

directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

Planning for ANCA's Future

Jim Berry
President
Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural
History
Jamestown, NY

I've been around ANCA for a while now. Thinking back, I guess the first contact was a letter from Bob Thomas sent to me when I headed the Cincinnati Nature Center back in the '80's. Like many of you when you first became aware of ANCA, I didn't join right away, but retained the letter for later.

I was already part of an active group of 5 Ohio nonprofit nature center directors who met regularly to share our challenges and concerns as well as successes, but I still wondered how the concept could be taken

nationally. I knew our Ohio group shared a common bond and that we all felt our past relationships with AIN (Association of Interpretive Naturalists) and NSYF (Natu-

ral Science For Youth Foundation) were great for what they were, but didn't address this leadership specialty of ours. No group did.

Like many of you, my next connection was meeting someone who was a member of ANCA that I respected very much. In my case it was Corky McReynolds. It wasn't a hard sell, it never is. It was like when any conversation with nature center leaders seems to eventually drift towards how each other deal with problem solving. That "light-bulb goes off when the other connects with you and you say to yourself, "I'm going to try what they tried."

Now I was ready to get involved with ANCA.

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Photo by Tom Hissong, Aulwood Audubon Center & Farm

Planned Giving is just one of many fundraising strategies utilized by ANCA's board of directors as a best practice. Here, Keanna Leonard and Cynthia Harrell, "pass the gator" during the Summit this past August.

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Founded in 1989, the Association of Nature Center Administrators is a private non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting best leadership and management practices for nature and environmental learning centers.

Serving nearly 500 organizations, ANCA is the leader in the profession.



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Director's Notes

Strategic Planning

Jen Levy
Executive Director
Association of Nature Center
Administrators
Logan, UT

Happy New Year ANCA Members! 2012 – the year of no snow (OK, except for parts of Alaska). I hope by the time this newsletter hits your Inboxes that has changed. I love snow and look forward to ski season every year, but this year we are being cheated out of our winter playground and future water. This puts a big glitch in my winter routine so I am trying to find new winter activities to occupy my time. I have assured all my ski buddies that it will snow at the end of January (epic amounts) because that is when I head out of town to meet the ANCA board at the Marine Science Consortium in Wallop's Island, VA (site of Summit 2012 in August!) for our annual winter meeting. All kidding aside, I am looking forward to the meeting (and returning to Utah and a few feet of the best snow on Earth).

In addition to the board meeting we will hold a planning retreat to review the ANCA Member Survey that many of you completed earlier in the fall, discuss key issues, and develop strategic directions for our organization. Thank you to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey – we got great feedback to take to the retreat.

One hundred and sixty four members completed the survey, the majority of which (53%) list executive director/CEO/manager as job title. Survey respondents are well educated with 41% completing a bachelor's degree and 48% percent with a Masters. Environ-



mental education was listed by 42% of respondents as professional background-to-date.

Of the survey respondents, 54% represent independent non-profit organizations with the remainder being government-owned (15%), operated by a larger NPO (Audubon or a university) that has other locations (14%), and those operated by a government/non-profit partnership (11%).

We asked about current challenges and how ANCA can help. Don't feel alone ANCA members – we are all united in our challenges! When asked to list your top three challenges the overwhelming winners are operating income/fundraising as the number one challenge, staffing/personnel as the second, and time management, board, and brand development/marketing all tied for third. Other challenges our members are experiencing include parent organization issues and strategic planning.

When asked how members are meeting these challenges currently, one quote stuck out for me, "Trying to Detox the Inbox." This is a huge challenge for me in my office and I will be looking for ideas and strategies for myself. Most members report working

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with their human resources (board, staff, and volunteers) to tackle challenges including taking a team approach, involving staff in policy changes, increasing volunteer resources, and networking with peers locally and through ANCA.

We heard from many of you that current ANCA resources, including the Sample Documents & Resources page in the Member's Only area of the ANCA website, have been helpful in meeting challenges. We also heard requests for more sample documents to include on the website. If you have a great resource to share, please send it to us. If you are in need of a resource, please put the word out! The best way to do this is through the ANCA list serve and/or our LinkedIn discussion group.


We host these two discussion groups. The first is on Edgateway, and instructions on how to join can be found [here](#). In addition, we started a discussion group on LinkedIn (instructions are [here](#)) two years ago in an attempt to find a better format for online sharing. Both remain popular and are great places to share ideas, questions, challenges, and successes.

In addition, we had a few suggestions to start a Facebook page. Well, we have one already so, as they say, "Find us on Facebook!" We started our Facebook page a couple of years ago and it has been a great way to stay connected on a more social level by sharing photos, member news, program information, and interesting happenings at our centers.

Forty-three percent of survey respondents have not attended an ANCA Summit in the past five years with location, cost, and timing all strong reasons preventing attendance. Not surprising, when asked what resources ANCA can

provide to meet members' leadership challenges three popular responses were webinars, regional meetings, and a mentoring program. We are already working on a year-round mentoring program and look forward to exploring the idea of training webinars and forming regional groups and meetings.

The agenda for our planning meeting includes taking the results of this survey and deciding where to focus ANCA to meet the needs of our members, become stronger as an organization, and have more impact. We will make decisions based on our available resources and if our strategies are realistic and doable and what new resources we will need to implement our strategies.

Our goal is to have a completed 3-5 year Strategic Plan by May 2012. I will keep you posted on our progress and look forward to what is ahead for ANCA (oh and some SNOW!) 

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You would think nature center directors would be joiners, wouldn't you?

After all we're leaders of membership organizations. But no, often we're not.

We're busy and don't have time outside of our own nature center world. You might say we can't see the forest for the trees sometimes!

Something else we have in common—we recognize value.

To me, the value is best summarized in this case statement styled paragraph currently used by ANCA in grant applications when describing the organization to others. In my work as President of ANCA I'm often asked why ANCA, why not any other national service organization?

The Association of Nature Center Administrators is the only organization in the U.S. & Canada whose mission is solely to provide support for leaders of nature centers and environmental learning centers (directors, managers, and board members). Nature centers are typically independent organizations, with minimal staffs, small budgets, and huge local constituencies. These organizations, joined by a passion for the natural world and getting people outdoors experiencing it, face management challenges unique to their profession. Professional staff development, adoption of "best practices," and incorporating efficient fundraising strategies are desired, but often

out of reach by these organizations. Providing these services is what ANCA does, and, it's done by its members.

During the modern nature center movement, hundreds of non-profit nature centers are springing up in rural and urban communities throughout North America. Like the local school, library, and civic center that defined the most livable communities of our parent's generation, communities of today are adding nature centers to the list



Photo by Ken Voorhis, Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont

Planned giving is a method of supporting non-profits and charities that enables philanthropic donors to make larger gifts than they could make from their income.

of must-have cultural amenities.

This success story was made possible by hundreds of directors now serving, or who have served during our lifetimes. Just in my tenure, starting in 1972 and now approaching retirement, I have experienced the early (somewhat rocky) phase of the nature center movement, its quick stability and now its surge of new growth threatened by a weak economy. More than ever, nature center leaders are facing rising demand for their programs while their budgets are falling and philanthropic dollars are shrinking. In other words,

the need for ANCA is greater than ever.

Now, it's time for me who's experienced a rewarding career that was guided throughout by my peers and the organization they've rallied around for the past 20 to consider to do what I can to support it in perpetuity. One of my colleagues and friends, Larry Richardson, has done just that. Most recently of the Lake Erie Nature & Science Center of Bay Village, OH, Larry is now retired.

Larry described what he has done in a recent letter:

The Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA) made me a better executive director and more importantly it made my organization, staff, and constituents exponentially more successful. I owe much of my success to ANCA because of best practices but more importantly to the leadership, professionalism, and support of my peers. ANCA is an organization like no other.

After having the privilege and opportunity to serve on the ANCA Board of Directors I realized that ANCA is only as relevant as its governance. ANCA doesn't direct the membership but leads the membership through participation and by example. ANCA leadership walks in the same moccasins as does the ANCA members.

The Association of Nature Center Administrators is a young and growing organization. Along with facing the challenges of any non-profit organization, ANCA needs

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Future (continued from page 4)

to secure its future just like every successful organization must. ANCA has long championed the efforts of member organizations to build a substantial endowment.


After much consideration and with input from my family, I have pledged \$50,000 to ANCA in the form of life insurance. In this economy I am limited to what I can contribute to ANCA. But this planned gift is something both my family and I can do in appreciation for the quality of life my profession afforded my family.

I encourage all ANCA professionals, past, present and future to continue to provide, leadership for ANCA by finding direct or creative ways to secure the nature center profession in perpetuity. Gifting is a tool all of us have employed. It is rewarding to know that in some small way, my gift will benefit my friends and colleagues as well as nature education for future generations.

Larry chose to make a future gift to ANCA for endowment purposes through a life insurance policy to ensure the viability of the organization and to allow it do even more for the profession. You may want to consider doing the same, or may want to consider another options like a bequest. Bequests can come in several creative forms such as:

- **Specific Bequest:** You designate a specific dollar amount, specific percentage, or specific property to ANCA
- **Residual Bequest:** Your estate will pay all debts, taxes, expenses, and specific bequests. The remaining amount, the residue, will be transferred to ANCA



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• **Contingent Bequest:** You can ask that ANCA receive all or a portion of your estate only under certain circumstances. For example, you can name ANCA as a beneficiary of your estate only if there are no surviving close family members. Childless couples sometimes provide for the entire estate to go to the surviving spouse, or if the spouse does not survive, to ANCA.

Of course decisions like this take time and lots of discussion with family members, but if you'd like my help or assistance from members of your ANCA board, or just more information about these and other planned giving vehicles contact Jen Levy. 

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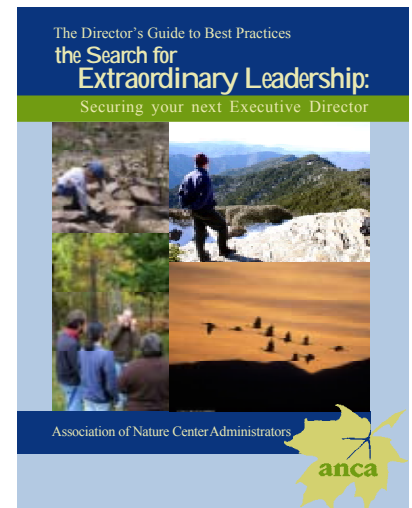
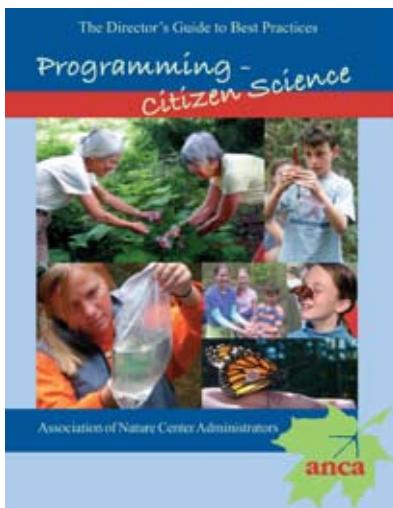
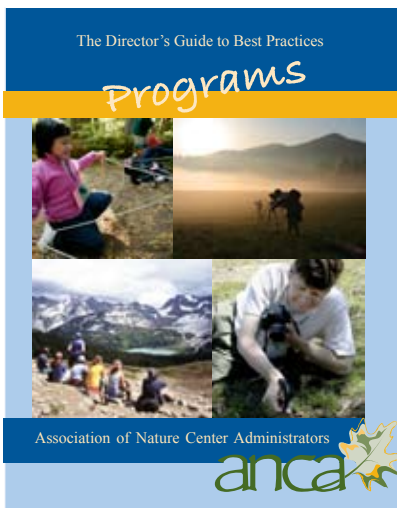
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From The Field:

Answers to Access:

Ideas for Increasing Participation by Under-served Groups in Community Science and Nature Programs

(reprinted from *Directions* Summer 2008)

Lori O'Day and Brett L. Bruyere
Colorado State University
Environmental Learning Center
Fort Collins, CO

States, which presents a challenge for how nature centers can insure they are accessible to traditionally under-served groups. Latinos are,

In the Spring of 2006 we began conducting focus groups with parents of elementary school students in Fort Collins and Pueblo,

The environment, perhaps more now than at any time in recent history, is at a forefront of the public's mind. However, there is also an increasing trend that people, particularly children, are spending less time outside, which is a concern that has garnered considerable momentum by author Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods*.

Since experiences in nature are critical to facilitating a child's connection with the environment and a commitment to stewardship later in life, the trend is of great concern.

Nature centers and other community science facilities, such as the Colorado State University Environmental Learning Center (ELC), have sought to help create this connection but face challenges.

One of the challenges includes growing diversity in the United



photo courtesy of the Environmental Learning Center

The mission of the Environmental Learning Center at Colorado State University is to connect people with nature by facilitating educational, inclusive, and safe experiences in the natural environment and to advance the field of environmental education through sound research and practice.

according to the Census Bureau (2006), the largest minority group in the United States and currently comprise approximately 15% of the overall population, and the focus of a recent research study at the ELC.

Our goal was to identify what factors influence family choice – particularly Latino families – to participate in nature center or other community science programs.

Colorado. We conducted 10 one hour focus groups with a total of 72 parent participants, some of which were Spanish-speaking only focus groups and parents who traditionally have not attended nature centers with their children. We asked the parents questions about their interest in such programs and facilities for their family, and what may prevent or enhance

the likelihood of their participation.

The results from the focus groups were very encouraging. In particular, nearly 100% of all participants expressed interest in community science programs. This should provide hope and ambition to nature centers; a lack of interest was clearly not a barrier to

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participation by any group, including Latinos.

The interest exists among families; the challenge is overcoming other barriers that are often practical matters.

Many barriers to participation were identified by both Latino and non-Latino parents; some of their barriers were similar and many were different.

The most frequently cited barrier for non-Latino focus group participants was time. Parents felt that they did not have the time to have their children participate in such programs because of their busy work schedule and other commitments of their families and children (e.g., sports leagues). This barrier poses a challenge to nature center staff; we must convince parents that nature centers and less-structured time outdoors are of comparable value to their families. For many parents, it must be elevated as a priority, in the same tier as other activities in which their families participate.

Aside from time, no other barrier was mentioned frequently by the non-Latino parents in the focus groups.

The barriers identified most often by Latinos were lack of awareness about programs, cost, lack of programs and program information in Spanish and concerns about safety of their children. In fact, lack of awareness about programs was the most frequently cited reason that parents expressed for not participating in programs offered by facilities such as nature centers.

Despite the high level of interest in such programs in general, few parents expressed familiarity with local resources. Such a finding can be frustrating to address; nature center staff might react with "What

more can we do!?" Our current efforts seem to be exhaustive and comprehensive, but we must ask if those efforts reach a broad audience and include the methods of communication that are most often utilized by diverse groups (e.g., word of mouth, networks).

Most of the Spanish-speaking focus group participants expressed that they wished that information would be provided in Spanish. When they receive information in English and which they did not

understand, they expressed feeling uncomfortable contacting the organization for more information or asking someone else to do so on their behalf.

If a nature center wants to increase participation of Spanish-speaking community members they must consider hiring bilingual staff or partnering with another organization that can provide those services.

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After ensuring proper marketing and advertising, we must also evaluate what our organizations can do to alleviate the financial burden that may be keeping some families away. It could be as simple as offering a free program a few times each year or scholarships for summer camps. This is often easier-said-than-done; the funding has to come from somewhere to provide such programs.

The barrier of safety for Latino parents was clearly a paramount issue. A majority of Latino participants made numerous comments that suggested a need to become familiar with an organization and its staff to gain a sense of ease about the well-being of their child if left in the care of the organization. Many Latino parents wanted to attend the programs with their children, in part to insure their

safety but also to promote family togetherness and to learn the science content with their child. In this regard, family-level programming is a necessity. In addition, this allows parents to converse about the content and answer questions later at home.

Many of the results that the ELC learned from this research can be addressed easily and swiftly to develop programs that are more inclusive of Latinos, depending on the resources of the nature center. We have integrated much of what we learned already, and will continue to develop methods for increasing Latino and non-Latino participation. Below are some strategies that have worked for our organization:

• **Teacher in-service days:**

One particular success at the ELC has been offering all-day programs during in-service, planning and parent-teacher conference days

at the local school district. Working parents often have to come up with a child care plan for those days; a nature-based program that follows the work day has been one of our most regularly well-attended program options, and helps address the barrier of time. Parents do not need to find more hours in a week for their child to participate; they are simply finding a substitute for the time that was otherwise scheduled for school.

• **Partnerships:** Engaging the Latino community more successfully in our efforts has been the product of relationships with Latino-serving organizations that have credibility and trust with their community. These organizations have helped spread the word out about our programs, provided opportunities for us to make presentations – in Spanish – to their parent groups, and advised us on

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how to best develop and market programs for Latino audiences. These partnerships have been critical to our organization's goal to become more inclusive.

• **Family Programs:** As stated above, many Latino parents are interested in programs in which the whole family can attend. While planning programs that cater to adults and children with different abilities and learning styles can be difficult, it is certainly not impossible and it is necessary for attracting many families to begin with.

• **Bilingual Staff:** The ELC has been fortunate for the past few years to have staff members who are bilingual. This has been a necessary advantage in helping to lead Latino families at our programs. In addition, our Spanish-speaking staff members have translated our program information so more Spanish-speaking parents can be aware of what we do. However, we must recognize that simply speaking Spanish does not equate to understanding a culture; we have been deliberate in our efforts to offer programs that are culturally appropriate and appealing.

• **Free programs and scholarships:** Our family programs are free and we also have scholarships available to eligible families in our community for our youth programs and summer camps. Our diversity and outreach efforts are published as a development priority; we raise and allocate donations earmarked for extending opportunities to those who might not otherwise be able to afford the participation fees.

These are just a few examples of ideas that the ELC has tried to incorporate in our programs to increase participation of Latino families. It is worth noting that our

research was done with Latinos of primarily Mexican decent, so our results may not be generalized to Latinos of different cultures or to communities outside of our study area.

It is our hope that other nature centers and community science programs can learn from and build on our results to make their programs more accessible to underserved groups. We, as organizations who offer science and nature programs are faced with a great challenge, to provide children with a connection to nature, all children. 🌱

Brett L. Bruyere is an assistant professor at Colorado State University in the Human Dimensions of Natural Resources department and the director of the CSU Environmental Learning Center. At CSU he is responsible for teaching upper-division and graduate level coursework in protected area management, environmental communication, and research methods. At the ELC he provides leadership, oversight, and supervision of all facets for the 212-acre nature center, including supervision of 15 staff, management of multiple budgets, administration of day-to-day activities and overall quality assurance for environmental education programs.

Lori O'Day has been a program staff member at the CSU Environmental Learning Center for the past two years. Her primary responsibility has been to create partnerships and design programs that help the ELC serve more diverse audiences. Lori graduated from Colorado State University in December of 2007 with a M.S. in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. Her thesis research involved developing a framework for informal science education participation, with a focus on Latino families.

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Profile:

Growing up WILD!

Let's get children outside with nature based education!

Geoffery Castro
Manager of Marketing
Council for Environmental Education
Houston, TX

Growing Up WILD, an award-winning early childhood program for building school readiness skills through nature based learning developed by the Council for Environmental Education, is reaching out to educators of young children nationwide with activities that help educators to develop active healthy children who appreciate nature and are prepared to enter school with ample learning skills. Since the launch of Growing Up WILD two short years ago, more than 50,000 early childhood educators have been trained, making it the fastest growing program in Project WILD's history!

Nature centers have embraced Growing Up WILD as a tool for teaching nature based education that aids in the development of a children's attitudes towards nature and wildlife.

With 27 nature-based activities Growing Up WILD provides educators with the knowledge and skills to comfortably teach nature-based education. To this end, each of the guide's easy-to-use activities features a "Take Me Outside" component to increase nature based recreation, "Helping Hands" conservation suggestions to build respect for living things and "Home Connections" cards with activities families can do outside

together. Furthermore, each activity builds on developmentally appropriate practice by involving social, emotion, physical, language, and cognitive domains to help foster learning and development in all areas.

Growing Up WILD's new website also features new resources to aid educators in the classroom such as Show Me Wildlife, featuring clickable links for viewing insects, bears, birds and more! There you can also find links for viewing workshops, activities and an introductory video featuring testimonials from educators who have experienced Growing Up WILD first hand.

Reaching Underserved Audiences

In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency supported Growing Up WILD with a grant in order to strengthen a national effort to connect young children to nature, particularly in the Head Start community and the diverse population of young children they serve.

Growing Up WILD was one of 14 award recipients from around the country in the EPA's distribution of more than \$1.5 million in



photo courtesy of Growing Up Wild

Growing Up WILD is a tool for teaching nature based education that aids in the development of a child's attitude towards nature and wildlife.

funding. Funds awarded were used to expand the reach of Growing Up WILD in ten states around the country, prioritize delivery to underserved children who receive services through Head Start, and build capacity to include new partnering organizations.

At the beginning of this project, these states agreed to hold a total of 60 workshops and train 1,650 educators. By the end of the grant period in 2011, these states held more than 90 workshops and

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trained over 2,200 educators in Growing Up WILD giving educators the skills to use the outdoors for learning and connecting children to nature.

How to get Growing Up WILD:

Growing Up WILD is available with training, through a national network of state sponsoring organizations. Educators can receive Growing Up WILD materials by participating in interactive, hands-on professional development workshops that are coordinated by representatives from sponsoring wildlife, natural resource, and education organizations. Training is often free although in some locations there may be a small workshop fee.

Growing Up WILD is also available for purchase directly from the Council for Environmental Education (Order here). For more information about Growing Up WILD including training, visit www.pwGrowingUpWILD.org. Be sure to download Growing Up WILD's free sample activity, Fishing Fun!, allowing children to engage in a dramatic play fishing game and learn about fish. With Growing Up WILD it has never been easier to share the wonders of nature with young children! 🌿

Geoffrey Castro has served as the Council for Environmental Education's Manager of Operations and Marketing since the summer of 2008. Geoffrey holds bachelors degrees in Environmental Studies and Communications and an MBA from the University of St. Thomas. He is a proud supporter of the movement to con-



photo courtesy of Growing Up Wild

nect more children to nature.

The Council for Environmental Education (CEE) is a non-profit educational organization and a nationally recognized leader in envi-

ronmental education, providing programs and services that promote responsible stewardship of natural resources. For more than 40 years, CEE has provided environmental education programs and services that promote stewardship of the environment and further the capacity of learners to make informed decisions. Each



photo courtesy of Growing Up Wild

Growing Up WILD makes it easy to share the wonders of nature with young children.

year CEE's benchmark programs provide materials and training for more than 50,000 educators, who reach millions of young people with essential information about conservation and the environment. www.councilforee.org; www.projectwild.org; www.flyingwild.org; www.pwGrowingUpWILD.org.

Peer Consults - We know the business. We're in it too!

ANCA offers consulting assistance to nature centers and other environmental education organizations at very reasonable rates.

The cost includes transportation, lodging, and meals for the team, plus a \$3,250 fee that goes toward supporting ANCA's professional services. Our board of directors and members, provide these services with no personal financial gain, while you gain the advantage of advice and guidance from some of the profession's most respected and experienced leaders.

What can be covered? Well, just about anything involved with planning, funding, and operations.

Some topics include:

- Assistance with long range and strategic planning
- Review facilities and trails
- Program evaluation
- Personnel & human resources issues
- Fundraising and fiscal management
- Green building
- Exhibits
- Starting a center
- Organizational structure

Join the Team!

ANCA's Consult Services are a success because of it's members' participation on Consult Teams. Please consider sharing your experiences and lessons learned.

Consult Team members donate their time but all expenses are paid. Participating in a Consult is a great way to see other parts of the country, learn about other nature centers, and take home valuable knowledge for your own center.

So don't delay!!!

PLEASE fill out the skills survey in the Member's Section on ANCA's web site at www.natctr.org.

To find out more about ANCA's Peer Consults contact:

Ann Rilling
Marketing & Communications Director
970-375-7090
arilling@natctr.org

ANCA Membership - a Great Investment in the Profession

Who Should Join ANCA?

The Association of Nature Center Administrators is intended to serve professionals who provide the vision and leadership to carry out the development and administration of an environmental learning center's mission, goals, and objectives.

Although most members are center directors, other senior staff will find it valuable for their own work and career development.

Membership Benefits

- Quarterly Issues of *Directions*
 - electronic or hard copy versions
- Special Issues of *Directions*
 - topics focussing on relevant issues
- Discounts on Publications
- Discounted Summits and Workshops
- Reciprocal Admissions Program
- Membership Guide
- Networking with Nature Center Professionals
- Free job postings on ANCA's web site

Membership Categories

- Individual \$70
- Institutional \$110 (benefits for 2)
- Graduate Student \$25
- Emeritus \$50 (retired from the profession)

Business Membership & Summit Sponsorship

The ANCA Business Membership and Summit Sponsorship Programs allow businesses to be part of the ANCA community on many different levels.

ANCA also offers additional advertising and p.r. opportunities for those with products and services of interest to the nature and environmental learning center profession.

Please contact Ann Rilling, Marketing & Communications Director for more information:

arilling@natctr.org
970-375-7090

Membership Forms & more Information at: www.natctr.org

