

Directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators // Summer 2021

INNOVATING
FOR THE FUTURE

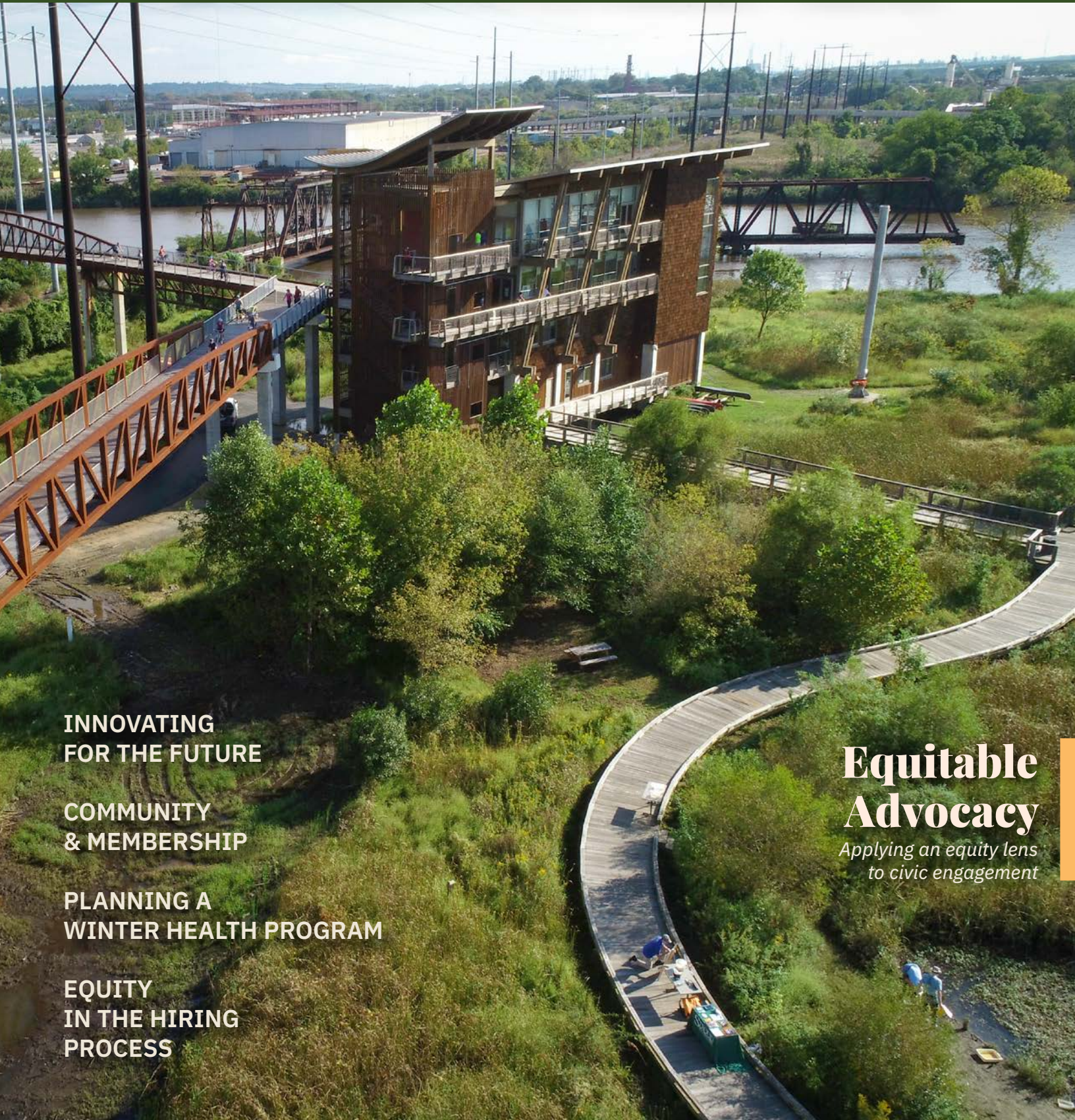
COMMUNITY
& MEMBERSHIP

PLANNING A
WINTER HEALTH PROGRAM

EQUITY
IN THE HIRING
PROCESS

**Equitable
Advocacy**

*Applying an equity lens
to civic engagement*



CONTENTS

1-2	Director's Notes
3-4	Cultivating Community Through Membership
5-7	Equitable Advocacy
8-10	Improving Winter Health
11-14	Embedding Equity in Hiring Practices
15	Highlights from the Discussion Forum

The *Directions* journal contains news and trends in the nature & environmental learning center profession, as well as relevant resources and stories of innovative leadership. ANCA members receive each *Directions* by email and can always see back-issues via the member portal on the ANCA website.

If you are part of the nature center profession and wish to receive *Directions*, see [ANCA membership levels](#).

Directions offers advertising space for [ANCA Business Partners](#), as well as individual [advertising opportunities](#).

Cover photo: Aerial view of [DuPont Environmental Education Center](#) on the Wilmington riverfront.
Credit: Maggie DeGennaro.

About ANCA

Founded in 1989, the Association of Nature Center Administrators is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting best leadership and management practices for nature and environmental learning centers. Serving more than 700 members, ANCA is the leader in the profession.

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Don't want to read on a screen? Print this issue — and then pass it onto other nature center staff!

Director's Notes: Innovating for the Future

Jen Levy, Executive Director
ANCA — Logan, Utah



The ANCA fiscal year wraps up at the end of June and despite the difficulties of the past year, we have a lot to celebrate and look forward to in the new year.

ANCA's Board of Directors is composed of some of the top nature center leaders in the country who support and govern ANCA with skill, wisdom, and a genuine love for our profession. I am grateful for their contributions! Two long-time members have ended their terms and will cycle off on June 30. Iain MacLeod and Pam Musk both joined the board in 2015. Iain, Executive Director of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center in NH, has been an active member of the Summit Committee, chaired the Governance Committee, and served as ANCA President from 2017 to 2019. In addition, Iain has generously shared his singing talents around the nightly Summit campfire and most notably, as one of our fabulous ANCA Auctioneers (sharing the spotlight with Amber Parker for more than ten years!). Pam, former Director of Centers and Education at the National Audubon Society in NY, was an active member of the Membership and Marketing Committees, served as Board Secretary, and co-chaired ANCA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Pam was instrumental in leading the effort to search for and select a consultant to lead our DEI efforts. Thank you, Iain and Pam!

On July 1 we will welcome new board member Merica Whitehall! Merica has been an active member of our DEI Committee, has presented at Summits, and served on an ANCA Peer Consult Team. In 2020 she received the *ANCA Outstanding New Leader Award* for her work as Executive Director of Fontenelle Forest in NE. Merica recently relocated to Seattle where she works as an Independent Consultant in the non-

profit and social enterprise fields. Welcome Merica!

There will also be a change in board leadership. John DeFillipo, Executive Director of the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center in TX, will step down as Board President after a two-year term and Kitty Pochman, Executive Director of the Linda Loring Nature Foundation in MA, will assume the leadership role. I am grateful to John for his strong leadership and his focus on our strategic priorities. John will remain on the board and chair the Governance Committee. I look forward to working with Kitty as we continue to advance our strategic priorities and navigate back to in-person meetings.

After nearly five years as ANCA's Office and Membership Coordinator, Taylia Sunderland left ANCA to be closer to family and to pursue new opportunities. We are grateful to Taylia for her work and contributions to our membership program and wish her good luck in the future. With Taylia's departure, we have a vacancy to fill on the ANCA staff! Please go [here](#) for details on the Member Coordinator position announcement.

Last spring, we set an Annual Fund goal of \$38,000. The fund is used to support our annual operating costs. Thanks to our amazing donors we met that goal less than halfway into the fiscal year. We increased the goal to \$50,000 and I am thrilled to report we reached our goal last month. Much of this success is thanks to the ANCA Board – they issued a challenge to the membership to match their giving in the fall. The resulting donations from our members were especially meaningful as we faced the uncertainty of the pandemic. In addition, members of the Board shared the ANCA Fall Appeal with their communities and as a result, we received several large gifts from donors new to ANCA. With the success of the Annual Fund, we set a new target for our Spring Appeal, the ANCA Innovation Fund. The **ANCA Innovation Fund** will

be an unrestricted fund to be used at the discretion of the Executive Director and the Board of Directors allowing us to move quickly to adopt initiatives that allow ANCA to think or act differently, strategically expand our mission, or respond to unique opportunities to grow our effectiveness. The fund was established after a new donor challenged us to *imagine the day after tomorrow*. She stressed that innovation is crucial to the continuing success of any organization and ANCA has an important role to play in pandemic recovery.

Our goal is to raise an additional \$2,000 for the **ANCA Innovation Fund** by June 30, 2021 and we are already halfway to our goal. Will you help us? Your support for ANCA can take many forms; please visit our [website](#) for more information on making a donation to this or another fund. Your generosity and support are truly meaningful.

Enjoy the summer months, please stay healthy, and I hope to see you soon in an ANCA CONNECTS meeting or at the Summit in August! 🌱



Congratulations to the 2021 ANCA Leader Award recipients

ANCA recently announced the recipients of the 2021 ANCA Leader Awards: Drew Dumsch, President/CEO of The Ecology School, and Mark McKnight, President/CEO of Reflection Riding Arboretum & Nature Center. We will feature full articles about their accomplishments in the next issue of *Directions* — in the meantime, you can read the award announcements by clicking on the award titles below.

Nature Center Leader Award

Drew Dumsch

THE ECOLOGY SCHOOL



Photo courtesy of
The Ecology School.

Outstanding New Leader Award

Mark McKnight

REFLECTION RIDING
ARBORETUM
& NATURE CENTER



Photo by Tim Barber,
courtesy of
the Chattanooga
Times Free Press.

Cultivating Community Through Membership

Rebecca Minnick, Executive Director
Louisville Nature Center — Louisville, Ky.

WHEN I JOINED the [Louisville Nature Center](#) (LNC) in 2018, our community of members, donors, and volunteers was largely made up of senior citizens. With our centralized location, surrounded by neighborhoods with young families, I knew we had an opportunity to broaden that community.

A very informative workshop on memberships at the ANCA Summit in 2019 pushed me to ask who we wanted to be our members, and why they would want to be members. Since we can't charge admission, we had to think creatively about what would drive someone to become a member, and how to get the members we wanted.

LNC has had a few different membership programs over the years, always with a base price of around \$30. All levels had the same benefits: discount on camps and programs (\$25 off every camp for every child.) People were becoming members to get a deal — some paying even less by buying a membership through Groupon — and they were not engaged, and not staying members after their kid aged out of camp.

We compared membership plans at other nonprofits to consider rates and benefits. Again, since we don't charge admission, we had to think creatively. My husband and I are members of the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, a gift we first received for our wedding. (Note: memberships make great wedding gifts!) While we love art, we really enjoy their monthly Friday after hours events, which are \$15 or free for members. We probably wouldn't go often if we had to pay, but since we're members, we go often, keeping us engaged with the museum!

In the past two years, LNC has been offering a lot more weekend programs such as Night Hikes, Plant ID, Beginner Birding, etc., and they have been regularly selling out. We raised the price on these to \$15/person, and made them free for members. By offering free admission to programs, we're encouraging a deeper connection with the nature center. We weren't really worried that members would fill these programs and we'd "lose" money — that would be a great problem to have: super engaged members! We threw in a logo canvas tote bag to sweeten the deal, and launched our new membership program in September 2020.

Only halfway through our fiscal year, we are at 90% of our target for income from memberships. In the two years prior, we'd not come close to our target. Our membership numbers have increased 65% over last year. We are seeing camp families become members and signing up for weekend programs. We are seeing Forest School families become members, sign up for camp, and make donations. And camps sold out in 4 weeks!

NEW MEMBERSHIP RATES AT LNC

INDIVIDUAL: \$70

free admission to all public programs for one person

INDIVIDUAL PLUS: \$100

free admission to all public programs for two people

FAMILY: \$125

free admission for 4 family members to all public programs; camp discount of \$25 per child, per week, for up to 2 children or grandchildren.

FAMILY PLUS: \$175

free admission for 5 or more family members to all public programs. camp discount of \$25 per child, per week, for 3 or more children or grandchildren.

All membership levels receive ANCA reciprocal membership benefits, a \$25 discount on rentals and birthday parties, and 2 weeks' priority camp registration — an idea from the ANCA summit that proved to be a big driver for LNC!


Thus far, only one person has reached out to mention the rate increase; however, she graciously offered to just donate \$30 (her old membership level) each year instead of re-joining at the higher base level. My father, who works in marketing, has taught me a lot over the years, including a reminder that you assign a value to your product when you price it. Is it possible that our higher rates seem more desirable because a membership seems more valuable?

Who does a nature center want as members? People who will be engaged, people who will potentially


volunteer, but most importantly, people who want to support your mission. The more members are engaged, the more likely they are to volunteer, to donate, to renew their memberships each year. Our community has clearly demonstrated how much it values these engaging connections—even in the midst of a pandemic. As a result, LNC has not only more resources to provide an enjoyable and educational natural space, but also the meaningful relationships that connect to that space. 🌱



REBECCA MINNICK is the Executive Director of the Louisville Nature Center. She has over 20 years of experience as an educator, teaching in schools, nature centers, and historic spaces. She holds an M.S. in Environmental Studies/focus on Environmental Education from Antioch University and a B.A. in Geology from Hanover College. Rebecca is passionate about natural areas in urban spaces. To learn more about LNC's education programs in an urban forest, visit louisvillenaturecenter.org.




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EQUITABLE ADVOCACY

Delaware Nature Society Reframes Its Advocacy Approach

*Ellie Ezekiel, Environmental Advocate
Delaware Nature Society — Hockessin, Del.*

THE END OF MAY 2021 brings with it the anniversary of George Floyd’s murder by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. Mr. Floyd’s murder, a jarring display of police brutality against a Black man, ushered in a new era of the civil rights movement around the globe. The tragedy sparked long overdue social justice conversations across all levels of society as organizations began to recognize and challenge their own complicity and unconscious racial biases. Many nature centers were forced to reckon with their White-centered practices and policies, and [Delaware Nature Society](#) (DelNature), was no exception.

We released a statement of solidarity in early June to communicate our commitment to doing the internal work to begin transforming our organization. “Recognizing our own need for change, we have started working on ways to ensure we are more inclusive, just, equitable and responsive to all communities. We are only in the planning stages...[and] we must challenge ourselves to ask the tough questions,” the statement reads. “What are we doing to combat racism and acknowledge white privilege? What are we doing to diversify our staff and programming? What can we do to ensure that everyone, including people of color, shape our mission and work in the community?”

A year later, and there is still a significant amount of work to be done, but we have decided we must reframe the way that we approach accomplishing the mission of our organization. One important change we made was requiring that all our advocacy, without exception, is reviewed through what we refer to as a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice, or DEIJ, Lens. Often, because of the emphasis on creating equitable policies, it is shortened to the Equity Lens.

Using an Equity Lens requires that rather than focusing solely on impacts and opportunities for the environment, we review legislation to take social justice and/or equity implications into consideration. We ask questions such as, “Could this legislation have a disproportionate impact on low-income or BIPOC communities?” or “Does this bill unfairly target any of the local customs or traditions of under-represented communities in this area?” Environmental legislation can often have an unintentional negative impact on low-income, BIPOC, or underserved communities and create additional burdens, not out of malice, but of ignorance.

An important distinction to clarify is that this is not meant to be an exercise in making assumptions. When exploring potential equity considerations, it is crucial that you are doing the work to seek feedback from communities that are likely to be impacted and not guessing at how they might feel, especially if your organization is not representative of your region’s demographics.


A recent example of how our Equity Lens has restructured our approach focuses on legislation meant to prevent the intentional release of balloons, Delaware Senate Bill 24 (SB 24). Balloons, what might appear to be a harmless party favor or decoration for many, are a significant pollutant and a major threat to marine wildlife such as birds, whales, and sea turtles.

The latex and Mylar are not readily biodegradable and the ribbons and strings attached to balloons can lead to dangerous entanglements.

Presented with this information alone, the environmental argument for penalizing balloon releases would ordinarily appear clear cut for an environmental organization. However, after looking again at the issue through an Equity Lens, we realized that for some minority communities this would mean taking away a commonly utilized tradition for family commemorations. It was critical that this legislation included a significant window of time to work with these communities, build relationships, and propose alternatives, such as lighting candles or blowing bubbles, before instituting any fines, in order to have our support.

Balloons and balloon bans are a small-scale issue I chose to use an example for brevity, but the same Equity Lens can, and should, be used for more serious, broad-scale concerns such as ensuring the equitable distribution of infrastructure funding, the prioritization of park land in urban neighborhoods that lack tree canopy cover, and the requirement that there be made room at the decision-making table for environmental justice community leaders.

Some nature centers might feel that social justice concerns are outside of their realm of influence, or as some may say, “their lane.” That argument is based on a false dichotomy that sets social justice as a stand-alone issue. The reality is that nothing exists in a vacuum, and outdoor recreational spaces and environmental policy are not exempt from the racism and inequality that is perpetuated throughout the nation. Nature centers are meant to serve the full community, and remaining silent is a show of privilege, not neutrality.



We must consider the cultural implications of our advocacy actions, as well as the energy needed to transition to more sustainable alternatives — such as lighting candles instead of releasing balloons.

DelNature is not an expert in issues regarding DEIJ, and this article is not meant to be a 'how-to' or 'best-practices guide.' Rather, we were hoping that by sharing some of our process towards progress we can help show others that whether they know the exact right path forward or not, there are steps they can take. It's about remaining committed to change despite discomfort and the inevitability of making mistakes.

Using an Equity Lens when reviewing policy is just one potential step in the work of dismantling the White-centered policies and procedures that are at the

root of so many of our institutions and organizations. The DEIJ journey will look different for all nature centers, but there are endless opportunities to begin the shift to inclusive, equitable work that truly serves all our communities. Eloquently said by a former DelNature colleague in June 2020, "We have stood with our community members as they experienced the value of the natural world and often call on them to help us defend it through our advocacy efforts. It is only right that we now stand with our family, friends, colleagues, and community members of color." 🌱



ELLIE EZEKIEL is an Environmental Advocate at [*Delaware Nature Society*](#), a statewide environmental nonprofit based out of Hockessin, DE. Check out DelNature's [*Clean Water Campaign*](#), a statewide education and outreach campaign to secure clean water funding.

Below: Abbott's Pond at Abbott's Mill Nature Center in Milford, Del. Abbott's Mill Nature Center is a DelNature partnership with the State Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs and the DE Division of Fish and Wildlife.



Winter 100: On the Move to Improving Mental and Physical Health

*Rich Niccum, Education Services Manager
Preservation Parks of Delaware County — Sunbury, Ohio*

AS WITH MANY ORGANIZATIONS IN 2020, **Preservation Parks of Delaware County** was forced to cancel all its in-person programming. It was rough for an education team that focuses on face-to-face connection with the public. Warm weather and lack of the usual summer activities pushed people to explore their local parks in record numbers. However, as cooler weather began to set in, we became more concerned about the physical and mental health of our residents.

The “Winter 100” program was the vision of Sandra McBrearty, our Outreach and Volunteer Specialist. In October of 2020, the notion of spending a cold, dark winter inside with COVID-19 restrictions, began to sink in. She knew that if she felt like this there were many others that felt the same.

“We needed to create a program that encouraged people to get outside, despite the short days and cold weather, in order to maintain their physical and mental fitness and

connect with the healing power of nature,” McBrearty commented. “At the same time, I was inspired by my friend and her 9-year-old daughter who were walking 87 miles together in honor of every year of Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s life.”

When the time came to talk about what self-guided winter program ideas she had, “Winter 100” rolled off her tongue. “Like a song, it had a ring to it,” she said. McBrearty felt the challenge could be set up quickly, accomplished safely, include unlimited partner organizations, reach a wide audience, and have a lasting impact on participants’ physical and mental well-being.

What is the Winter 100?

The Winter 100 program was set up to challenge people to walk 100 miles or 100 kilometers (62 miles), whichever they felt they could accomplish, between January and March 2021. We felt it extremely



Left: A family walks at Gallant Woods Park in March for the Winter 100 program.

important that the goal was attainable and not seem out of reach. Participants could walk anywhere, even indoors if conditions were unsafe, but they were highly encouraged to get outdoors as much as possible to enjoy the invigorating winter air. Each participant would receive an introductory email when they registered online with a tracker form they could use to record their progress. When they reached their goal, they could turn in their form and receive a special Winter 100 decal to proudly display.

How would we effectively get the word out?

To be a success, we knew that we would need help in promoting the program outside of promotional efforts that would include yard signs at park trail heads, park kiosk posters, social media posts and our district e-newsletter. We were already working with organizations that were part of the Delaware CHIP (Community Health Improvement Plan) Team. The Winter 100 was a great fit for the members of this group as it met goals that many of them had. Goals such as decreasing adult and youth depression, decreasing adult, youth, and child obesity as well as tackling adult diabetes, adult heart disease and adult chronic pain to name a few.

CHIP partners were invited in November 2020 to participate in the program by promoting the opportunity to their employees and the communities they served. An incentive for partners was they could also promote their organization and programs in our bi-weekly Winter 100 newsletter and a Winter 100 Facebook group. Within a couple weeks, 18 organizations signed up to promote the Winter 100 throughout Delaware County. In mid-December, we sent the partners a marketing toolkit comprising the Winter 100 logo, approved pictures, a social media hashtag, and sample social media posts to be used to share the program to an internal or external audience.

Creating Connections

Beth McCollam, Marketing and Communications Manager for the district, knew as the pandemic continued and the weather turned cold, people might feel even more isolated. Participants would need an extra boost and a way to connect with others if they were going to stay motivated throughout the challenge. There initially was not a plan for two-way communication. Knowing this and understanding ways she was staying connected to other professionals during the pandemic, McCollam was inspired to create a private Facebook group for Winter 100 participants. It was promoted to “share photos of your journey,” but it became so much more.

The Facebook group was exclusive to people who registered for the program. The benefits of the private group were many: participants learned about Preservation Parks’



Top: Preservation Parks volunteer Shawna Stambaugh shows excitement for the Winter 100.

Above: A hard-won decal for the Winter 100.

*participants learned about
Preservation Parks' locations
they had never visited,
they learned about trails in
surrounding communities,
shared tips about winter
walking shoes and walking
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they shared their stories
that inspired others to get out,
even on the coldest days.*

locations they had never visited, they learned about trails in surrounding communities, shared tips about winter walking shoes and walking apps, but best of all, they shared their stories that inspired others to get out, even on the coldest days. We learned about stories of weight loss, improving physical health (for both human and K-9 friends), and fun family outings in the parks. Not only was it inspiring to participants, but it was exciting for our staff. We never imagined that the Facebook group would blossom to include over 500 participants and serve to motivate so many people to get out and accomplish their goals, even on the dreariest of days.

Exceeding Our Expectations

When we created the Winter 100, we had no idea how it would be received. We thought if we got a couple hundred people to take part that it would be successful. It soon became evident that the program would involve many more participants. People were excited about the program and were using it to accomplish their New Year's resolutions and other personal goals or serve as a respite from the dragging pandemic, a tense political climate or the dreary winter weather.

When all the snow had settled, over 1,400 people took part in the Winter 100 challenge. 350 partici-

pants turned in their final tracker forms and logged an impressive 33,698 miles! That is comparable to walking 1.35 times around Earth's equator. Many participants went above and beyond the 100-mile or 100-kilometer goal, with some logging three or four times that amount. Thanks to the power of social media, we had participants join from as far away as Florida and Arizona.


Where do we go from here?

A survey sent out to participants after the program found that many respondents wanted us to continue similar challenges in other seasons. We are looking at a potential fall challenge, calling it a "walk n' roll" that would add biking and rollerblading, etc. to the hiking, walking and running component. We also know that the Winter 100 is special and want to ensure it remains unique. What we do know is that we will be working on offering a second Winter 100 challenge in 2022, possibly with longer distance options, new incentives, and enlisting more partners to help improve the physical and mental well-being of Delaware County residents.

For more information about Winter 100 or other self-guided programs offered by Preservation Parks, visit preservationparks.com. 🌱



RICH NICCUM has been the Education Services Manager for Preservation Parks of Delaware County since 2010. He has been in the fields of interpretation, environmental education and parks for over 30 years. His interests include nature photography, geology, Ohio history, native landscaping, spring ephemerals, and using technology to improve visitor services. You can reach him at rniccum@preservationparks.com.



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IslandWood Works to Embed Equity in Hiring Process

*Asa Duffee, Director of Marketing & Communications
ANCA — Asheville, N.C.*

WHEN KATRINA MILLER joined ANCA Organization Member [IslandWood](#) as Director of Human Resources in 2018, the organization tasked her with helping advance its [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(JEDI\) efforts](#). IslandWood, a nonprofit in Bainbridge Island, Wash., was beginning an organization-wide effort to build a race equity culture, and sought to implement new hiring practices that would help cultivate a more equitable and diverse institution.

It is well-established that the staffs and boards of environmental organizations are disproportionately White on average. The professional environmental field in the US has developed through a history of White supremacy culture, and today grapples with how that culture persists. Nature centers are by no means exempt from this. As [Merica Whitehall wrote](#) in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Directions* journal, “if nature centers want to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive we must examine and redesign our systems, our policies, and our procedures.”

Miller has spearheaded the effort to examine and redesign one such system at IslandWood: the hiring and on-

boarding processes. This is part of a larger trend among nature centers, in which organizations are recognizing the inequitable practices that they have used in the past. As [Vu Le has written on the Nonprofit AF blog](#), these practices include an overreliance on formal education, gate-keeping based on unimportant factors, and a focus on short-term goals, as well as [not listing salary ranges on job postings](#).

To be clear: equitable hiring practices don’t automatically result in an equitable and inclusive organization. In other words, “diversity” can’t be a goal independent from justice, equity, and inclusion — if the larger organizational culture and structure is hostile to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) employees, they will leave. Green 2.0’s 2019 [Leaking Talent report](#) shows that the lack of promotion and retention of BIPOC employees is a serious issue, and that environmental organizations suffer when they do not focus on retaining the BIPOC employees

that they worked to recruit. However, implementing equitable hiring practices remains a vital part of creating organizations that are truly inclusive — and having a racially diverse organization will itself increase BIPOC

*implementing
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employee retention, according to the Leaking Talent report.

As such, IslandWood has made significant changes in its recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding processes [see sidebar].

Change is a process

These changes at IslandWood might seem simple when read from a list, but actually implementing such changes can take time.

“People don’t inherently embrace change,” says Miller. “Because it is a process, it can sometimes take longer, or it can seem like it’s more of a burden to do this work, but really it’s building the muscle to do it.”

Any organization making significant changes will face some debate among its stakeholders, especially when those changes connect to values in larger social institutions, such as formal education. Therefore, “the hard part is educating people on why it’s a good idea to make changes,” says Miller.

For instance, when IslandWood had turnover in its leadership team, Miller advocated that the organization prioritize BIPOC candidates for the open position, as the leadership team was predominantly White. Though some stakeholders were reluctant to be so explicit, Miller addressed their concerns — it wasn’t that they would entirely refuse White candidates, but that they would prioritize BIPOC candidates given the context of the situation.

This especially makes sense when considering that organizational racial diversity has myriad benefits as indicated in Green 2.0’s *Leaking Talent*, including improved decision-making, ability to form new partnerships, and even enhancing fundraising efforts. It’s particularly important that organizational leadership includes that diversity; *Leaking Talent* reports that “the greatest benefits of diversity occur when People of Color represent at least 25% of the senior leaders.”

Miller says that though IslandWood’s stakeholders needed time to fully consider changes such as prioritizing BIPOC candidates and re-evaluating education requirements, such changes have now been widely accepted.

ISLANDWOOD’S CHANGES to HIRING PRACTICES

CHANGES TO RECRUITING

- Centralizing the hiring process through the HR department, including involving HR in approving job postings and selecting candidates where practical
- Creating a template for job descriptions and reviewing postings for bias
- Prioritizing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) candidates specifically for opportunities where non-BIPOC annual staff are dominant
- Offering an IslandWood application form as an option for applicants who do not have a formal resume
- Asking all applicants to respond to a general JEDI question, and not advancing applicants to the interview phase if their response does not indicate a commitment to social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Clearly stating salary range, work schedule, and job classification on all job postings
- Focusing job descriptions on what is required for each position, without inflating educational requirements
- Investing in advertising to expand job listings to reach a larger BIPOC applicant pool
- Including a commitment to JEDI as a required qualification in all job descriptions

CHANGES TO INTERVIEWING

- Reducing the number of staff members at interviews
- Breaking interviews into two groups when more than 3 or 4 people need to interview a candidate
- Whenever possible, having interviews conducted by staff members who have previously demonstrated effective interview skills
- When practical, including the HR Director in interviews to help ensure objective observation and interview feedback

CHANGES TO ONBOARDING

- Creating Spanish versions of open enrollment benefits packages
- Providing an interpreter for Spanish-speaking staff members
- Reviewing onboarding schedule to ensure that there is adequate time to orient and educate newly hired staff members

Beyond hiring practices, flexibility can widen the candidate pool

The pandemic has radically changed how people work in the US, and how people *view* work. Workers in many roles are now familiar with performing their responsibilities remotely, and workplace cultures are more frequently prioritizing flexibility.

Such changes complement equitable practices that encourage a racially diverse staff. IslandWood has approached this moment as an opportunity, particularly with positions that don't need to be onsite.

Bainbridge Island, where IslandWood is located, is over 90% White and has a high cost of living. Because of this, IslandWood has intentionally recruited candidates from outside of the immediate area, and specifically kept some positions remote — at least temporarily. In some cases, the organization is hiring remotely and will later evaluate if the employee wants to relocate in order to work in person. This would not function for all positions, but Miller says it's advantageous for certain IT or administrative roles.

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Working toward an organizational JEDI framework

As stated earlier, “diversity” cannot stand wholly apart from justice, equity, and inclusion. Any organization that works toward a racially diverse staff without considering the underlying institutional structures, will only achieve a short-lived diversity at best. Still, equitable hiring practices are essential to

any organizational JEDI framework.

Miller says any organization can begin the journey toward a JEDI framework today, first by evaluating its current practices — and then working to change them. And it really is a learning process, she says, so don’t be intimidated.

“You can’t be afraid to make a mistake, because you’re going to,” she advises. “But you learn.” 🌱

FURTHER READING

BEETLES Project: [Examining Equitable and Inclusive Work Environments in Environmental Education](#) (pdf)

Green 2.0: [Leaking Talent — How People of Color are Pushed Out of Environmental Organizations](#)

IslandWood: [Our Commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion](#)

Merica Whitehall: [Actions Always Prove Why Words Mean Nothing](#)

Nonprofit AF: [Our hiring practices are inequitable and need to change](#)

Nonprofit AF: [When you don’t disclose salary range on a job posting, a unicorn loses its wings](#)

Nonprofit Quarterly: [5 Hiring Pitfalls To Avoid—If You Want Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Leadership](#)



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Corky McReynolds,
PhD, CPF

corky@leadteamconsulting.com
leadteamconsulting.com

Discussion Forum Highlights

The ANCA Discussion Forum is an important conversation space for the ANCA community, and continually exemplifies the collective wisdom of nature center leaders. The following are some recent conversation topics that received high engagement. We've provided brief descriptions, but feel free to click the topics and continue the conversation there!

Authentic Community Engagements

How do nature centers engage their communities? In recent years, many organizations have been reevaluating the model of their community connections. Instead of viewing their communities as an external audience, those organizations now engage with those communities as co-collaborators. This conversation includes strong examples and recommendations of how nature centers can examine and transform such connections.

Newsletters, A Deep Dive

Newsletters are one of the quintessential tools for nature centers to connect with their audiences — but they're by no means straightforward. The modern newsletter can be print, digital, or hybrid, and the content will vary significantly depending on the organization and the audience. This discussion explores some of the nuances behind newsletters and how nature centers can strategically create them.



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