

directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

the State of ANCA ~ presented at Summit XXI

Francis Velazquez
ANCA Board President
Manager of Education
York County Parks, Nixon Park
York, PA

At the Natural Connections Summit in August, ANCA President Francis Velazquez delivered the annual State of ANCA presentation. Here are the highlights from his talk –

In 2014 ANCA turned 25 and launched a one-year celebration

honoring the work of the founders and early leaders with accomplishments publicized at the Beyond Boundaries Summit in Kalamazoo, MI. Now we are looking forward to the next 25 years!

Some of our recent accomplishments include:

- 25 Tips: To acknowledge the sharing of best practices over the past 25 years, we have compiled 16 best practices lists that present 25 Tips on a variety of management and leadership topics. Start-

ed in September 2013, we released one tip sheet per month for twelve months, and have continued with quarterly lists. The tools are a collection of the Best Management Practices of ANCA members including working with boards, volunteers, succession planning, risk management, and social media. All of these lists are available in the Member's Only section of the ANCA website.

(continued on page 4)



ANCA Headquarters:

mail • P.O. Box 464
Logan, Utah 84323
email • info@natctr.org
phone • 435-787-8209

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.

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- 2 **Director's Notes:**
Fantastic Summit!
- 6 **Profile:**
OMG - Join the Plastic Awareness Coalition
- 9 **From the Field:**
Executive Burnout by Amber Parker
- 11 **Feet On The Ground:**
Recent & Upcoming ANCA Gatherings
- 12 **Professional Leadership Institute**
Delaware Nature Society & ANCA
- 14 **Thanks Nature Nerds!**
Join the Campaign
- 16 **Peer Consult Scholarships**
Applications now accepted



Director's Notes

What a fantastic Summit!

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

hey y'all! We just returned from the 2015 Annual Summit hosted by the Elachee Nature Science Center in Gainesville, GA. Talk about southern hospitality! We were treated as welcome guests with graciousness and warmth as well as the best possible networking environment. Everything from the food to the sessions to the field trips set the stage for a fantastic professional development opportunity. I am grateful to Andrea Timpone and the Elachee Nature Science Center staff and volunteers for the fantastic job they did as hosts, thank you one and all!

Once again we partnered with the North American Association for Environmental Education's Natural Start Alliance to bring the Nature-Based Preschool National Conference to the Summit. This was an excellent opportunity for NBP teachers & administrators, and it provided ANCA members the opportunity to interact with and learn from NBP professionals. Both Summit and NBP Conference participants were invited to attend the programming offered by the other group.

In 2014 we added a full-day "ANCA On the Road" workshop to visit close-by nature centers. It was a huge hit so this year we offered two – one to Atlanta and one to Athens, GA. These workshops



offer Summit attendees a behind the scenes look at other centers including programming, staffing, exhibits, land management, building design, and fund development.

Along with all the great workshops and facilitated sessions attendees had to choose from were two Featured Speakers selected to both inspire and challenge the audience. First, siblings Carter (now 13) and Olivia Ries (now 12) shared their story starting their own nonprofit, One More Generation Foundation, in 2009. Carter and Olivia started their nonprofit in an effort to help educate children and adults about the plight of endangered species with the intention to preserve these species for at least One More Generation...and beyond. They have since launched additional campaigns. See Page 6 for information on their open invitation to ANCA members to join the Plastic Awareness Coalition.

John C. Anderson, director of education at the New England Aquarium spoke about Shaping the Climate Change Discourse,

(continued on page 3)

providing an introduction to climate change interpretation and a challenge to ANCA members to broaden the public discourse to be more interesting and more productive. Here's the challenge he posed:


"I challenge ANCA to make climate change a priority topic to incorporate into your education and interpretive programming and exhibits. As you do that, I encourage you to practice doing that in ways that are guided by social sciences (Don't guess what will happen in your guests minds). Share with one another when you have positive conversations with your audiences. And share what you did to initiate and guide those conversations.

"Next year – I expect you will have new stories to share with each other. I envision you'll have stories about inspiring your guests to talk about climate change in ways that show they feel motivated and empowered to join together in shaping our world to protect people and places that we and all species depend upon."

In addition to being a successful Summit, we had two very successful fundraisers in Georgia. The annual Auction raised more than \$14,500 for our programs and services including the Summit and regional meetings, our consulting and mentoring programs, and ANCA publications. Thank you to everyone who participated with donations and spirited bidding. I also want to thank our extremely talented auctioneers Amber Parker and Iain MacLeod!!

New this year, we launched the ANCA Nature Nerd Campaign, and I am thrilled to report that as a result we will be investing \$4,455 in the Richard Haley Memorial Scholarship Fund! This scholarship fund was established in memory of Richard Haley who served on the ANCA Board from 1995-2003 and was a huge advocate for the nature and environmental learning center profession. Richard was admired for his professionalism, enthusiasm, and support of new ANCA members – and he was the ultimate Nature Nerd! The scholarship fund was established to honor Richard, who died in 2006, and to support ANCA members.

When we launched the Nature Nerd Campaign, we received a very generous \$1,500 lead donation from Alice Apkarian, the daughter of Lewis Batts, the first recipient of the ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award. Alice believes in our new leaders and the important work we do. I was hoping we would match her donation at the Summit and we exceeded that goal! All the gifts made through the Nature Nerd Campaign, will be managed to generate ANCA Summit scholarships for many years to come. This is a huge investment in the future of our profession and we could not have done it without the support of Summit attendees, including many brand new donors.

Throughout this next year we want to call on our Nature Nerds, especially those new to ANCA, to share innovative ideas in our field. Sharing of best practices is what we do best and our members have a lot to offer. 



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972-474-9100

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Kay Carlson
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Iain MacLeod
Squam Lakes Natural Science Center
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603-968-7194

Pam Musk
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712-545-3283

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

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

Jenn Wright
Kalamazoo Nature Center
jwright@naturecenter.org / 269-381-1574

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jenlevy@natctr.org / 435-787-8209

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

MEMBER SERVICES COORDINATOR

Cameron Lawrence
membership@natctr.org / 435-787-8209

- ANCA membership has increased from 475 to 600+ members in the past three years - Our membership has exceeded 600 individuals and now extends from Canada to China and Japan.
- Regional Meeting Activities - We now have 10 active regions throughout North America meeting annually – some meet twice a year! They provide an opportunity for members to network in their regions as well provide meeting opportunities for additional staff.

• ANCA was invited to the White House as a guest at the 2015 National Medal for Museum and Library Service presentation. Public or private non-profit museums of any discipline as well as historic houses and sites, arboretums, nature centers, aquariums, zoos, botanical gardens, and planetariums are eligible. We would love to see an ANCA member receive this prestigious award!

• In 2014 we partnered with the North American Association for Environmental Education’s Natural Start Alliance and offered the ANCA Summit in conjunction with the Nature-Based Preschool National Conference. As a result we had a record number of attendees at the 2014 Summit at the Kalamazoo Nature Center with 229 attendees followed closely in 2015 at the Elachee Nature Science Center with 208 attendees.

• ANCA is now recognized as an important partner on national initiatives designed around connecting people to nature and was invited as a partner in the following three campaigns -
 #LetsMove
 #FindYourPark, #LearnYourPark
 #EveryKidinaPark

ANCA’s Financial Picture -

- The ANCA Endowment has grown from an initial \$10,000 contribution in 1997 to \$210,566 as of June 2015 providing a \$9,000 annual distribution.

The Richard Haley Memorial Scholarship Fund is \$39,032 as of June 2015 and funded four Summit Scholarships this year.

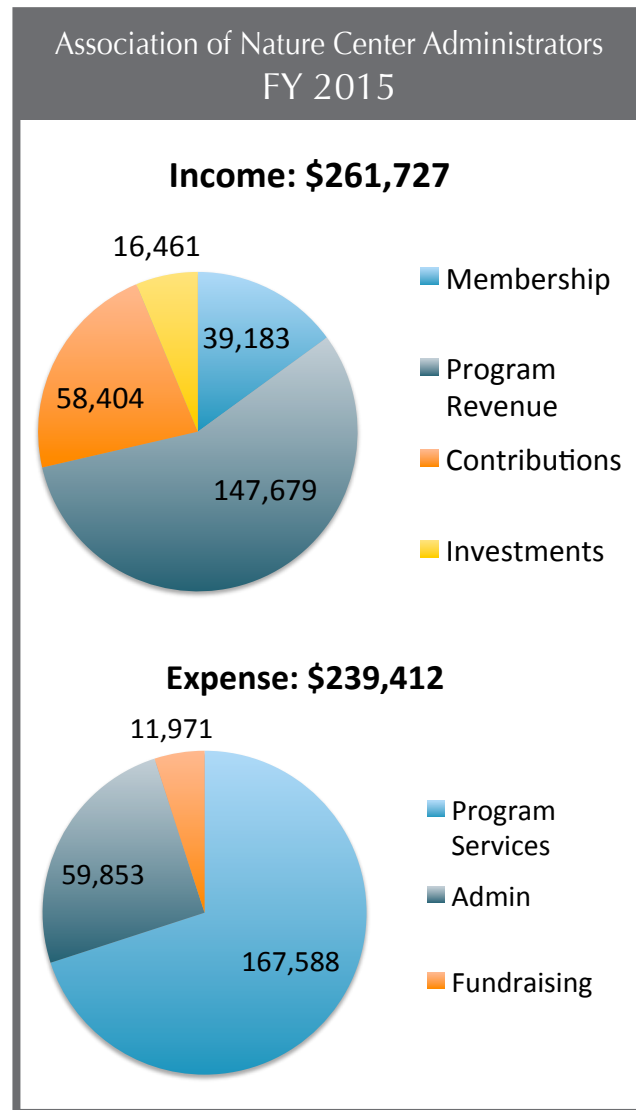
The ANCA Operational Reserve is \$14,813 as of June 2015 and is set aside for cash flow emergen-

cies and projects such as the re-printing of the Director’s Guide to Best Practices.

• In 2014 the ANCA Board made it a priority to look at our development program. Following best management practices, the Board voted to participate in the annual Third Space Studio Individual Donor Benchmark Project. We compared our data to surveys from past years and then participated in the 2014 survey. We identified the need for growth in individual donors and initiated a strategy of reaching out to more of our members through personal asks. By participating in the Third Space Studio Individual Donor Benchmark Project we were better informed to implement

successful future strategies. As a result, we increased both the total number of donors and the total dollars. We will continue with this strategy to strengthen our individual donor program.

- The ANCA Annual Fund is the fundraising effort that secures unrestricted contributions from individuals in support of the programs and services of ANCA.



Members and other individuals donated more than \$37,000 to the FY 2015 Annual Fund. \$5,000 will be designated to the ANCA Endowment.

- The ANCA Ever Green Society was created in FY 2012 to help meet the increasing demands for ANCA programs and services. Membership in the ANCA Ever Green Society is open to individuals who make a gift of \$1,000 or more in a fiscal year supporting ANCA's mission to promote and support best leadership and management practices for the nature and environmental learning center profession. Today, the ANCA Ever Green Society has 52 members.

What's Next? To continue expanding member services and moving our profession forward, the ANCA Board has their plate full:

- Explore an Accreditation Program
- Participate in FD Benchmarking Studies
- Explore Partnership Opportunities for the Summit as well as Specific Program Tracks
- Develop Succession Plans for ANCA Leadership
- Explore new Revenue Streams
- Expand our Regional Offerings
- Publish more ANCA Monographs and provide Electronic Publications
- Identify and Support Emerging Leaders
- Expand our Capacity 🌱

Francis Velazquez has worked as a naturalist/educator in the lower Susquehanna River Valley for the past 30+ years. He has been employed by York County Parks since 1984 and during that time worked as a naturalist and Manager of Education and Outreach. His primary responsibilities are running Nixon Park Nature Center, and three small ancillary museums in the 11 park county system. Additionally Francis teaches as adjunct faculty at York College of Pennsylvania in the Department of Biology and serves on the Recreation Advisory Board, also at York. He had the privilege of serving on the ANCA board for the last seven years and is currently its president.

When not involved in work or ANCA, he spends his time gardening, exploring the river via canoe, cooking, traveling, and keeping up with friends and family.

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Profile:

An Open Invitation ~

Join OMG's Plastic Awareness Coalition

At ANCA's recent Summit, at Elachee Nature Science Center, featured speakers, Carter and Olivia Ries founders of One More Generation (OMG), shared a very inspirational overview of their organization and projects. One way ANCA members can help with their good work is to join their Plastic Awareness Coalition.

OMG founders Carter and Olivia first learned about the issue of plastic pollution while delivering animal rescue supplies back in 2010 to the Gulf of Mexico during the BP Gulf oil spill. It was there that they saw first-hand the effects of plastic pollution on our environment and on many of the animals.

When they returned, they spent five months educating themselves on this issue and started reaching out to local community leaders and mayors asking for meetings to discuss ways we could all reduce our plastic footprint. What they found was that it was virtually impossible to get a meeting with community officials, everyone looked at them as being merely kids with no clout to back up their requests, so they decided to create a coalition of local like-minded organizations who were also concerned with trying to keep our environment clean. On Carter's 10th birthday, February 22nd 2011, OMG officially launched the Plastic Awareness Coalition.

Now the Plastic Awareness Coalition boasts over 90 local, national and even international partners who are all fighting to clean up our environment and educate others on how they too can start being the solution to the issue of plastic pollution.

Joining the coalition is free, OMG merely requires a high-resolution jpeg file of your logo,

a short sentence about your organization and your commitment to help share their efforts via your social media outlets. Once you are added to the coalition, they also add a direct link to your website

throughout. For more information on how you too can get involved, just send them an email at info@onemoregeneration.org or give them a call at 678-491-6222.



The Plastic Awareness Coalition is comprised of more than 90 national and international partners working to educate people about and find solutions to the issue of plastic pollution.

so their visitors can learn more about the work their partners do as well.

They have also created an award winning *Plastic and Recycling Awareness Curriculum* which is now available nationwide here in the US and is being made available to several countries overseas. The curriculum has been written to match the latest standards for science and they have even infused math, literacy, and art

More about OMG
One More Generation (OMG) was founded in 2009 by then 8 year-old Carter Ries and 7 year-old Olivia Ries. Carter and his sister Olivia are both extremely passionate about animals and conservation. Following the adoption of cheetahs in South Africa, they began to question why humans would need to adopt wild animals

(continued on page 7)

like the cheetah. Soon they learned of the pressing issues surrounding endangered species, and knew they had to act.

Carter and Olivia started their own nonprofit in an effort to help educate children and adults about the plight of endangered species. Their intention is to preserve all species for at least One More Generation... and beyond.

Shortly after starting OMG, Carter and Olivia took action to assist marine wildlife affected by the BP Gulf Oil Spill. After spending four months collecting animal

Carter and Olivia have since launched additional divisions within OMG designed to empower youth around the world to stand up and help create solutions for the pressing issues of today.

From OMG's website: Here's a quick update regarding our Plastic Awareness Coalition, we now have over 90 local, national and even international amazing organizations who have joined us in our efforts.

A few of our newest coalition members are the folks from IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Young Professional Group,

we collected to help out with the oil spill in the Gulf, we started to realize that it was not enough to just fight to help save endangered species, we also needed to look at ways we could help clean up our environment (since they basically go hand-in-hand).

As we educated ourselves as to some of the bigger problems, we learned that plastic is the number one pollutant item in our oceans and waterways. We also learned that over 1 million birds and over 100,000 marine animals die each year from ingesting plastic. Sea Turtles and Sea Birds often mistake plastic bags floating in the



OMG's Plastic and Recycling Awareness Curriculum was developed to further educate students about the impacts of plastic, plastic pollution, and recycling. Curriculum content is engaging for all learners through active learning strategies, and there are specific opportunities for students to take action based on their new knowledge.

rescue supplies, the two spent five days delivering their supplies and rehabilitating marine wildlife. They learned first hand that many animals are at risk of extinction due to environmental threats, specifically plastic pollution so they proceeded to create a plastic and recycling curriculum for elementary school students, launching their first environmental conservation initiative.

The Eulabor Research Institute (Arezzo – Italy), WorldRise (in Italy), Marine Debris Tracker, Travelers Against Plastic, WiseOceans and the Georgia Wildlife Federation, who will be supporting OMG as we move forward with bringing our educational awareness programs to communities across the country.

After we returned from delivering the Animal Rescue Supplies

oceans and on the beaches as jellyfish and end up dying from eating them. Armed with what we have learned, we decided to launch our Plastic Awareness Coalition. We have purchased the movie rights to show the Bag-It Movie and we partnered with the founder of Chico Bags and now have the famous Bag Monster Costume which we use at all public engage-

(continued on page 8)


ments. We debuted the Bag Monster at the Atlanta Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation Fundraiser last year and we haven't stopped since. We have been invited to numerous church groups including the Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church to help get their members to pledge to be Plastic Free for Lent... What a great concept.

The Atlanta, GA debut of the *Bag-It Movie* was held at GA Tech Institute on April 18, 2011 during their Earth Week celebration and we are always looking for more opportunities to show other communities the movie as well. If you are interested in booking a viewing, please let us know.

Since starting the coalition we have partnered numerous local, national and even international organizations so we can raise awareness to the problem plastic pollution is causing to our environment and to endangered species. Our goal is not to dictate to communities that they have to Ban plastic bags or even enact a Fee program. Our goal is to help educate communities about the issues of Plastic Pollution and help each

community find the best solution that will work for them. There are many voluntary programs that communities can devise which will still allow each person to decide for themselves how they want to make a difference.

The Plastic Awareness Coalition offers our coalition partners many benefits and services. There are no annual dues or obligations. The goal with the coalition is to show communities, community leaders and other officials the amount of support we have for trying to find a solution. We encourage feedback from all our partners to help us best educate communities about the issue so we can help them find a solution that will work best for them. We also gladly accept voluntary contributions to help us continue our work and encourage our partners to help us spread the word about how their friends and fans can also get involved.

All coalition members will receive our Plastic Awareness Coalition widget which we ask everyone to place on their website so everyone knows they support the initiative and so their fans can learn more how they too can get involved. 



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From The Field:

Executive Burnout ~ the soul-sucking monster under the bed

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

“Why don’t I like my job any more? I used to be so good at what I did, but now I feel like I’m not making a difference. I’m tired. I’m depressed. I’m distracted. I’m just over it! But... I can’t tell anyone this stuff.... can I? I mean, it makes me seem like I’m weak and generally bad at my job.”

Does this sound like you? You aren’t alone. I was there a year ago and many of your peers are there now. Burnout is a soul-sucking beast that will make you feel life is void of color and wonder. So, let’s kill the monster and reconnect with joy, fulfillment, and peace that we feel we’ve lost.

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion created by prolonged, excessive stress that leaves you feeling overwhelmed and unable to fully function in your job and life. Burnout can happen to anyone in any job, but for the executive/director/boss it can be particularly difficult, due to the isolation of our position. We have no peers in our workplace with which we can comfortably speak and, because of feelings of shame and self-doubt, we are hesitant to speak about it at all.

Left unchecked, all those feelings spiral into a host of problematic symptoms, which include:

- Exhaustion
- Lack of motivation
- Overwhelming guilt
- Loss of interest in your organization’s mission
- Feeling ineffective and that everyday is a bad day
- Inability to concentrate



- Slipping job performance
- Inability to feel emotions fully
- Frequent mood changes
- Generally not taking care of yourself
- Being preoccupied with work all the time
- Increased self medication (drugs, alcohol, food, etc.)
- Health problems

Burnout flourishes when we create an imbalance in our lives. When “The Work” becomes our obsession and personal relationships, health, and all other soul-nourishing things are pushed aside for “The Work.” Over time, this behavior becomes routine and habitual until we can’t imagine life

being any other way.

Burnout doesn’t just go away. You can’t wish it gone. The only way to cure a case of burnout is to acknowledge it and call your life back into balance. And, since burnout flourishes best in a state of isolation, exacerbated by feelings of shame, the first step is to reach out and talk with someone.

That someone can be a loved one, a colleague (hello, ANCA!), or a counselor, but it’s very important that it is someone to whom you can say it out loud. Naming the monster under the bed gives it less power.

Finding balance is different for everyone, but should include:

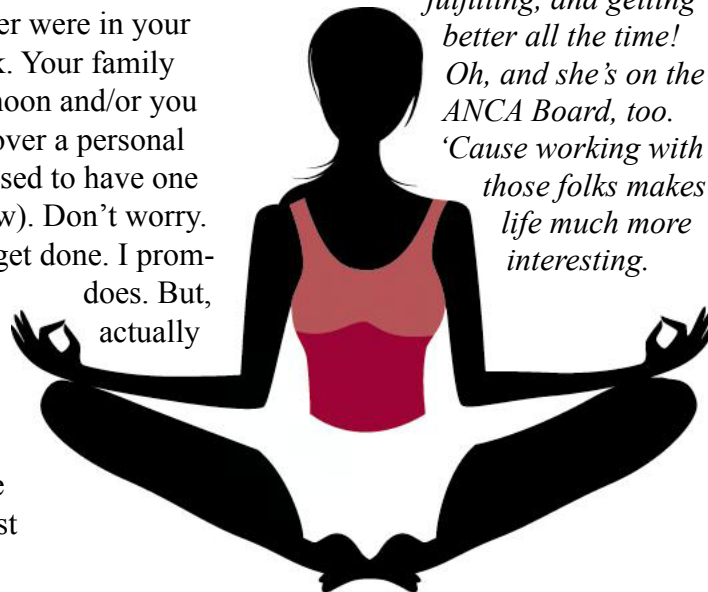
- Acknowledging the problem and get support – Talk about it with someone and don’t turn your nose up at professional counseling. Those folks know what they’re doing!
- Setting boundaries – Limit the hours you work each week. Learn to say “no.”
- Making your health a priority - Eat well, exercise, and sleep at least 8 hours a night (don’t argue with me. You may think you only need 4-6, but you’re wrong.)
- Learning how to manage your stress – Whatever works; meditation, exercise, creative activities, etc.

(continued on page 10)

- Doing those things that nourish your soul – creative pursuits, outdoor activities, family fun
- Turning off the technology – Set a time of day that you disconnect from everything.
- Take a darn vacation! – Yeah, I’m talking to you.....and myself.....
- Finding the joy and meaning in your job again OR moving on to a new job – It sounds harsh, but if you can’t reconnect with your organization in a healthy way, moving on will be WAAY better for you and them. Promise.

While all this may sound pithy and trite, none of it is easy or unessential. If you are exhibiting even half of the symptoms mentioned above, it’s time to make yourself a project and fix you. It will never get better without putting in the time and hard work to balance your life.

Take it from someone who continues to battle with the burnout monster, while it’s not easy, the rewards of putting yourself forward are worth it. Your staff will appreciate the new, refreshed you. You will find you are more effective in your new 40-45 hour work week than you ever were in your 50-60+ hour week. Your family will be over the moon and/or you will actually discover a personal life (you’re supposed to have one of those, you know). Don’t worry. “The Work” will get done. I promise. It always does. But, this way, you’ll actually feel joy in the accomplishment, which is why you got into the nature business in the first place. 🌿



Resources:

- Burnout Self Test
- Preventing Burnout
- Burnout – Mayo Clinic
- *Daring Greatly* by Brene’ Brown

Amber Parker is Executive Director of Chincoteague Bay Field station, where she has served for seven years. She discovered that leading a large residential environmental education center through a \$15 million campus revitalization project, overhaul of programs, rebranding, and culture change was pretty darn exciting! However, somewhere along the way, her work/life balance became seriously out of whack, making her grumpy, tired, unhealthy, and no longer the fun gal she used to be. After six years of obsessive focus on her organization, she decided to step back a bit and turn her problem solving skills on herself. A year later and while balance isn’t completely restored, it’s much closer than before. Amber keeps most work weeks to around 45 hours, is now a badass in the gym, is reconnecting with her creative pursuits, birds, and kayaks as often as possible, and always gets her 8 hours a night. Her life isn’t perfect, but it is richer, more fulfilling, and getting better all the time! Oh, and she’s on the ANCA Board, too. ‘Cause working with those folks makes life much more interesting.

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Feet On The Ground:



Recent & Upcoming ANCA Activities Around the World



The Texas 2016 ANCA Regional Meeting will be held at Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program in Corpus Christi, TX on February 18-19.

↩ The next Alberta, Canada Regional Meeting will be held in Lethbridge at Helen Schuler Nature Center on October 26, 2015.



↩ The 2015 ANCA Summit had international representation with attendees from China, Japan, and Canada.

Retired and soon-to-be-retired ANCA veterans shared their more than 150 years of combined expertise at the Summit.



↩ Around 30 nature center professionals from across Michigan attended the 2015 September Michigan Regional Meeting at The Outdoor Discovery Center on September 10, 2015. Presentation topics included growing a nature center from the ground up, fundraising, interpretive sign production, nature-based preschool, and more!

On September 11, 2015 nature center administrators from across Florida met at Trout Lake Nature Center in Eustis, FL. Attendees learned about how to maximize your media message, partnerships, and partnering with Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network.



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Raja Byrnside	Jeanne Gural	Amy McCarthy	Loretta Rose	Pat Welch
Kathryn Carlson	Ann Halley	Tony McDowell	Liz Roxberry	Andy Williams
Dave Catlin	Barbara Hoffman	Mary McKinley	Rosie Ruschman	Brian Winslow
Kelley Cox	Stephen Hutchinson	Corky McReynolds	Tim Sandsmark	Jenn Wright
Susie Creamer	Mary Kate Intaglietta	Heather Merbs	Loren Smith	Julie Zimmerman
Dana DeBenham	Maggie Johnston	Robert Mercer	Heather Stehle	

A very big thank you to all who participated in the ANCA Nature Nerd Campaign during the 2015 Summit! When we launched the Nature Nerd Campaign, we received a very generous \$1,500 lead donation from a long-time supporter of nature centers and the important work we do. Our goal was to match this gift, but through the generosity of 85 Nature Nerds (listed above) we exceeded this amount and will be investing \$4,455 in the Richard Haley Memorial Scholarship Fund!

This scholarship fund was established in memory of Richard Haley who served on the ANCA Board from 1995-2003 and was a huge advocate for the nature and environmental learning center profession. Richard was admired for his professionalism, enthusiasm, and support of new ANCA members – and he was the ultimate Nature Nerd! Richard died in a car crash in 2006. The scholarship fund was established to honor Richard and to support ANCA members.

All those who contributed to the Nature Nerd Campaign now proudly sport Nature Nerd buttons. If you would like to become an official ANCA Nature Nerd click here for more info.

"I wasn't sure what to expect, but from the time I stepped onto the Elachee Nature Center grounds I was thrilled to have decided to attend. Having so many like-minded people in one location to bounce ideas off of was outstanding. I seem to have come back to work refreshed and more confident (after having attended sessions) knowing I am not in this alone and that others deal with much of the same." – Simon Solomon, Friends of Rogers Environmental Education Center, 1st year attendee (scholarship recipient)

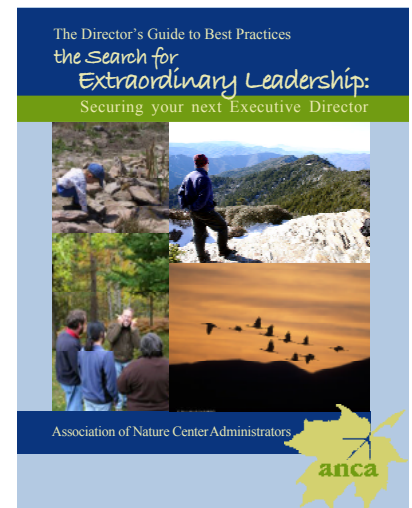
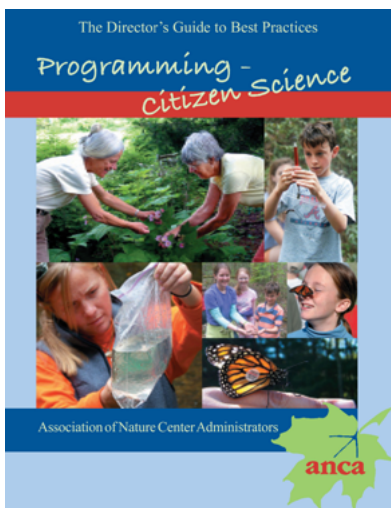
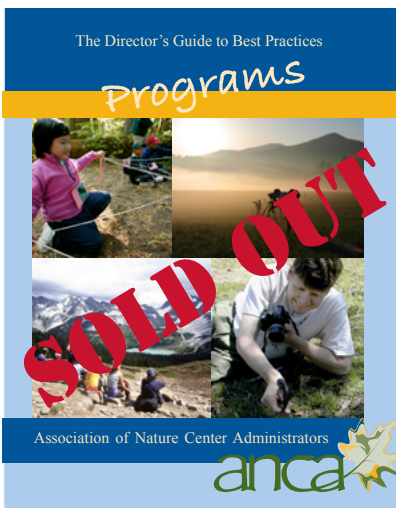
"Great blend of much needed professional development, and even more needed therapy!" - Kevin Wernet, Woldumar Nature Center, 1st year attendee (scholarship recipient)

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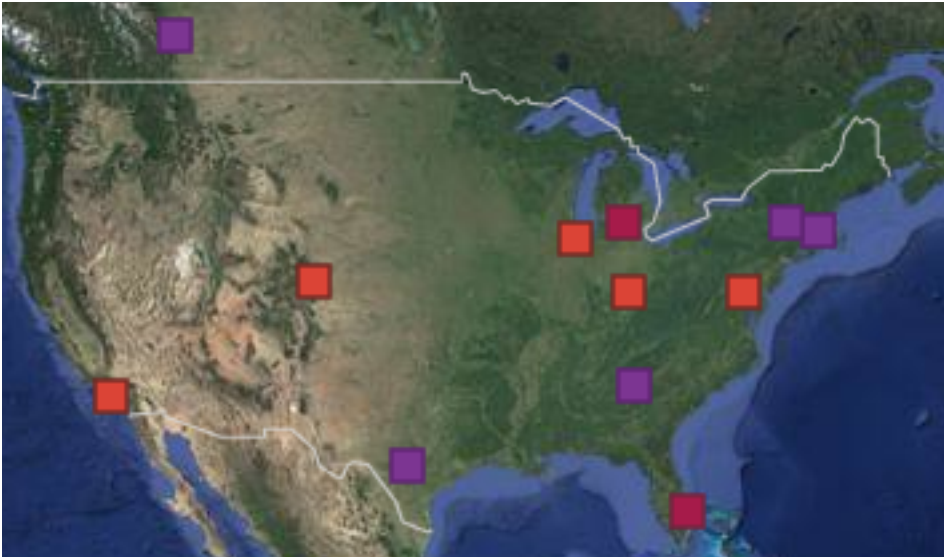


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In an effort to connect our members regionally, ANCA is now offering peer-to-peer opportunities for professional development in several regions across the country. Click on the adjacent map to see if there's a meeting near you!

Upcoming ANCA Regional Meetings:

- Alberta, Canada Regional Meeting – October 26, 2015
at Helen Schuler Nature Center in Lethbridge
- Texas 2016 Regional Meeting – February 18-19, 2016
at Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program in Corpus Christi

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