An Update on our Education & Events Team!

Amy Roell, Director of Education & Events

Things certainly have changed with Education & Events this past year! With the onset of the pandemic, the subsequent lockdown and slow reopening, we have had to adjust, just like everyone else. Many of our team members were furloughed and empty positions still have not been filled. Our staff quickly adapted to virtual programs for school and the public. They had to learn no fewer than nine different online platforms! In addition, we provided content for the parks website, Parks@Home, in the form of blogs, nature journal prompts and videos. We assisted our social media specialist, Nikki Ferrell, by presenting various nature topics daily on Facebook Live from mid-March through August and since then, once or twice a week. Our Adventure Outpost team worked to convert the in-person fitness series, Naturally Fit, into a video series and Special Events produced ‘Calls with Claus’ in place of Santaland.

In addition to adjusting in-person programming to virtual, from mid-March to June all staff members assisted the park district in any way they could: picking up trash, removing invasives by hand, planting, mucking stalls and more in addition to adjusting in-person programming to virtual and making those virtual programs as engaging as possible. Starting in June, we began offering some in-person programs which followed proper COVID protocols. In-person programs could only have a total of 10 people (including the instructor/interpreter), all have to wear masks, maintain 6’ of distance and sanitize everything that guests may have contacted. Due to these restrictions, the staff got creative on how to maximize our impact. We had to be able to run programs solo as much as possible, and run them all outside. To date, we have not reintroduced indoor programming as most of our nature centers have not reopened to the public.

Despite these roadblocks to volunteering, there are ways individuals can assist the Education & Events Department! Our interpreters need people to take on the responsibility of animal care at Sharon Woods, Miami Whitewater Forest and Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve. We also need volunteers to help with animal enrichment at these three locations. Because our program animals are not in front of people as much as they were pre-COVID, they need human interaction to ensure their behavior remains calm around people. We will also need periodic assistance preparing supply packs that people pick up for virtual programs such as day camps. We could also use assistance in manning the supply pick up dates/times and conducting health screenings for our in-person programs. Check your email and GrapeVINE for news about these volunteer opportunities.

While these volunteer opportunities are not quite as varied and as plentiful as we had pre-COVID, they are important! We look forward to when these restrictions will be lifted and we can once again welcome larger numbers of people into our park for programs and events. At that time, our volunteer opportunities will increase greatly. You will again be able to interact with the public, providing great experiences at our programs and events as you have done in the past.

THIS MONTH’S BLOG

“I Didn’t Know I Was Pregnant:” The Fascinating Reproductive Cycle of Bears
https://blog.greatparks.org/2021/01/i-didnt-know-i-was-pregnant-the-fascinating-reproductive-cycle-of-bears/
Volunteer Spotlight

Melissa Wirth
Years of Service – 1 year

What hobbies are you passionate about? I have a lot of hobbies. I love to play with makeup on myself and I am passionate about Microblading. After being quarantined for months, I developed a passion for sewing and I love cooking, especially for other people.

When you’re not at Great Parks, where might we find you? I volunteer at a local church so I could be there, doing permanent makeup for my clients or sewing at my home.

What might we be surprised to know about you? I can be pretty shy especially in English (my first language is Spanish), but people always think I am pretty extroverted.

What is your favorite volunteer activity? When I am at the visitor center I like to interact with customers, most of whom have a lot of interesting things to share with me.

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would it be? Probably Africa, but I would take my husband with me.

What’s your favorite outdoor activity? I enjoy having long walks with my husband or friends.

March Volunteer Opportunities

For all Stew Crew projects – participants should bring work gloves, a facemask (to be worn if 6-feet physical distance cannot be maintained), hand sanitizer, insect repellent, water, snacks and wear long pants, boots or sturdy shoes. Tools will be provided.

Don’t forget to RSVP – Due to COVID-19 health and safety protocols, we are limiting group sizes for volunteer projects. Drop-ins are no longer permitted.

*If you would like to participate but you have not completed the COVID-19 training, contact Lauren McClure at lmcclure@greatparks.org.

Link to parks and park maps – https://www.greatparks.org/parks
Link to record your service hours – https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/Login

Animal Care at Sharon Woods
2 Hours Weekly/Biweekly – Tue, Wed or Fri
Help us care for the animals used in our educational programming for the parks! Thousands of guests see and learn about local animals up close. Volunteers who assist will give the interpretive staff more time to focus on programming while keeping our furry and scaly animal ambassadors happy and healthy. Animal types include: snakes, turtles, frogs, insects, spiders, hawks, owls, doves and rabbits. Volunteers will need to come between 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. until trained and signed off by staff, then you can come anytime between sunup and sunset. To volunteer, contact Julie Robinson at jrobinson@greatparks.org or phone 513-484-4043. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Animal Care–Sharon Woods [Edu & Events/East]

Animal Enrichment at Sharon Woods
Weekly/Biweekly – Any day of the week
Volunteers are needed to handle the animals on a regular basis. Since the education staff is not offering the same amount of programs as the did pre-COVID, the animals are not getting daily interactions with people. Volunteer support allows for healthier interactions with our ambassador animals and thus better programming for our guests. Animal types include: snakes, turtles, frogs, insects, spiders, hawks, owls, doves and rabbits (must be willing and able to hold all animals listed). Volunteers will need to come between 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. until trained and signed off by staff, then you can come anytime between sunup and sunset. To volunteer, contact Julie Robinson at jrobinson@greatparks.org or phone 513-484-4043. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Animal Care–Sharon Woods [Edu & Events/East]

Admin Support at the Winton Centre for Natural Resources Department
Mondays or Fridays
Natural Resources is looking for a detail-oriented volunteer to help digitize a large amount of research that is currently only available in paper format. This role would entail scanning and reading reports, and entering data into an online software program. This work will help centralize information and make it accessible for everyone at Great Parks. No prior experience, except familiarity with computer work, is needed. Staff will provide additional training. To volunteer, please contact Kari Morehouse at kmorehouse@greatparks.org or phone 513-728-4526. For volunteers ages 18 and older. Admin Support–Winton Woods [Natural Resources/Central]
Wildlife Box Inventory and Cleanup at Miami Whitewater
Mon 3/1, 9:30–11:45 a.m.
Miami Whitewater Conservation and Parks needs a few volunteers to help collect/remove abandoned wildlife boxes throughout the park. GPS locations will be marked for Natural Resources staff to later determine if boxes will be replaced or moved. Dress warm, wear sturdy shoes/boots and bring gloves. Meet at the Miami Whitewater Maintenance Building. This opportunity is limited to 2–4 volunteers. To volunteer, contact Alex Hearing at ahearing@greatparks.org or phone 513-646-4217. For volunteers ages 18 and up. Stew Crew–Miami Whitewater [C&P/West]

Invasive Plant Removal at Mitchell Memorial
Thu 3/4, 9–11 a.m.
Volunteers and staff will be removing invasive plant species from Mitchell Memorial Forest. The main focus will be on invasive plants in higher-quality natural areas near the Mountain Bike Trail to help preserve the natural beauty of these forested hills. Meet at the Mitchell Memorial Maintenance Building. To volunteer, contact Ben Braeutigam at bbraeutigam@greatparks.org or phone 937-405-6212. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew–Mitchell Memorial Forest [C&P/West]

A Weekend and Training Opportunity! Preserving Natural Areas at Winton Woods
Sat 3/6, 11 a.m.–2 p.m.
The focus of this project will be controlling invasive pear by basal bark chemical spraying. (volunteers who wish to receive Herbicide Applicator training must first complete a short online Bridge training–please contact Lauren McClure at lmcclure@greatparks.org to sign up). We will have hand saws available for those who prefer to cut. This will help preserve this beautiful area and create a more natural area for our native wildlife. Meet at Meadow Links Golf Academy parking lot. To volunteer, contact Jaimie Martin at jmartin@greatparks.org or phone 631-334-3876. For volunteers ages 18 and up. Stew Crew–Winton Woods [C&P/Central]

An Evening Opportunity! Shawnee Lookout Landscape Maintenance
Tue 3/9, 5–6:30 p.m.
Come help our Conservation and Parks team get landscape beds ready for the 2021 season! We’ll be cleaning up landscape beds and pruning shrubs. Meet at Eagle’s Landing Shelter (the old clubhouse). To volunteer, contact Adam McCosham at amccosham@greatparks.org or phone 513-978-7198. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew–Shawnee Lookout [C&P/West]

Trail Maintenance at Withrow Nature Preserve
Tue 3/9, noon–3 p.m.
Join the Conservation & Parks team to improve the Trout Lily Trail. There are some aging waterbars on the trail that need to go. We will discuss the techniques of installing more sustainable water control. By removing waterbars, installing water control, removing berms, and outsloping the tread to provide a safe and pleasant hike for our guests. Meet at the parking lot at Withrow Nature Preserve. To volunteer, contact Dan Hart at dhart@greatparks.org or phone 513-250-0925. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew–Withrow [C&P/East]

Summit Center Invasive Removal
Wed 3/10, 9 a.m.–noon
Join our first ever Stew Crew Project at the Summit Center! Volunteers will assist in the removal and treatment of invasive plant species, creating better habitat for our native plants and wildlife. Learn about what invasive plants could be present in your backyards and how to properly remove them. Meet at the New Prospect Baptist Church parking lot (1580 Summit Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45237). To volunteer, contact Jeremy Barkley at jbarkley@greatparks.org or phone 724-814-1008. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew–The Summit Center [C&P/East]

Mulching at Little Miami
Tue 3/16, 8–11 a.m.
Spring is on its way and so it’s time to start tidying up Little Miami. We will be sprucing up the beds with a top dressing of mulch. Your efforts will help conserve water during dry spells and make Little Miami shine! Meet at the Little Miami Golf Center. To volunteer, contact John Walker at jwalker@greatparks.org or phone 937-302-7717. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew–Little Miami [C&P/East]

Ornamental Grass Removal at Glenwood Gardens
Thu 3/18, 9 a.m.–noon
We will be cleaning up cut ornamental grasses and raking the beds for pre-emergent weed control. Meet at the parking lot by the service drive gate. To volunteer, contact Shaun McClary at smclary@greatparks.org or phone 513-869-9525. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew–Glenwood Gardens [C&P/Central]
Turn Off Your Lights and Join us as we Celebrate Earth Hour!

On March 27 at 8:30 p.m. people from all over the world will join the Earth Hour. This event encourages people to switch off their lights at home for one hour, turning entire streets, buildings, and city skylines dark—an unmissable sight that drew public attention to nature loss and the climate crisis. This year it’s a virtual light-off with a live stream of a film and other events. We want to help spread the message and participate in the efforts to increase awareness for positive environmental impact. We encourage you to participate from home and share this event on social media (if you do, make sure you tag Great Parks!). If you would like to participate in this virtual event, please check out the website here to learn more.