____. Is this your first visit to the Nature Center? ”

“Please let me know if you need any help.”

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 more animals and exhibits. Please keep your hands and other body parts out of the animal’s cages, with the exception of CeCe bunny. Children are allowed to touch things on display, 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 or their pets 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 is 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. If you need to put the caller on hold, first **ask** if you can put them on hold, and wait for them to answer. At the bottom of the phone, in the middle, is the “hold” button. Press the

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

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.

Event Assistant

Birthday parties, summer camp, weekend programs

- 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.
- Eleanor Buck Wolf Day-June 10-9:00 am-4:00 pm-Volunteers help the Friends of the EBW Nature Center set-up, run activities, and clean up
- Counselor in Training (CIT)-June 20-August 19-8:30 am-4:30 pm-Spend a week or the entire summer developing leadership skills and gaining experience by helping students during lessons. Lead by example in recreation activities and serve as a role model.
- Cornfest and other Fall activities



VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Thank you for your interest in helping people share and explore the natural world. Volunteers help care for animals and plants, support educational 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) _____

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.

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

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

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 before 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 _____
