

# directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

## Carolyn Chipman Evans Receives 2014 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award

The board of directors of ANCA is pleased to announce that Carolyn Chipman Evans, founder and executive director of Cibolo Nature Center & Farm in Boerne, Texas, is the recipient of the 2014 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award. For 26 years, Carolyn has worked tirelessly to preserve a wild stretch of the Cibolo Creek in Boerne, develop a model nature center, and promote nature centers around the world.

Carolyn grew up in San Antonio, Texas, but visited her family's Herff Ranch in Boerne, as often as possible. At 19, she moved to the ranch for good and has never wanted to leave. On the ranch, she and her husband, Brent Evans, raised two children and now have three granddaughters who visit as



*Carolyn Chipman Evans, founder and executive director of Cibolo Nature Center & Farm will receive the 2014 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award on Aug. 21 at the Beyond Boundaries Summit in Kalamazoo, MI.*

often as possible.

Carolyn is the sixth generation living on her family's Texas Hill Country ranch, and comes from a long line of women who lived on the ranch and kept journals of their lives and their love of the land. Once she had a family, she realized she wanted all children to have the opportunity to play in the creek or see a great blue heron fly overhead. She is passionate about wild places and believes every generation should have the opportunity to experience them. Realizing how fast we are losing our natural world, she has dedicated her life to preserving land for future generations to know and love.

A self-taught naturalist, she

(continued on page 5)

### ANCA Headquarters:

mail • P.O. Box 464  
Logan, Utah 84323  
email • [info@natctr.org](mailto:info@natctr.org)  
phone • 435-787-8209  
fax • 435-752-3984

[www.natctr.org](http://www.natctr.org)

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 more than 600 members, ANCA is the leader in the profession.



Rooted in Experience. Reaching for Excellence.

*Directions* is a quarterly publication of the Association of Nature Center Administrators, distributed to members of ANCA as a membership benefit.

© 2014 Association of Nature Center Administrators

## Contents

Directions • Summer 2014

- 2 **Director's Notes:**  
**Change Ahead!**  
by Jen Levy
- 4 **25 Tips:**  
**Membership Programs**
- 8 **From the Field:**  
**What is a Nature Center?**  
by Gordon Maupin
- 11 **Profile**  
**New Leadership Award**  
**Jason Meyer**



Pat Welch, long-time ANCA member and board member, has never been one to shy away from digging in to work for ANCA!



# Director's Notes

## Change Ahead!

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

According to *The Director's Guide to Best Practices*, "An effective board can be a director's greatest resource," – and in the case of the ANCA board, this is very true! The ANCA board is made up of a geographically diverse group of members from a variety of centers and backgrounds. As an entity, the board governs, but the 13 individual members all work hard to keep our committees, programs, and services operating smoothly.

ANCA board members serve three-year terms and can serve two consecutive terms before they must retire from the board. In the case of someone vacating a position early, our by-laws state that the vacated seat will be filled by appointment of the board and that person will serve until the end of the term of the vacated seat. This turnover ensures a healthy board, provides opportunity for new ideas and fresh perspectives, and prevents board burnout. It is time to say goodbye and thanks to three outstanding ANCA board members. We will miss them!

Holly Dill, Executive Director of the Environmental Learning Center in Vero Beach, FL, joined the board in 2008. Holly served as the Chair of the Regional & Specialty Initiatives Committee and under her leadership; we now have eight regions meeting regularly with a few more in the planning stages.



Cynthia Harrell, who also joined the board in 2008, is retired from Crow's Neck Environmental Education Center in Tishomingo, MS. Cynthia served as Secretary and was Chair of the Governance Committee where she organized our nominations process and created a 'Board Member Briefcase' for new members.

Annoesjka Steinman is the Executive Director of the Blandford Nature Center in Grand Rapids, MI and she joined the board in 2012. Annoesjka co-Chaired our Communications Committee and helped develop a system of "watershed maps" to visualize and prioritize trends in the profession identified by our membership.

In addition I would like to thank Ken Voorhis, Director of Education at the Yellowstone Association in Yellowstone National Park, WY for his service as our Vice President for Professional Services. Ken is still on the board and will work closely with our new V.P., Francis Velazquez, Manager of Education at York County Parks in York, PA.

Keanna Leonard, Education

(continued on page 3)

Director of Rowe Sanctuary & Audubon Center in Gibbon, NE has taken over as board Secretary.

I am excited to introduce our three new board members, Kay Carlson, Amber Parker, and John DeFillipo. Kay is the Executive Director of the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes in Cleveland, OH and is a veteran leader with experience in national, state, and local nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Kay also brings experience in strategic planning and policy and public funding initiatives at federal, state, county, and local levels to the board.

Amber is the Executive Director of the Chincoteague Bay Field Station (formerly known as the Marine Science Consortium) in Wallops Island, VA and has extensive experience in the environmental learning field including residential centers. Amber served as our host for the 2012 Summit on the Shore.

John is the Executive Director of the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center in Seagoville, TX. John is the center's first director and has been involved in building, pro-

gram, and exhibit design as well as forming partnerships in the community to advance the center. I look forward to working with these talented individuals.

As you know, we have been celebrating our 25th Anniversary, and I hope you will join us at the Beyond Boundaries Summit in Kalamazoo, MI to continue the celebration. The Summit will feature a "walk" through time with 25 stations representing various milestones in our history, and there will be an ANCA history trivia contest complete with prizes during the Friday night auction. It's not too late to study old issues of the newsletter!

In addition we have invited many "ANCA Alumni" to join us and share their stories and experiences as the pioneers in the organization and profession.

In the process of researching our history, we dug up the article, "Just What is a Nature Center" on page 10, from the very first issue of the ANCA newsletter (winter, 1989)! It took them "the better part of the morning" to define a nature center. Imagine how long it would take now? 🌿



Rooted in Experience. Reaching for Excellence.

**Board of Directors**

**PRESIDENT**

Jim Berry (retired)  
Roger Tory Peterson Institute  
jberry2@stny.rr.com

**V.P. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

Francis Velazquez  
York County Parks, Nixon Park  
nixoncountypark@york-county.org  
717-428-1961

**V.P. DEVELOPMENT**

Pat Welch (retired)  
Pine Jog Environmental Education Center  
paw571@aol.com

**SECRETARY**

Keanna Leornard  
Rowe Sanctuary & Audubon Center  
kleonard@nctc.net / 308-468-5282

**TREASURER**

Tim Sandsmark  
Lookout Mountain Nature Center  
tsandsma@co.jefferson.co.us  
720-497-7602

**Kay Carlson**

Nature Center at Shaker Lakes  
carlson@shakerlakes.org / 216-321-5935

**John DeFillipo**

John Bunker Sands Wetland Center  
jdefillipo@wetlandcenter.com  
972-474-9100

**Victor Elderton**

NV School District 44  
thinkingnaturally@hotmail.com  
604-240-0962

**Debbie Greene (retired)**

Pilcher Park Nature Center  
playinnature@gmail.com

**Amber Parker**

Chincoteague Bay Field Station  
amber@cbfieldstation.org / 757-824-5636

**Ken Voorhis**

Yellowstone Association  
kvoorhis@yellowstoneassociation.org  
406-848-2169

**Patty Weisse**

Salt of Central New York, LLC  
patty.weisse@gmail.com

**Brian Winslow**

Delaware Nature Society  
brian@delawarenaturesociety.org  
302-239-2334

**Staff**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Jen Levy  
jenlevy@natctr.org / 435-787-8209

**MARKETING & COMM. DIRECTOR**

Ann Rilling  
arilling@natctr.org / 970-375-7090

**MEMBER SERVICES COORDINATOR**

Jessie Bunkley  
membership@natctr.org / 435-787-8209



The 1990 ANCA Board - bring this photo to the Beyond Boundaries Summit with all members correctly identified and win a prize (Beernuts!).

## 25 Tips: Membership Programs

1. Contact your membership frequently (once a month is a good standard).
2. Preserve your brand by using a consistent template each time you send members an email or newsletter.
3. Use social media to engage membership. See ANCA's 25 Tips for Social Media for guidance.
4. Show your members you care. Awards, designated parking spaces, discounts, and public recognition of great volunteers are all good ways to make your members feel valued and increase loyalty to your organization.
5. Family memberships are not just for parents and kids anymore, market them for two adults living at the same address and/or for grandparents too!
6. Alert your members if their membership is going to expire soon. Remind your members to renew at least twice before they expire and be sure to include the expiration date.
7. When sending renewal reminders, be sure to use each type of communication at least once. For example, send an email several weeks before and the day of expiration, send a physical letter a few weeks after expiration, and then follow up with a phone call.
8. Consider your potential members' perceived value of your programs and member benefits and how you market your program.
9. Are you a government center? Consider a Friends Group.
10. Welcome new members with a welcome packet and/or a phone call.
11. Follow up with members who choose not to renew for feedback on ways to improve member services.
12. Establish a policy at your center that defines 'members' versus 'donors' and consider classifying all of your 'donors' as 'members.'
13. Your articles of incorporation and/or by-laws may dictate some of the roles and responsibilities of your membership. For example, do your by-laws grant voting rights to your members? In addition, are you required to hold an annual meeting for your members?
14. Invest in a member database from the beginning! Do not manage your membership with multiple Excel spreadsheets!
15. A membership program is not enough to sustain an organization financially, but it is a key ingredient in your revenue pie. Your members are your future major donors and should be treated as such.
16. Encourage two-way communication with your membership to promote engagement with the organization. This helps build community and member ownership.
17. Ask your membership if they know of prospective members. Contact prospective members with a letter or email and follow up with a call.
18. Price membership fees reasonably to ensure you are delivering the best value. This is particularly important during difficult economic times.
19. Test new campaigns, logos, and services on a small group of members before enacting them fully. This allows you to make modifications and improvements early in their development.
20. Have multiple people proofread important documents before publishing or distributing them to your membership.
21. Make paying for a membership convenient. Online forms, with software such as Wufoo, can make membership registrations and renewals easy for your members and staff.
22. Encourage members to share their experiences with your organization. If positive, ask if you can use their statements as testimonials. If they have negative feedback use this as an opportunity to improve your services.
23. Understand your membership and their varied needs. Try to provide a spectrum of services to engage multiple audiences.
24. Keep membership records and data well organized and up-to-date.
25. Offer ways for members to identify themselves and show pride in your organization, such as buttons or stickers.

Contributors of this list are Caitlin Laughlin, Jen Levy, Elizabeth Dougherty, Jessie Bunkley, and MemberWise.



Thank You to Our Summit Sponsors

### Sustaining



### Supporting

landscapeforms



LAWRENCE  
PRODUCTIONS

### Contributing

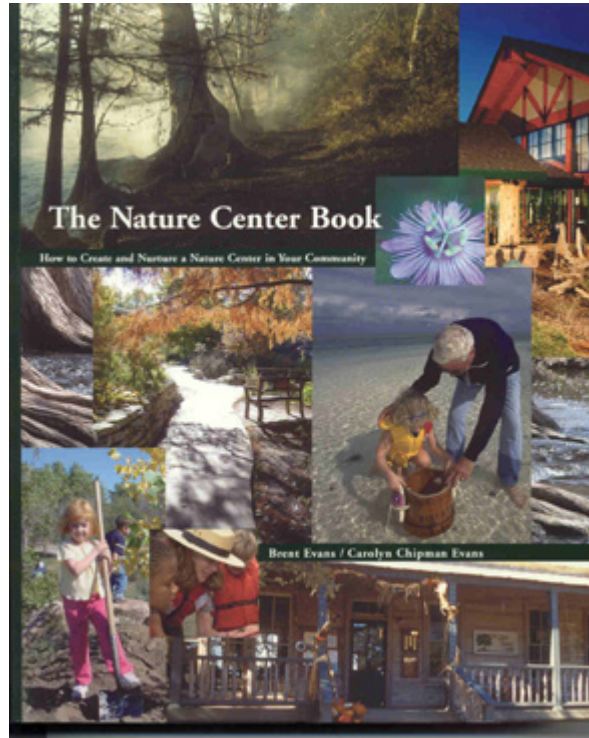


likes to say that through years of working with talented mentors, the nature center has been her education. Even before she began to develop the idea of establishing a nature center, Carolyn led citizens and the Boerne City Council in passing the City of Boerne's initial tree protection ordinance.

As the founding director of the Cibolo Nature Center and Farm (CNC), Carolyn has made the nature of her business, nature. She literally built the CNC from the ground up, a place nestled among sprawling live oaks along the banks of the spring-fed Cibolo Creek. There, she and her team of committed professionals, volunteers, and public and private partners have developed an exceptional, year round outreach and education facility, replete with innovative on-site and off-site programs and partnerships, environmentally sustainable infrastructure, and an undeniable nexus to the beauty and diversity of the Edward's Plateau, a region that noted Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson heralded as the 26th biodiversity hotspot in all the world. Along the way, she and her team have helped develop a strong sense of place and engendered a community-based conservation education program that professionals from around the country come to see, learn, and emulate.

Carolyn has worn all the hats involved in nature center development. She has worked as a naturalist, volunteer coordinator, educator, public relations coordinator, program designer, newsletter editor, display designer, site designer,

construction honcho, community change agent and leader, development director, and executive director. In the early years of CNC, Carolyn worked with her husband, Brent, to build a community of caring and concerned citizens (Friends of the Cibolo Wilderness) that would work to preserve the land and provide environmental education to children and their families.



The Nature Center Book, written by Carolyn Chipman Evans and Brent Evans, was published in 1998 and is now in its second printing. [Click here to order!](#)

Carolyn has led Cibolo Nature Center & Farm with a commitment to building community and an eye to the future by involving numerous organizations, agencies, businesses, clubs, and individuals in the creation of the nature center and preservation of land. Under her leadership, the nature center has accumulated a net worth of \$5.7 million with current annual operating and campaign budget of \$1.6 million. CNC has grown to a staff of 15, with more than 30,000 volunteer hours donated each

year. Initiatives include a growing Citizen Science Research team with a focus on land management and water quality, school programs, summer camps, gardening and sustainable-living classes and demonstrations. Currently Carolyn, with her team and community stakeholders, are revitalizing the old, and creating new CNC programs to provide opportunity for engagement at every stage of life through the Life Journey Initiative.

In 2003, Cibolo Nature Center & Farm began construction of the Lende Learning Center, as part of a \$3.5 million capital campaign, including land acquisition and endowment. CNC launched the Cibolo Conservation Corridor initiative in 2006 to protect additional land on the sensitive Cibolo Creek and adjacent to the nature center. Currently, 800 acres of adjacent land have been protected in the Cibolo Conservation Corridor.

Currently, the CNC's conservation focus includes preserving additional land in the Upper Cibolo Watershed, and developing the historic 60-acre Herff Farm, recently acquired by the Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, to further connect the Hill Country community to its past, present, and future through nature. The Herff Farm is now open to the public and hosts the Boerne area's Farmers Market while the CNC offers family-friendly workshops on vegetable gardening, keeping backyard chickens, growing native plants for wildlife, water conservation, and other ways families can have a more ecologically sustainable lifestyle.

Carolyn is far too modest and self-deprecating to fess up to it, but she has been recognized far and wide with innumerable accolades for her service, leadership, and contributions to her profession, her community, and her state. Among them are the 1990 Environmental Woman of Action Award for the State of Texas and the 1998 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence for the State of Texas. And in 1992, CNC won the Texas Urban Forestry Award.

Carolyn was instrumental in starting a land trust organization in 1998, the Cibolo Conservancy, which now holds conservation easements on more than 12,000 acres in the Hill Country. Her leadership of the Cibolo Conservation Corridor (CCC) initiative exemplifies her approach to delivering on the mission of the CNC. The pillars of this initiative are leadership, stewardship, education, and research. Carolyn conceived, activated and continues to fund and execute on every pillar.

For close to ten years, Carolyn worked on the 3K Initiative, to inform and encourage Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to prepare to accept a gift of 3,500 acres of land in Kendall County. In 2011 the land was acquired by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and became the Kronkosky State Natural Area.


Carolyn has served on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Trails Advisory Board, Association of Nature Center Administrators Board of Directors, Historic Landmark Commission for City of Boerne, Boerne Public Library Foundation Board of Directors, the Cibolo Conservancy Land Trust as founding director, The Texas Lyceum, TPWD Texas

Partnership for Children in Nature Advisory Board, and is past president and current board member of Hill Country Alliance.

Carolyn has always been one to think, act, and work beyond her borders. The nature center movement has been promoted worldwide as a result of Carolyn's efforts. Carolyn is co-author, with her husband Brent, of *The Nature Center Book*, detailing how to develop a nature center. In 1998, *The Nature Center Book* received the First Place Media Award, Book Category, from the National Association for Interpretation, and the Imagineer Award from the Mind Science Foundation. In its second printing, the book has sold more than 4,000 copies in the US and overseas. It recently was translated into Japanese and Chinese. In May 2013, Carolyn and Brent traveled to these two countries for a speaking tour on nature center development. In Japan, copies of *The Nature Center Book* were donated to communities along the coast that were devastated by the 2011 tsunami. Among others, they consulted with Tobetsu Ecological Community in Ishikari-gun, Hokkaido and Shanshui Conservation Center Beijing, China.

Since the publication of *The Nature Center Book*, Carolyn and Brent have consulted with dozens of nature centers and start up nature centers around the country. Most recently, CNC hosted the first Texas Regional Association of Nature Center Administrators Summit. Carolyn has also participated on the teams of several ANCA Peer Consults to other nature centers while serving for six years on the ANCA Board of Directors.

Carter Smith, executive director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, summarizes Carolyn's career best in his nomination

narrative "Carolyn is the consummate educator-steward who has made her deep and abiding love of the natural world her life's work and calling. She is both well traveled and well grounded, broad and deep in spirit and intellect, curious beyond measure, and exceptionally knowledgeable about the world around and surrounding her. She has touched and transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people – young and old, rural and urban, people who come from all walks of life to engage, explore, learn, and discover their outdoor and natural heritage. Her tireless service and work are a source of deep inspiration to many." 

*Gordon Maupin, retired Executive Director of The Wilderness Center in Wilmot, OH provided this information for Carolyn's nomination for the 2014 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award.*



  
COMMON GROUND  
DISTRIBUTORS

Books for Specialty Retailers Since 1986

**Order online**  
**www.comground.com**

**800-654-0626**



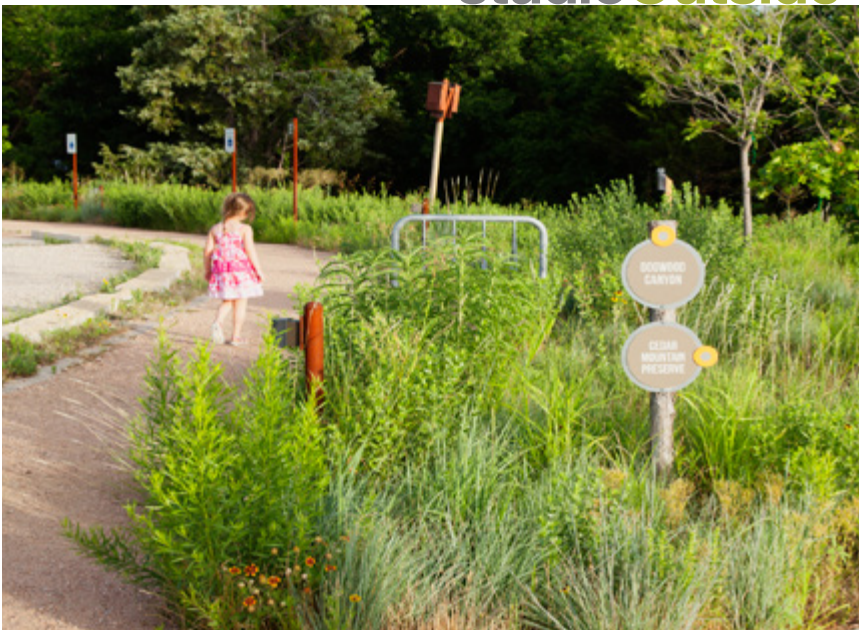
**early bird  
registration  
ends  
July 9th**



**Sign up today! For the Beyond Boundaries ANCA Summit XX at the Kalamazoo Nature Center**

**Where else can you:** Dance in a barn • Diversify • Kayak or paddleboard a scenic river  
 Share ideas • Balance on a log • Join an improv troupe • Photograph in macro  
 Play an instrument • Manage human nature • Address water issues • Enjoy a winery tour  
 Learn a lot • Manage your land • Swim a Great Lake (no sharks, no salt, no worries!)  
 Experience a "Sleeping Bear" • Canoe the Kzoo • Focus on the human mind  
 Get sand between your toes • Bid on cool stuff • Experience free play • Sample the best  
 breweries • Meet friends old and new • Swap stories by a campfire • Take a hike  
 Ride a bike • Tour award-winning nature centers and preschools • Listen to live music

**studioOutside**



**Summit Registration:  
Click Here**



**Serving  
Nature Centers  
since 1987**



**Replica Skulls**



**Displays**

**So Much More...**

**www.nature-watch.com**  
800-228-5816

Landscape Architecture and Master Planning  
 214 954 7160  
 www.studiooutside.us

# From The Field:

## What is a Nature Center?

Gordon Maupin  
Executive Director (retired)  
The Wilderness Center  
Wilmot, OH

Over the last year as The Wilderness Center (TWC) was crafting the profile for my successor, Education Director Joann Ballbach and I repeatedly fell into the same discussion.

I would say something like, “The Wilderness Center has become much more than just a nature center.” Joann would answer, “No it hasn’t.” I’d say, “What do you mean? We do all this stuff that most nature centers don’t... like land conservancy work and ecopreneurial things like Foxfield Preserve (our nature preserve cemetery), consulting forestry for area landowners, and wetland mitigation.

Joann (she knows me too well) would say, “So? How is that not being a nature center? That’s what a nature center is... or should be.”

Our friendly banter prompted me to remember working to come up with a definition of a nature center many years ago. We’d laugh at each other. I’d say TWC is more; Joann says TWC is what a nature center should be.

Joann has been watching other organizations—not just nature centers. She especially notes how libraries have redefined themselves. Libraries are no longer “just” a place to borrow printed books. At her small, local library (and Ohio has, they say, the best library system in the country), you can still do traditional library things, like book discussion groups and age appropriate Story

Hours. But you also can borrow books on tape and for your tablet, movies, CDs, educational packets; attend workshops, computer classes, and social events; join a club; download music, movies, and current periodicals; attend dramatic presentations, pizza tasting, and game nights; research online databases; access the internet,



*Foxfield Preserve is a nonprofit cemetery operated by The Wilderness Center, a nonprofit nature center and land conservancy. It was the first nature preserve cemetery in Ohio, and the first in the nation operated by a conservation organization.*

computer access for low income people, and pick up tax forms. They’re still libraries, but are also reaching for a broader mission as the internet makes traditional reference work less critical.

At nature centers we are redefining ourselves, too. We’re no longer “just” a place to get information about nature. Many of us are preschools; I think all of us are working to redefine the educational part of our missions. From what I hear around the country, most of us are also looking hard at the social aspects and questioning the mission value of even our “sacred cows.” Many of us are experimenting in the virtual world.

So how is TWC adapting to the changing world? The internet changed the paradigm upon which The Wilderness Center was founded. Some very successful activities TWC offered in the 1980s don’t work anymore. The internet made the center’s library irrelevant. Information and reference is a mouse click away. E-tail forced

us to transform our “bookstore” into a “nature store.” Our monthly Members’ Newsletter was once an important benefit encouraging people to join the center. Today we must give away the same benefit on our website.

The rapidly shifting competitive environment also caused a paradigm shift. Other nature centers, trail systems, and local parks have sprouted up around us. A huge societal

change is the competition for peoples’ time. Television changed from three channels to hundreds. Video games, internet entertainment, social media and much, much more has clearly affected the way a nature center can attract people.

Looking back, our nature center evolved/adapted its mission in response to these greater societal forces. Some of the adaptive actions The Wilderness Center has taken:

- Special Interest Clubs: In 1981, The Wilderness Center had one special interest club, a Nature

(continued on page 9)

Photo Club. It was dynamic. In the following years it was followed by an array of clubs. Some have died out but others have begun; some are struggling while others are booming. We're holding right now at 12. The notably booming club, Geocaching, couldn't exist in 1981. When geocaching began as a sport, a discussion erupted on the ANCA list serve. Some thought it was a terrible thing; geocachers would step off trail! In one extreme case a government-run nature center criminalized even the creation of virtual geocaches (simply posting coordinates on line and no physical cache). Others embraced geocaching as a new way to encourage people to connect with the outdoors. These nature centers established their own caches and reached out to work with geocachers to assure caches were located properly. TWC took it a step further; today Geocaching is one of our most dynamic clubs.

- Wetland Mitigation: This is an extremely complex process, but basically, the government is trying to create a "cap-and-trade" process to support a no-net-loss policy for wetlands. Developers who destroy wetlands must mitigate the destruction by restoring wetlands. Nature centers with drained or degraded wetlands can get paid very well to fix their wetland. TWC entered mitigation as an ecopreneurial venture.

- Forestry: In Ohio, state forestry officials do not market timber for landowners. We hired a forester who provides full-service forestry for area landowners. He provides sustainable services, which enhance woodlands over time, improving wildlife habitat and proving a clean watershed. However, his primary source of income is marking and marketing timber. While some environmen-

talists may balk at timber harvests, sustainable practices are immensely superior environmentally to high-grading practices happening all too often. Sustainable forestry is an ecopreneurial venture.

- Nature Preserve Cemetery: Foxfield Preserve is the concept that has drawn the most attention to TWC from other nature centers. We created a cemetery on some old farmland adjacent to our nature center. The cemetery is a nature preserve first. People who buy plots become partners in restoration of the site. It has trails and looks like a nature center. There are no lawns or "marble orchards."

Foxfield Preserve is a financial success, but that is only a part of its success. It has created a new class of stakeholders at TWC who care about the nature center's success. You can't be much more connected to a place than to have your atoms (or mom's) become part of it, so Foxfield is also a great friend-raiser. The business community has been thrilled at the outside-the-box ecopreneurial aspect of the cemetery.

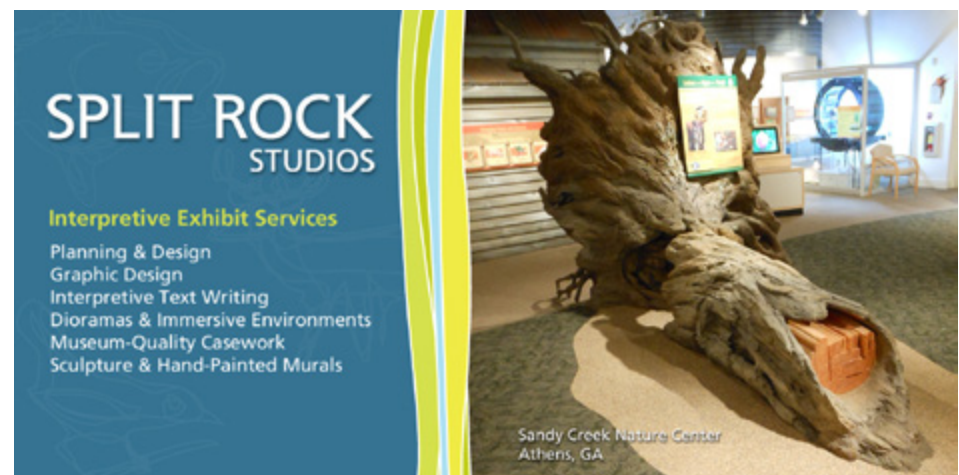
- Ecotourism: For many years, TWC has offered ecotours all over the world. These trips are budgeted to make a profit to help support the organization. However, the people who participate in the ecotours have become supporters in ways far beyond the profits

generated by the ecotours.

I am reminded of the old biology saying, "Adapt or die." It's a very good analogy to apply to nature centers. We nature center folks know biology. We are taking that lesson from our biology background and applying it to our centers. Our climate has changed—but, unlike plants and animals, ours is not just the physical climate. Different strategies/adaptations will work in our nature centers' different places and cultures. Like biological adaptation, it requires change and not a little bit of luck. Unlike plants and animals, we can plan ahead to adapt and take our best stab at it. Your nature center will be different than TWC. But we're still nature centers.

And Joann and I agree that's the way it should be. There are days when it would be nice to stagnate, to always do what we've always done. But we can't. Adapt or die. 🌱

*Gordon Maupin retired from The Wilderness Center in 2014 after serving as Executive Director since 1981. From 1992 to 2002 he served on the ANCA board of directors including two years as President. In 2006, ANCA honored him with its Nature Center Leadership Award, the highest recognition in the field of nature and environmental learning centers.*



# Blast from the Past

## Directions - Winter 1989 (Issue Number 1)

Just What is a Nature Center?

It took the better part of a morning to figure it out, but the steering committee was at last able to come up with an acceptable definition of a nature center for the purposes of this organization. A nature center consists of:

1. A natural site or home base to conduct educational programs;
2. A separate legal entity with a precise mission statement managed by a governing body;
3. A paid professional staff;
4. An established education program.

A nature center administrator (as defined by ANCA) is an individual who provides the vision and leadership to carry out the administration and development of the center's missions, goals, and objectives. Primary responsibilities include management of a facility its education program, personnel, finances, marketing, and physical resources.

With these definitions in mind, ANCA has set three primary goals:

1. To establish a national network for nature center administrators;
2. To promote the identity and credibility of nature centers as educational function;
3. To provide nature center administrators with products and services that will improve their performance on the job.



We know  
your risks.

**Specialty insurance  
for nature centers.**

[naturecenterinsurance.com](http://naturecenterinsurance.com)



GWWO, Inc./Architects  
800 Wyman Park Drive • Suite 300  
Baltimore, MD 21211  
410.332.1009 • [www.gwwoinc.com](http://www.gwwoinc.com)

ARCHITECTS



# Profile:

## Jason Meyer Receives 2014 Outstanding New Leader Award

In an effort to recognize and support new leaders in the field of nature center administration, ANCA has created the Outstanding New Leader award category for 2014. The board of directors is pleased to announce Jason Meyer as the 2014 recipient of this new award category.

Jason has served as Executive Director of the Fenner Conservancy in Lansing, Michigan for nearly four years. From his bachelor's degree in forestry, through today, Jason's passion and positions have revolved around the natural world. With a master's degree in Forestry and Natural Resources, and various awards and certificates in leadership and education, he embodies someone who truly lives their passion every day. Jason has worked hard to progress through the field, from program coordinator, to instructor, naturalist, program manager and through to executive director.

In 2010, Jason became the first executive director of the Friends of Fenner Nature Center, where he walked into a small nonprofit that was newly charged with operating the center. Fenner was almost turned into a passive use park by the city of Lansing, but the formation of a public/private partnership between the Friends and the City kept the doors open long enough for the Friends to build community awareness and support for Fenner Nature Center.

Jason led the efforts to rebrand the Friends group as "Fenner Conservancy," and worked in tandem with Fenner's board, bringing the organization towards a real gov-

ernance and fundraising structure, and building its base of support. He has built the board from the pre-existing friends group, to now a diverse base of community and industry leaders, businesses, and partners.

Jason now manages and leads



*Jason Meyer, Executive Director of the Fenner Conservancy.*

a staff for the non-profit, as well as naturalists hired by the city of Lansing. Since he first joined Fenner, he and his staff have cleaned up the building and renovated it based on a shoestring budget. Often working in partnership with local companies and volunteers, he led the organization to rethink their space in a creative and fiscally sound manner.


When he faced one of his weakest areas, fundraising, he not only sought out appropriate training (Indiana School of Philanthropy, Certificate in Fundraising Management) to build this skill set, but also identified a donor to

pay for the training. This type of vulnerability is rare in a leader, to both state to a donor that you need help, and demonstrate to one's staff that you are willing to seek out additional training and help.

From the words of one of Jason's employees: "Jason is the kind of person who rarely 'toots his own horn' so he never seems to get recognition for the work that he does. He's quick to recognize his staff as being responsible for the immense changes that are happening at Fenner, but what people don't realize is that we couldn't do it without his leadership and vision."

Jason serves as the chair of the ANCA mentor committee, whose entire purpose is to help develop and mentor peers in the nature center community. He regularly encourages his staff to become involved and participate both in ANCA and in their community. Jason has also served on three Peer Consults through ANCA, and recently served as a team leader.

Susan Westhoff, executive director of Leslie Science & Nature Center, summarizes Jason's leadership in the award nomination application in which she wrote, "The sign of a true leader is someone who knows when they need to step forward and when they need to gently encourage others to do so. Jason has a keen sense of how to do this without making others around him feel 'on the spot' or uncomfortable. It comes across as support, confidence in others, and a true sense of camaraderie."

Congratulations Jason on receiving the Outstanding New Leader Award for 2014! 



Association of Nature Center Administrators

a Silver History, a Gold Future

25  
years

*Elachee Nature Science Center's connections with ANCA were vital in helping them move to the "we need to do this" stage.*

From humble beginnings 35 years ago as a grassroots community nature center serving a small number of students, Elachee Nature Science Center has grown into a regional center educating 35,000 students each year, hosting 30,000 visitors, maintaining 12 miles of hiking trails, and conserving the biodiversity of the 1,400-acre Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve for current and future generations.

The heart of their educational programming has always been to introduce children to the natural world using the natural classroom provided by the Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve. They have focused on the concepts of building learning experiences that endure for a lifetime, building self-confidence, combating sedentary lifestyles and childhood obesity, and providing a place where "no child is left inside." These experiences, especially those for preschoolers, provide a foundation that will prepare them for kindergarten, school, and life.



Elachee's connections with ANCA were vital in helping them move from the "wouldn't it be nice" stage to the "we need to do this" stage: their staff observed the Teton Science Schools preschool at the 2008 ANCA Summit; took part in Rachel Larimore's (from Chippewa Nature Center) and Buffy Cheek's (from Schlitz Audubon Nature Center) Nature Preschool presentations at the 2011 ANCA Summit in Tennessee; and an ANCA Peer Consult followed later in 2011 with experienced preschool and center directors provided them with energy, recommendations for locations, processes, staffing, logistics, etc. Synergy intervened and shortly after they received a grant for an in-kind donation of pro bono services with MBA level professionals who helped explore market feasibility, financial scenarios, state licensure requirements, and planning charts. Armed with positive outcomes, bolstered by the ANCA consult, they kick started the idea of a capital campaign with their Board to fund both the indoor classroom renovations enhanced by the outdoor nature playscape.

The program opened in August 2013 operating two or three mornings per week with an enrollment of 11 children ages 3 and 4. Fully licensed by the state of Georgia's "Bright From The Start" preschool curriculum, they also utilize the "Creative Curriculum" as an integrating context for nature-oriented lessons and activities. As a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredited nature center, the nature preschool also holds this prestigious recognition. Elachee Nature Science Center in the midst of a second promotion push in order to increase enrollment so the program will be more financially viable for years 2 through 3. They will also be increasing both the hours and the days of the program for the 2014-2015 school year.

The classroom is an early childhood educator's dream and the outdoor nature playscape contains only one piece of plastic.... the slide!

Andrea Timpone, President/CEO of Elachee Nature Science Center says, "ANCA experiences, consulting, and experienced peer support has been invaluable to the growth and success of both our professional staff and our organization."

[read more success stories here](#)

# Blast from the Past



**Pack up the station wagon and come to the Summit!!!**



**kidZib!ts**  
creates...

*...exhibits about nature.*

Exhibit Design,  
Development,  
& Fabrication

612.722.5432  
info@kidzibits.com



MICROSCOPES FOR PUBLIC SPACES  
www.microeyeinteractive.com



**AWARD WINNING OPTICS**



#381SR is a family binocular that fits adults and kids alike with Super Close "Interpupillary Distance" (IPD).

877-987-8370 • alpenoptics.com

Binoculars • Spotting Scopes • Riflescopes



The Acorn Group  
Interpretive Planning and Design

180 S. Prospect - Suite 230  
Tustin, California 92780  
(800) 422-8886  
www.acorngroup.com

**Nature's Delight  
Coffee**

Bird Friendly • Organic • Fair Trade

*Bulk Prices Available  
Proceeds benefit  
ANCA's Scholarship Fund*

**More information:  
435.787.8209**

## Thank You to our Business Members!

*We are grateful for the financial support and expertise of our Business Members. We hope the ANCA membership will consider these businesses when they are in need of market resources. Please visit their websites to see what they have to offer!*

### Platinum:

- GWWO Architects

### Gold:

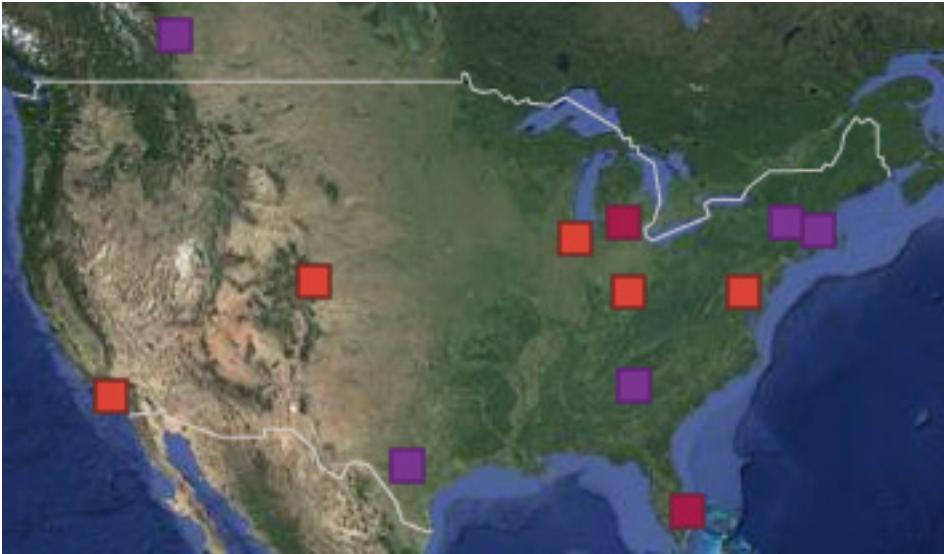
- Common Ground Distributors
- KidZibits
- Markel Insurance Company
- Split Rock Studios
- Studio Outside

### Silver:

- Acorn Group & Acorn Naturalists
- Alpen Optics
- microEYE INTERACTIVE
- Nature Watch

### Bronze:

- 106 Group
- PEER Associates



## ANCA Regional Meetings

In an effort to connect our members regionally, ANCA is now offering peer-to-peer opportunities for professional development in several regions across the country.

Click on the adjacent map to see if there's a meeting near you!

## 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 website at [www.natctr.org](http://www.natctr.org).

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

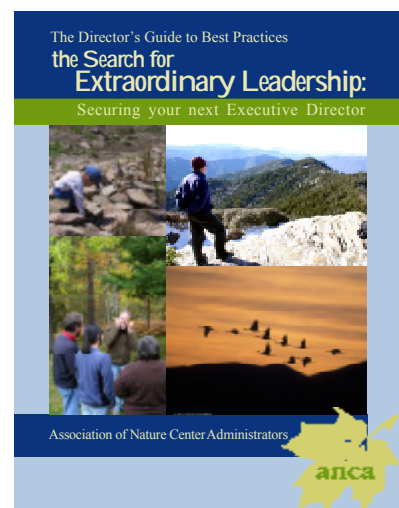
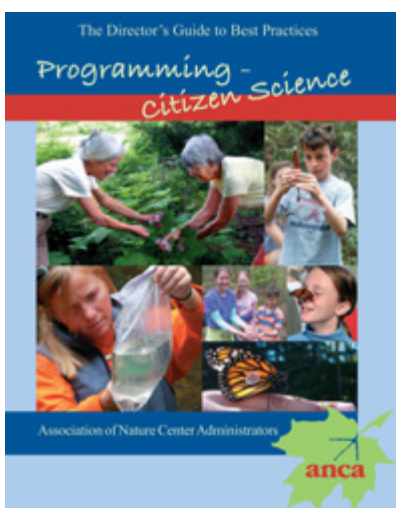
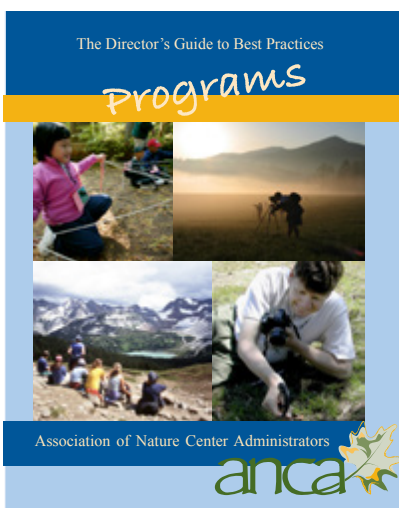
Ann Rilling  
Marketing & Communications Director  
970-375-7090  
[arilling@natctr.org](mailto:arilling@natctr.org)

# ANCA Publications - a Fabulous Educational Investment

- Interpretive Design of Nature Centers: Exhibits
- Interpretive Design of Nature Centers: Buildings
- The Search for Extraordinary Leadership: Securing Your Next Executive Director
- Programming - Citizen Science
- Programs
- The Nature Center Book: How to Create and Nurture a Nature Center in Your Community

## To get your copies today:

download an order form from the Publications page at: [www.natctr.org](http://www.natctr.org)  
or contact: [jenlevy@natctr.org](mailto:jenlevy@natctr.org) or 435-787-8209



## Order Today!

### *Branding & Marketing Your Nature Center*

- Building your brand on a strong foundation
- Developing a Differentiated Brand
- Developing a Marketing Strategy and Tactical Plan
- Protecting Your Brand and Building Brand Equity Over Time
- Staffing the Marketing Role
- Marketing and Branding Examples



# Hot Off the Press!

2<sup>nd</sup> Printing of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition



## Director's Guide to Best Practices

Examples from the Nature and Environmental Learning Center Profession  
Second Edition

Norma Jeanne Byrd  
Association of Nature Center Administrators

Leadership  
Strategic Planning  
Boards  
Staff  
Fundraising

the Essential Handbook for Nature Center Administration!

To get your copy today: [click here](#) or call 435-787-8209