

# directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

## Observing & Recording Their World

Gregg Bruff  
Chief of Heritage Education  
Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore  
Michigan's Upper Peninsula

It is a warm day in late September with a brisk westerly wind. A group of fifteen 7th graders attending a three day camp at Clear Lake Education Center in Manistique, MI with their school fan out on the beach, some searching a small pond for tadpoles and frogs. In just a few minutes, a salamander, green frog, an American toad, tadpoles, snails, a mussel, and fish scales have been collected. The kids settle down individually or in small groups to sketch what they have found. Some gaze off into the distance across the lake and draw the water, beach, and mixed hardwood forest.



What are we doing and why? The idea goes back a few months as Clear Lake Camp director and program manager Mimi Klotz and I thought about how best to

get kids outdoors and engaged with the landscape. The concept also stems from years of reading books like *Into the Field - A Guide to Locally Focused Teaching* by Clare Walker Leslie et al and *A Trail Through Leaves* by Hannah Hinchman. Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood* also helped develop these ideas.

The books contribute to a long human history of sketching and taking notes on the landscape, while lamenting how children are getting outdoors less than previous generations. They play outdoors less and their favorite activities have become "electronified."

Parental fears, concern over litigation, lack of opportunity, personal electronics, teacher inex-

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



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

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# Director's Notes

## Successes & Their Stories

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



One of the ways we are celebrating ANCA's 25th Anniversary is to acknowledge the accomplishments of some of our members who have benefited from our programs and services. We have a lot to be proud of looking back to 1989 when ANCA was founded and the stories we are collecting provide the best example of how our members have reached various levels of success and accomplished great things professionally. These stories not only demonstrate the impact of our programs and services but they are real world examples of best practices in the field that provide inspiration to other ANCA members.

The ANCA Marketing Committee has been busy collecting and writing our stories and we are posting them here on our website. Our first story demonstrates the power of mentoring and the influence both ANCA and Mentor Cynthia Harrell had on John De-Fillipo as he moved from seasonal naturalist to full-time director of the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center in Texas. Now John is paying it forward as an active member of the ANCA Mentorship program.

You can read the success story of Amber Parker and the newly re-branded Chincoteague Bay Field Station on page 12. Amber and her staff hosted the 2012 ANCA Summit on the Shore and used the opportunity to showcase a newly completed \$15 million campus revitalization project. The Summit provided them with the best whole-staff experience her

organization has had and provided ANCA members with a wonderful location for networking, sharing, and learning.

Ken Finch is a great example of a long-time ANCA member who has been an active member of the peer network and is now giving back to the profession through his organization Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood. In 2003 Ken first challenged the ANCA membership at the Summit to consider the implications of 'the extinction of experience' and since then has been a valuable resource on the value of unstructured childhood play in nature.

Success stories can be used to illustrate the good work your center and programs are doing everyday. You can post them to your website, print and mail them with fundraising appeals, and share them with your donors. Do you collect and tell your stories?

We invite you to share how success stories have impacted your organization. If you have a good story, please share it on the ANCA Facebook page. And if you have a success story tied to an ANCA program or service, please let us know by emailing Jen at [jenlevy@natctr.org](mailto:jenlevy@natctr.org).

Thanks and Happy Story Telling! 🌿

## 25 Tips: Risk Management

1. ALWAYS remember that risk management is much more than just buying insurance once a year.
2. Truly managing your risks means developing a practical plan to identify, deal with, and minimize the adverse effects of the unexpected on your nature center if or when it happens.
3. Risk management is NOT a “solo sport” – you’ll need to put together a team to tackle this important business need.
4. To identify the risks your nature center faces, you will probably need to examine property and liability concerns, business interruption exposures, key person concerns, potential for injuries (to employees, visitors, participants and the public), and risks unique to your nature center.
5. Once you’ve identified all of the different risks your center faces, you should evaluate the potential severity of each one.
6. Evaluating risks can be accomplished by using a risk matrix, a severity scale (1 to 10) or through a group discussion “force ranking” each risk as to potential impact on your center.
7. Group these evaluated risks into manageable “clusters” (3 to 5 per cluster) and aim to get the most important ones completed in the first year. Do this each year and before you know it, you’ll have addressed all of those risks “that keep you up at night.”
8. Risk management begins at the top – are you setting the “risk tone” for your center?
9. As a risk management leader you need to help your center understand risks by setting policies that evaluate exposures, establish accountability, and assure everyone knows their role by providing training.
10. Take care of your people; they are your most precious asset.
11. Hiring and employment practices are a great risk for nature centers. Do NOT underestimate the importance of this area!
12. Be sure to establish fair and consistent hiring practices that reflect the interests of the people your center serves.
13. Document all of your employment practices using clear and concise writing. Provide copies in a staff handbook. Make sure they meet applicable regulations and are consistently applied. Have them reviewed by legal/HR counsel.
14. Volunteers are valuable but they also expose your center to risks. Adapt “lite” versions of your employment and hiring practices to suit the needs of your volunteer population. You should include volunteer policies for selection, screening, onboarding, training, and evaluating them.
15. Every nature center risk management plan needs to examine the potential safety risks faced by staff, visitors, participants, children, and the community served. To do this, look at safety incidents that have come up in the past, how they were handled, and if other (better) means could be used in the future.
16. Use risk management to safely plan new programs. Ask: (1) What could go wrong? (2) What are you concerned about? (3) What will your center do to prevent harm from occurring, and how will

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you lessen the worry? (4) How will you finance these efforts?

17. Proper insurance coverage is the central part of risk management. Participate with your agent to analyze your risks and determine the best options for your center. You should be comfortable that your agent understands the nature center business.

18. Severe property losses can devastate a nature center. Make sure your agent knows if your facilities are owned or rented and if you are leasing properties to others. Also make sure you have provided your agent with an up to date inventory of ALL your property assets.

19. Workers Compensation can be a large exposure for your staff. Make sure you have measures in place to: train staff and volunteers about any known areas of concern, report claims for all incidents, state regulatory requirements and return employees to work within a light alternative duty program.

20. Not being prepared for the unexpected can cripple a nature center during an emergency or crisis. Make a list of the things that could happen to your center and create a plan around each one of those risks. Develop a backup plan for each in the event there is something you haven't anticipated. Utilize local emergency resources and support services in your planning, assign roles to all your staff and practice, practice, practice so you'll be prepared to respond.

21. If anyone drives one of your vehicles (or their own) for your center, you have a driving exposure. Make sure you select safe drivers (check their MVRs), develop written safe driver policies and procedures, train your drivers, and maintain those vehicles in good condition.

22. Make sure you can access your records (both paper and electronic) efficiently and quickly whenever needed. Determine how best to protect and backup your records (Off-site? Thumb drive? Find an effective way that works for your center.).

23. Staffing is the heart of your nature center! Determine what positions should be red-flagged as key positions and how you will back them up in the event that one of them is suddenly unavailable.

24. Examine the size of your center's "footprint" on social media sites and identify the things that could go wrong that would damage your center's reputation or credibility. Now, what will you do in the event that one of these things occurs?

25. Get started by developing YOUR list of possible risks - prioritize and choose the top 5 risks that your team is going to work on. Use a task group (never just 1 person) and list steps your center can take to reduce the negative effects. You are now well on your way. Well done!

*This tip sheet was written by Michael Harding - MS, WSO-CSE  
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perience in the outdoors, and kids overscheduled with sports and other activities have all contributed to fewer hours spent in contact with the natural world.

Numerous writers support these outdoor nature activities. In *Beyond Ecophobia*, David Sobel states: "Exploring the nearby world and knowing your place should be a primary objective for the bonding with the earth stage, from ages seven to eleven." "The desire to explore the landscape becomes a potent force during these years." In *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv writes: "An environment-based education movement—at all levels of education—will help students realize that school isn't supposed to be a polite form of incarceration, but a portal to the wider world." "We have such a brief opportunity to pass on to our children our love for this Earth, and to tell our stories. These are the moments when the world is made whole. In my children's memories, the adventures we've had together in nature will always exist."

To make the program concept a reality, we assembled art and writing supplies via grant funding from the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition. The supplies included an eight pan watercolor paint kit with brush, an HB drawing pencil, watercolor pencils, a fine point sketching pen, kneaded eraser, pencil sharpener, drawing and lined notebook paper, a recycled yogurt cup, and a clipboard. Materials are kept in bags donated by the Hiawatha National Forest "More Kids in the Woods"

program so they are easy to transport, use and store. Foam yoga mats were cut into smaller pieces as sit-upons for each student.


So, how do we conduct the programs? An introduction to the hour to 1.5 hour long activity includes an overview of how people have recorded their environments over the centuries. Photographs of cave art from Lascaux, France, pictographs from Lake Superior and Lake Michigan, an image of the Ojibwa migration scroll, plains Indians "winter count" bison hides are used to illustrate how people have been drawing for millennia. Copies of journals from Christopher Columbus, Leonardo DaVinci, Lewis and Clark, Thomas Edison, and astronaut Peggy Whitson's Space Station journals are discussed and passed around.

We take a spin through the art supplies, noting how each can be used. Many kids have never used watercolor pencils with their ability to blend colors with a brush. This leads to setting the boundaries of where they can explore, and how long they have to draw.

Kids are encouraged to select something that interests them and is "smaller than a loaf of bread." Larger subjects can then be taken on as the class progresses. Students are required to handle any live creatures gingerly, and return them unharmed to their habitat after the exercise. Small, clear plastic naturalist containers are used as a way to keep insects, frogs, and toads from jumping away.

Basic journal keeping techniques are then discussed noting location, date, weather, moon

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phase, what sounds they hear, and how students feel about where they are at the moment. We sometimes create short poems out of words as the kids describe their feelings.

The session ends with a voluntary art show of what the students have drawn and a description of why they chose their subject. It's interesting to note that many of the kids name the critters they capture, draw, and release, thus personalizing their new friends even further. I end by suggesting they share their drawings with family and friends, get outside, and continue journaling.

One might wonder "does this work" - particularly for the increasing number of kids who have learning disabilities? Teachers report, and I personally have seen, children with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder concentrate significantly better outdoors during these activities than when they are in the classroom. This observation is backed by numerous research studies. Other encouraging signs are the sheer joy and enthusiasm expressed at being outside paired with the ability to wander around looking for critters to write about and draw. Our only regret is that time constraints do not permit longer periods of exploration.

At Clear Lake, some 240 students have already participated in the nature journaling program this year. We plan to continue it for next year's camps as well as expand it to a nature mentoring program for different groups. Thanks to UPEC for supporting this wonderful youth in nature program! 🌿

*Gregg Bruff is a retired National Park Ranger and Chief of Heritage Education at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. He enjoys working with kids, motorcycling,*

*sailing, canoeing and kayaking, hiking, camping, snowshoeing, skiing, journaling, listening to music, and is an accomplished landscape painter.*



photo by Gregg Bruff

## Resources for The Art of the Nature Journal

*Into the Field – A Guide to Locally Focused Teaching*

Clare Walker Leslie, John Tallmadge, Tom Wessels

*Nature Journaling – Learning to Observe and Connect with the*

*World Around You – Clare Walker Leslie, Charles E. Roth*

*The Art of Field Sketching – Clare Walker Leslie*

*Nature Drawing: A Tool for Learning – Clare Walker Leslie*

*The Sierra Club Guide to Sketching in Nature – Cathy Johnson*

*A Trail Through Leaves - The Journal as a Path to Place*

Hannah Hinchman

*A Life in Hand - Creating the Illuminated Journal*

Hannah Hinchman

*One Man's Island – Keith Brockie*

*Zen and the Art of Seeing – Frederick Franck*

*Painting What You See – Charles Reid*

*Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain – Betty Edwards*

*A Field Guide to Nearby Nature – Fields and Woods of the Midwest*

*and East Coast – Peggy Kochanoff*

*Sharing Nature with Children – Joseph Cornell*

*Sharing the Joy of Nature – Joseph Cornell*

*The Natural History of Selborne – Gilbert White*

*An American Childhood – Annie Dillard*

Art supplies – DickBlick.com

# Profile:

## Amazon.com: Where Wishes Do Come True!

Amber Parker  
Executive Director  
Chincoteague Bay Field Station  
Wallops Island, VA

Earlier this year the Amazon.com Wish List button caught my eye, right about the time I was working on our organization's donation webpage. I had heard of another nonprofit using the Wish List as a way for donors to give specific, necessary items, and thinking it couldn't hurt, I created an account for the Field Station.

We populated the list with all sorts of items; from cameras to gardening gloves, aquarium pumps to crayons, and crock pots to ice coolers for the food service program. We added a Wish List button to our website, made an announcement on Facebook and promptly forgot about it... until the first donations arrived three days later.

For the better part of a year now we have been the recipients of many randomly chosen items from our Wish List. The list includes: aquarium pumps, garden tools, large coolers, field guides, crayons, markers, blue ice blocks for our coolers, various aquarium parts, fish measuring boards, a crock pot, cargo bag for a hitch mounted cargo carrier, board games, and critter keepers. All of these items were chosen by donors who loved the opportunity to give specific items they knew we could use.

The Wish List gifts arrive, often once a week, giving our staff a boost every time. "It feels like

Christmas!" has been uttered more than once. Sometimes we don't know who gave them and sometimes they include their name in the information. In order to make sure that everyone is thanked, even the folks who did not give a name or address, we post a photo of each Wish List donation on our Facebook page along with a note of thanks. This tactic has been wildly successful as it continues to keep the Wish List option out there without a "hard sell." I also know for a fact that at least one Wish List donor has donated items from it more than once and that this same person also became a major monetary donor this year.

Give an Amazon.com Wish List a try. Its ability to build staff morale is worth it. Not to mention the procurement of necessary equipment and program supplies and the opportunity for donors who rather "see" what they are giving to connect with your organization. It's all priceless. 🌿

*Amber Parker is Executive Director of Chincoteague Bay Field Station where she has served for 6 years. She and her staff have developed an exciting mix of educational programs that connect people to the natural wonders of the mid-Atlantic coast through hands-on, feet-wet experiences.*



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# From The Field:

## Nurturing the Newbies: a Case for Attending the ANCA Summit

Ru Mahoney  
Executive Director  
Stokes Nature Center  
Logan, UT

In the winter of 2010 I was shivering alongside 1.6 million other Manhattan residents, most of whom it seemed were crammed up against me, rattling towards the Chelsea-Greenwich district in a subway train that was about as warm as a hospital mortuary. I was in the city – again – producing an event for a pretty famous fashion designer. After graduating with a biology degree I had spent a few years as a science and history teacher, but found the politics and the lack of teachers’ voices behind federal and state education initiatives unpalatable, and so I jumped on the opportunity to pursue some unique professional experience.

I come from a family of nature enthusiasts. My parents were – and still are – school teachers, and my childhood summers are colored with a mental patina reminiscent of John Waterhouse’s paint palette; which is to say it runs the gamut from boreal gray-blues to Levantine gold, reflecting the geography we wandered during summer breaks.

I could tell you how the shape of trees and the smell of water

changes as you drive up I-95 along the eastern seaboard, before heading west to the Great Lakes, and up over the border towards James Bay. Which is why – when I was drawn with the flow of foot traffic, up the grimy subway steps, and deposited like somnambulant



*ANCA's Summit is a not-to-be-missed opportunity for networking, learning, discovery, and rekindling passion, focus, and friendships.*

sediment at a frenetic intersection, buzzing with the frequency of the city – I would often find myself having momentary but intense fantasies about wild remote places, so much so that I could hear the creak of tree limbs and smell rich, loamy earth. These mini-meditations, if you will, kept me feeling grounded, and nurtured a deep sense of self and connection during an intentionally less-grounded period of my life.

Jump forward to this winter,

with 2014 looming on the horizon, and my commute looks quite a lot more like my New York corner daydreams. I’m at least 1,000 miles from the nearest subway (although, if I’m being honest, it’s still really damn cold). I’m coming up on two years as the executive

director at Stokes Nature Center, a modest organization based out of an old American Legion hall, tucked along a walking trail in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest of northern Utah.

This past summer I received a scholarship to attend my first ANCA Summit in Newport Beach, CA (shout out to the awesome people at the Environmental Nature Center).

And oddly enough, the more I spoke with ANCA members, learned about the organization and its services, and began to get a sense of the widespread but tightly knit community ANCA caters to, the more I felt like I was back at the top of that subway entrance stairway – consciously centering myself, reevaluating my place and purpose. The ANCA Summit was

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– above all else – a place to seek and find insight and wisdom from the collective experience of your peers. And if it’s been said that “the wiser you are, the less you know,” then the same adage could certainly be applied to new administrators (in which case I must be really really wise).

When ANCA’s executive director Jen Levy contact me and asked if I’d share some thoughts about my ANCA Summit experience, and take-aways I’ve put into practice with success at Stokes Nature Center, it was hard for me to hone in on a specific example. And it didn’t take too much pondering to realize that it was because for nature center newbies like myself it’s the holistic insights that are most valuable – the broad reaching conversations about board development and strategic planning, and the facilitated sessions that expanded my entire outlook on what a small organization like mine can and should aspire to offer its community. My most successful take-away was myself, with the caveat that I left better ready and willing to embrace my role as an administrator, to say nothing of the arsenal of advise I now have at my disposal, from the ANCA mentor program (Patty Weisse, you’re a star!), to the new Google Group, Peer Consults, and professional contacts. And just like I tell any prospective school teacher that no job training is more valuable than getting into a classroom, my transition into the world of nature center administration has been characterized by the trial and error of hands-on experience.

The ANCA Summit distilled my driving mission as an executive director, and that – in turn

– has distilled my choices in staff, programs, board development, and my overall leadership style. My interaction with the ANCA community helped me realize that my personal goal is to create an organization that fosters the kind of self-awareness that kept me feeling connected – not only to myself but to others – in the midst of a frenetic city environment where busy people avoid eye contact as much as conversation with strangers.

As a nature center employee, I have not only the opportunity to use the natural world as the lens through which self-awareness is fostered, but the imperative to incorporate environmental conscience into that worldview. Making nature feel like “home” for our program participants is about more than gifting them a sense of place – it’s about the marriage of one’s sense of personal security with their awareness of environmental responsibility. ANCA not only played a critical role in helping me distill that mission, but also in giving me the toolset to make it more than a philosophy, but a practice.

This winter my organization will hold its very first board retreat, highlighting professional development for board members, launching strategic planning for

our organization, and utilizing program budget evaluation methods and software that I picked up at the ANCA Summit. With the guidance of my ANCA colleagues and mentor, I’m embarking on a mission to help our administrative process evolve from the current climate of “well intentioned board member cheerleaders” to one where board committees have annual work plans with goals and objectives that support our strategic plan. We’re getting serious about long-term sustainability and growing our capacity to earn income. And we’re taking a proactive approach to recruiting and retaining the staff we need to make our organization productive and prosperous. And while these are all tasks I knew I needed to tackle as a new executive director, it was my experience as a first-time ANCA Summit attendee that really made me feel both a sense of urgency and a sense of readiness to make them happen in the most effective and efficient way.

Sitting around conference tables at the Summit’s facilitated sessions, listening to the (in some cases) decades of insights and experiences (or hearing about nature centers with \$1 million+ budgets) made me deeply cognizant of how much work there was in store for

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# Review:

## An Orion Reader: *Leave No Child Inside*

Dave Van Manen  
Executive Director  
Mountain Park Environmental  
Center  
Beulah, CO

“This is a book about education for connection with the earth...” These are the opening words of the Foreword to *Leave No Child Inside*, and they accurately capture one common thread that connects each of the 11 essays written by authors both familiar and not so familiar. Another thread is that each essay appeared in Orion magazine sometime in the last couple of decades. Beyond these common threads, *Leave No Child Inside* approaches the topic of connecting children with the natural world from several different angles.

Paging through the book just now, I notice many lines in the essay “Charlotte’s Webpage” highlighted from my first read of the book a week ago. The essay was written by Lowell Monke, who spent two decades teaching young people “with and about digital technology.” Referring to a fourth-grade class in a rural Iowa school that was given the assignment of producing hypertext book reports on E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*, “the teacher explained that her students were so enthusiastic about the project that they chose to go to the computer lab rather than outside for recess. While she seemed impressed by this dedication, it underscores the first troubling influence of computers. The medium is so compelling that it lures children away from the kinds of activities through which they have always most effectively dis-

covered themselves and their place in the world.”

Monke’s essay, as well as “Why Is the Moon Getting Farther Away,” by Stephen L. Talbott, addresses several ways in which our cultural infatuation with technology can alienate people, especially children, from the real world, and from each other. From Talbott’s



essay, “The problem is that today something is substituting for the child’s intimacy with the world. And if you want to know the nature of the substitution, consider the lenses, video screens, instrument panels, windows, phones, loudspeakers, books, faxes, billboards, newspapers, magazines, and various protected environments through which we gauge our relations to the world. How can a child possibly feel the natural world counts for anything at all?”

The title essay, written by Richard Louv who coined the term “nature deficit disorder,” provides an abbreviated version of the stories and statistics found in his seminal book *Last Child in the Woods*. Anyone writing grants to support environmental education will find some useful information in this essay that could be folded into grant proposals.

David Sobel offers some thought-provoking challenges to the policies that have crept into many environmental education programs meant to protect nature in “Look, Don’t Touch.” He clearly ties the hands-on, get dirty, tree-climbing, lizard-catching kinds of childhood activities common to our conservation heroes (e.g. John Muir, E.O. Wilson, Rachel Carson) to the development of environmental values and behaviors that environmental education is supposed to produce.

When I first read this essay a year or so ago in Orion, I sent it to all of my program staff. As the director of a busy nonprofit that brings thousands of children to nature and also stewards a 600-acre mountain park, I wanted to initiate some good discussions on how to balance our stewardship of these woods with offering the kinds of programs that allow children to experience some real down-and-dirty fun in these woods.

“In Pursuit of a Bioregional Curriculum,” an interview with John Elder, should inspire all classroom teachers to want to take their students outside, “substituting the landscape and its lessons

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for the usual four walls, desk chair, and chalkboards.” Drawing on nearly four decades as a teacher of English and environmental studies at Middlebury College and the Bread Loaf School, the interview touches on several topics, including the value of students keeping a journal and how to overcome the logistical challenges associated with taking students outside. Elder’s infectious enthusiasm for education that is “naturally localized and interdisciplinary” makes this an especially inspiring contribution to the book. “A journal-based practice, connected with nature-study and rooted in an intense experience of educational community, is powerful and constructive.”

Other essays take on the question of whether or not it is good practice to name the flora and fauna that students discover (Robert Michael Pyle, “Naming Names”), the lack of citizenship education (Erik Reece, “The Schools We Need”) and science education (Belle Boggs, “The Science of Citizenship”) in our nation’s schools, and the story of developing an interdisciplinary middle-school curriculum revolving around a southwestern river (Elise Rymer & Anne Valley-Fox, “The Rio Grande Revealed”). Medicine

Grizzlybear Lake’s “An Indian Father’s Plea” is a moving and personal letter written by a father to a kindergarten teacher explaining the earth-based, tribal education that his five-year-old son is receiving through his extended family. “Animal Allies,” by Brenda Peterson, weaves a touching story of an emotionally wounded teenage girl with the tremendous healing power of imagination, story, and the Dance of the Animals.

Together, these 11 essays, along with the Foreword written by Louise Chawla, offer a diversity of good reasons why children should spend much of their time outdoors. Its relatively small size makes it an excellent book to slide into your backpack for some inspiring and thought-provoking trailside reading. Anyone who cares about children, education, community, and nature will find it a most worthwhile read. 🌿

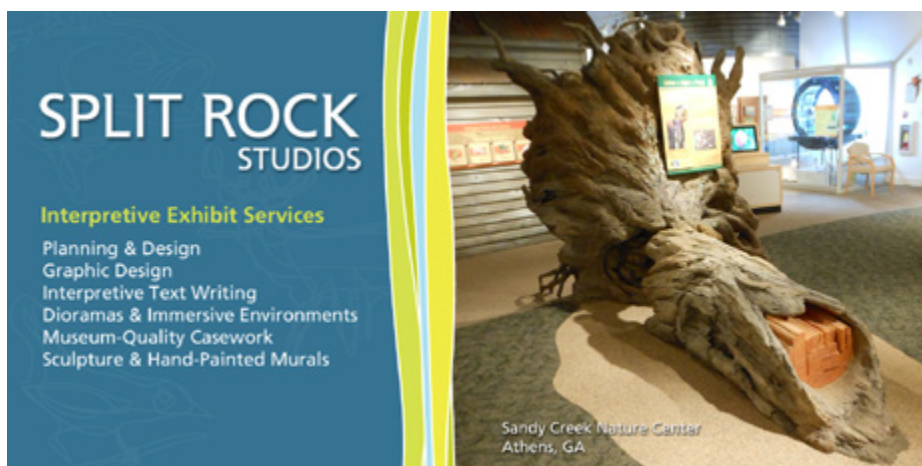
*Dave Van Manen is the founder of the Mountain Park Environmental Center ([www.hikeandlearn.org](http://www.hikeandlearn.org)), a retreat and environmental education center in Beulah, Colorado. He is the recipient of the Enos Mills Lifetime Achievement Award from the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education, and a consultant to nonprofits and special projects ([www.davevanmanen.com](http://www.davevanmanen.com)).*

my organization. But it was also a cathartic experience in that I left with a personal mission, a realistic outlook, and the tools and connections to make them all possible. In retrospect, that is the very most you can possibly hope for from professional development.

Not only will I never miss an ANCA Summit in the future, I am currently focused on finding the funding (in my very modest budget) to ensure my director of education can join me at the Summit next year in Kalamazoo, MI. No matter what your past professional experience, if you’re a nature center newbie like me who hasn’t attended the ANCA Summit because you think it’s not affordable and just not strictly necessary, you’re cheating yourself of your best opportunity to accelerate your growth as an administrator in this field.

ANCA is more than the average professional organization – it’s a community where participants are offered the tools and support to be empowered, productive members of the nature center network. It’s a place where newbies can find their stride, and where the experience and wisdom of others can inspire you to walk with a little more confidence towards a lifetime of sharing nature. 🌿

*Ru Mahoney is executive director at Stokes Nature Center in Logan, UT and recipient of an ANCA Summit Scholarship in 2013. Ru holds a degree in biology from New College of Florida, with a specialization in neuroethology and scientific illustration.*



*Organizational Upheaval and Ultimate Success*

“Becoming executive director of The Marine Science Consortium in 2008 was a mind-blowing experience,” Amber says. “I had always worked at well-managed education centers with very positive organizational cultures. Taking on the challenge of revitalizing an organization failing in every possible area (financial, infrastructure, facilities, programs, and staff moral) was no picnic.”

In 2009 The Marine Science Consortium (MSC) began a \$15 million campus revitalization project. During that time MSC would remain open and work to build its programs. 2009 – 2012 saw construction, reorganization, restaffing, endeavors to maintain the good parts of the organization’s culture and to cleave off the bad, planning, dreaming, and striving for excellence. Woven into all this work was the advice and strength of ANCA peers.



“I’m grateful for how much ANCA helped me and MSC during a time of great change and hard work,” reflected Amber. “I was blessed to have ANCA colleagues with expertise in all aspects of the field and that they gave freely of their time, advice, and a listening ear. During this time I hatched the idea of hosting the ANCA Summit, which required a serious leap of faith and a whole lot of bravado. My reasoning was that, if we could successfully host our peers, we could really say that we had accomplished all our goals. Given that, in 2010 our organization still had far to go, I was thrilled that ANCA took that leap with us and agreed to have the Summit here.

“Hosting the 2012 ANCA Summit was the best whole-staff experience our organization has had. The intense organizational revitalization in which we were engaged required significant growth in service, teamwork and program. The ANCA Summit became our goal for completion of that growth. Every staff member knew that hosting our peers was serious business and that The Marine Science Consortium’s new facilities, grounds, customer service ideals, and programs must demonstrate the utmost in professionalism. “ANCA is coming!” was our mantra.

“When peers from across the continent began to arrive, it was wonderful to see the sense of pride on every staff member’s face. Not only did they know they were doing a great job, but they also enjoyed the fellowship of people with like minds. I can honestly say that our organization was elevated by hosting the Summit and from all our ANCA interactions including its part in our latest venture; providing consultation during our name change to Chincoteague Bay Field Station.

“Throughout organizational upheaval and ultimate success, ANCA has been a friend, mentor, consultant, and soft place to land. The success of Chincoteague Bay Field Station is built upon ANCA advice, best practices, and well wishes. We couldn’t ask for a sturdier foundation.”

[read more success stories here](#)

## 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.*

### Platinum:

- GWWO Architects

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### Silver:

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

### Bronze:

- M2-Architecture
- Naturalist Journeys
- The 106 Group



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

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

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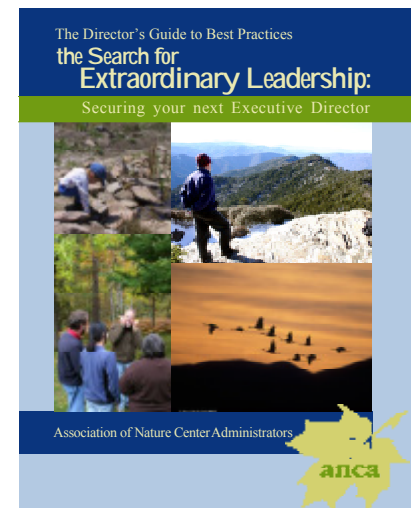
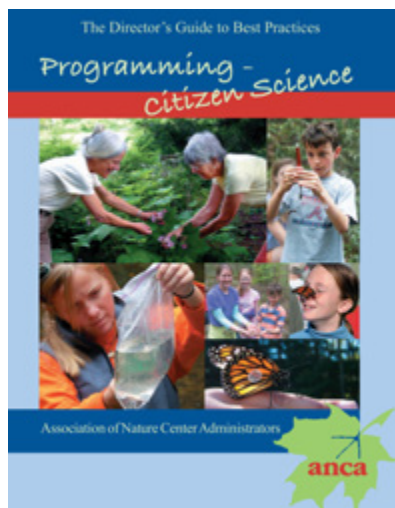
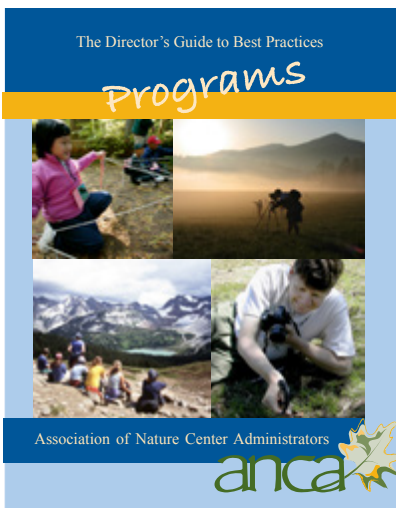
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