

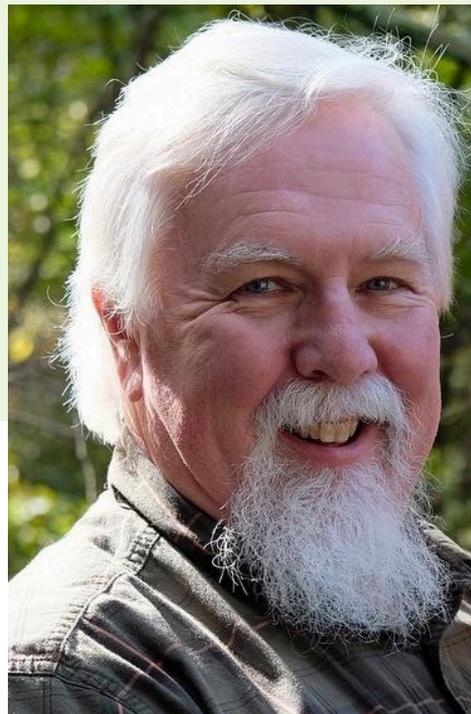
directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

Ken Voorhis Receives ANCA's 2019 Nature Center Leadership Award!

"Ken Voorhis is a remarkable professional who has dedicated his entire life to environmental education and nature center management. He is a thoughtful and insightful leader who seeks to empower individuals, create cohesive teams, and build cooperative bridges. He has an unassuming demeanor and goes about achieving huge successes in a very quiet and unobtrusive manner. Ken has an intuitive ability to identify core issues and needs and key in on the strategy to address those issues and needs. He is a visionary leader who works for continuous improvement and takes an organization to the next plateau."

- Pat Welch, Retired Executive Director of Pine Jog Environmental Education Center and Recipient of the 2009 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award



Ken Voorhis

The Association of Nature Center Administrators' Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Ken Voorhis has been selected as the recipient of the prestigious 2019 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award. Ken's service to the nature center profession started in college where he secured positions, both paid and volunteer, with duties involving program development, teaching in outdoor environments, teaching about natural history, and professional development for staff and teachers. His professional career began with his first job at the Dayton Museum of Natural History. From that point forward, Ken's career path was a steady progression of work, service, profes-

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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 630 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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Director's Notes

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

We have been BUSY at the ANCA office! More than usual. One of my board members sent me a link to an article on Burnout that one of his board members sent to him. Hmm, a pattern? According to a 2019 Gallup poll, 44% of us experience burnout sometimes. I appreciated the article and the recognition that he knew I was feeling a little overwhelmed. What do you do when you experience burnout? I think the most important thing is to be honest and let others know how you are feeling. It helps! We



do important work and we need to keep doing it. Take time for yourself when you need and call on your peers – the ANCA network is a great resource when you need to talk with someone who gets it. I would be happy to introduce you to other ANCA members when you find yourself in need. After several big changes and a few small ones, I am seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and excited for what is ahead. I am especially looking forward to the Summit in August and the chance to visit with members, learn about new achievements, vent frustrations, share ways to cope, and laugh with ANCA Friends!

We will greatly miss Caitlin Fader, ANCA's marketing and development assistant, who left in May to go back to school to study occupational therapy. We will miss her professionalism, dedication, and the positive energy she brought to ANCA. Caitlin accomplished quite a bit in the two years she was with us, most notably the new ANCA website. Caitlin led us through the process of selecting a website design firm, migrating content to the site, and raising funds needed for the project. We have more plans for the new site including a more robust member's only section where ANCA members can more easily find the resources they need – including other members. In addition, Caitlin worked hard to stay current with best practices and as a result, helped ANCA earn our Advocacy and Civic Engagement Badge from the Utah Nonprofits Association. Incoming Board President, John DeFillipo, will be forming a committee this summer to draft an advocacy policy statement for review at the Summit in August.

We have two brand new staff members, and I will be introducing them soon. We hired an Events Coordinator to help oversee and manage the Summit and Region Meetings and a Marketing and Communications Coordinator to manage our member communications, social media, Directions newsletter, and website. Both positions are remote and will help us reach out to more members around the country. Our two new staff will join Taylia Sunderland, ANCA's Membership and Office Coordinator, and myself at the Summit this year.

At the end of April, the ANCA office moved. The building we called home for the past 12 years was sold and we found a new office a few blocks away. We took

the opportunity to clean out old files and purge all of the things that did not ‘spark joy.’ We are unpacked and settled and look forward to welcoming ANCA members who find themselves in northern Utah.

On July 1 we will welcome three new board members and a new Board President. After two years at the helm, Iain MacLeod’s term as Board President has ended and John DeFillipo will take over. Thank you, Iain, for your thoughtful leadership and calm demeanor facilitating the ANCA board meetings.

In May of 2018 we revised the ANCA by-laws to allow for no less than 11 and no more than 15 board members and decided to grow the board to 15. Jeff Giesen is the Associate Director of the North Cascades Institute (NCI) in Washington. Jeff has worked in the EE field since 1995 and has been at NCI, a residential environmental learning center (RELC), for close to 21 years. Jeff has served on ANCA Peer Consult teams and attended several ANCA RELC Gatherings. In 2017 he helped organize and host the 2017 Gathering at NCI.

Kristin Smith is the Interpretive Programs Supervisor at Tualatin Hills Nature Center, a governmental day-use center within the Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District in Oregon. Kristin brings experience with diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, earned income, and maintaining organization capacity. She has served on ANCA Peer Consult teams as well as the Summit and Peer Consult Committees.

John Myers is the Executive Director of the Indian Creek Nature Center in Iowa and the 2016 recipient of the ANCA Outstanding New Leader Award. Indian Creek Nature Center is a private, non-profit, day-use center and the first nature center in the world to meet the Living Building Challenge. John has served on ANCA Peer Consult teams, is a member of the ANCA Finance Committee, and will host the 2020 ANCA Summit. Welcome to the ANCA Board Jeff, Kristin, and John!

Enjoy your summer Everyone and I hope to see you in Cincinnati in August! 



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**Know of a Good Vacation Spot?
Have a Contact at an Outdoor Gear
Company?**

**Help Support
ANCA**

ANCA's Auction is a crucial fundraiser for our support services to nature and environmental learning center leaders like you! If you know someone who may be interested in donating an auction item or if you are interested in donating, please contact Jen Levy at jenlevy@natctr.org.

sional development, and community service dedicated to environmental education and nature center administration.

Ken's early career included developing programs, training and supervising staff, food and facilities management, and administration of programs at a variety of outdoor education and camp facilities. From 1984-2018 Ken worked at two centers where he had a profound impact due to his character, leadership, and vision.

When Ken was hired as the Executive Director of the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont (GSMIT) in 1984 the center had been closed for two years, buildings had been condemned, and the remaining facilities were in shambles. Ken's job was to hire staff and get ready for school groups – in less than four months. He got busy building a new dining hall, cleaning up the existing buildings, hiring and training staff, and developing the curriculum. They re-opened that fall and from that moment forward, Ken was always thinking of ways to advance the organization. Ken served as the Executive Director of GSMIT until 2013 and under his leadership, the organization developed from a 'door's closed' and neglected center to a nationally recognized institute making a difference in the lives of children, teachers, and adults. John DiDiego, GSMIT's Education Director shared, *"Given his tenure, vision, and energy, it is fair to say that Tremont is the successful organization it is today at fifty, in large part because of his leadership. He successfully navigated the ship from being a program of the Great Smoky Mountains Association, then transitioning it to becoming an independent non-profit partner of the National Park Service."*

Ken's vision for GSMIT included getting classroom teachers and the GSMIT teacher naturalists working together. John DiDiego adds, *"Get this – we ask teachers to do a lot more work before and during their school programs than most other centers, and charge them more for it! It's brilliant. And in the end, teachers come back because what they get out of the experience is so much greater for what they put into it."*

Another significant innovation to the educational programming was the active engagement of GSMIT in measuring program impacts and outcomes. Under Ken's leadership, GSMIT was among the first centers in the country to initiate a formalized program assessment and data gathering on measurable outcomes.

GSMIT resides inside the boundaries of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. To strengthen the connection with the Park, Ken initiated a name change from Tremont Environmental Education Center to Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. This change maintained the name Tremont which had special meaning to the community and previous visitors to the center and which clearly acknowl-

edged the identification with the Park and the national network of sister organizations providing programs in national parks. The next significant step was to separate from the park service and become an independent 501(c)(3) – this was necessary to increase funding for capital improvements, staffing, and operations. In 2001, Ken successfully navigated the separation in a way that left all parties satisfied with the outcome.

I think it is safe to say this is a career any of us would feel satisfied retiring from! Not Ken! He left GSMIT in 2013 to assume the duties of Director of Education at Yellowstone Forever. Ken quickly recognized the need to create a stronger sense of teamwork and cohesiveness among the staff, and within a year, staff observed significant changes in their team dynamic. He also used his position to open up a dialogue between the Park Service and the Institute and initiated discussions which resulted in both organizations working together to achieve common goals. Jess Haas, Director of the Montana Outdoor Science School and former educator at Yellowstone Forever, adds, *"Ken instigated several incognito 'team builders' – sometimes to the skepticism of the managers – however, after just one year there was an obvious change in our team dynamic. We were collaborating and solving challenges together rather than blaming each other for them. Another relationship Ken worked tirelessly to solidify was between Yellowstone Forever and the National Park Service. Both parties were territorial, causing a strain on the partnership as a whole. When Ken arrived, he used his position to open conversations between the park service and our non-profit organization. In my last year at Yellowstone Forever, the partnership had done a complete 180. We were working well together to meet common goals and I attribute this to Ken's leadership."*

Ken's contributions to ANCA have been significant. He served two terms on the ANCA Board, 1996-2003 and 2007-2013, initiated the very first ANCA list serve, participated in more than 16 Peer Consults, initiated the biennial Residential Environmental Learning Center (RELC) Gathering (and hosting the first one at GSMIT), co-authored the ANCA Programs Monograph, hosted two ANCA Summits, and started the ANCA Mentor Program. Corky McReynolds, Principal of LeadTeam, Inc. and 2004 recipient of the ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award adds, *"I served with Ken on the ANCA Board, several consults, and escapades. As a board member he was creative and dependable. Although his many contributions have been great, I believe his idea and championing of the ANCA Mentor Program was one of his two best contributions. The other was establishing the RELC Gatherings."* Dick Touvell, retired Executive Director of the Chippewa Nature Center and 2016 recipient of the ANCA Nature Center Leadership

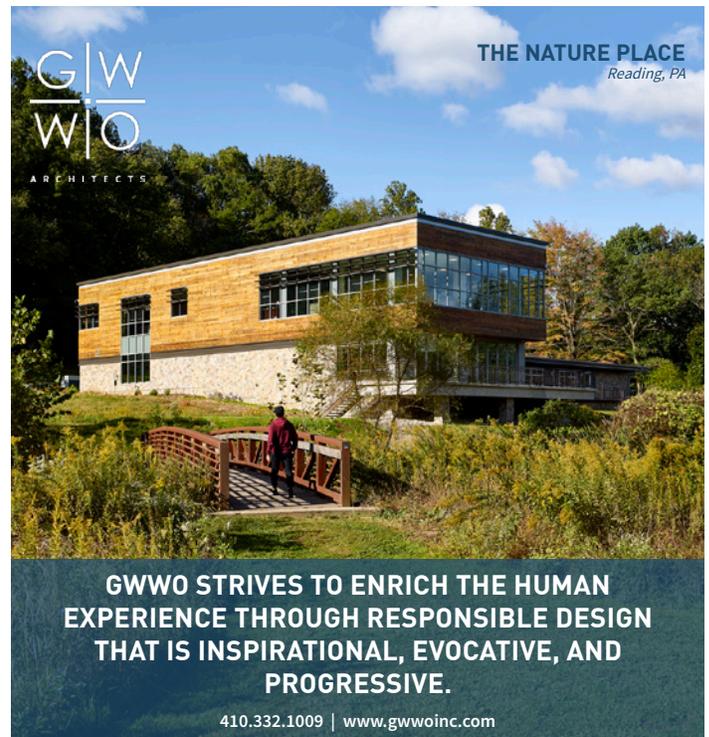
Award describes Ken as, “...the best of the best and is the highest level of a role model for others to emulate, as they build a successful career and life.”

Saul Weisberg, Executive Director of the North Cascades Institute and 2013 recipient of the ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award, says about Ken, “Ken has always sought opportunities to improve connections to people and place. He has mentored staff across the country, lead ANCA Peer Consults, written curricula and field guides, collaborated across disciplines, and gets stuff done! And as anyone who has worked with him knows – he does all this with a smile on his face and a song in his heart.”

Ken left Yellowstone Forever in 2018, and with his wife Jennifer, moved back to Tennessee to be closer to family and the Smoky Mountains. Did he retire? Or course not. This summer, you will find Ken, donned in the National Park Service uniform of grey and green, working as an Interpretive Ranger in Great Smoky Mountains National Park’s Cades Cove.

We are honored to acknowledge Ken with the ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award. Join us at the 2019 ANCA Evolve Summit at the Leadership Awards Ceremony, Wednesday 8/21 at 6:30 pm to honor and celebrate Ken! 

(continued on page 5)



ev  live

ANCA SUMMIT 2019

August 20-24

Cincinnati Nature Center, Milford, Ohio



Ann Wasser Receives ANCA's 2019 Outstanding New Leader Award!

The Association of Nature Center Administrators is proud to recognize Ann Wasser, Executive Director of the Severson Dells Nature Center in Illinois, with the 2019 ANCA Outstanding New Leader Award. The Outstanding New Leader Award was created in 2014 to acknowledge the contributions of new leaders to the nature and environmental learning center field in organizational leadership, professionalism, professional development, and creativity.

In 2016, Ann succeeded a long-time director who had built Severson Dells from a very small beginning to a recognized nature center. Michael Holan, Executive Director of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, recognized the challenge of following in the footsteps of a well-respected veteran in his endorsement of her nomination and went on to say, *“Ann lost no time taking on this challenge. She quickly hired new educators and worked with them to revamp Severson Dells programs. Next, she worked with our Trades and Operations Department staff to rearrange and update displays. She is constantly and continually looking at means to improve the Nature Center to offer a unique visitor experience. Ann has earned the respect of her peers and staff through her leadership and professionalism.”*

Jack Armstrong, Board Member of Severson Dells Education Foundation, adds, *“Ann has jumped into the position and carried on moving Severson Dells forward. She has improved the structure and organization considerably. Ann is working with other organizations in the area to map outdoor activities for K-12 students and find gaps that need to be filled.”*

Ann completed her Bachelor of Science in Earth Systems Science and Policy in 2005 from California State University at Monterey Bay and her Masters in Science Education from the University of Washington in 2011. Her background in nature education began with the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, CA in 2006 and continued as Director of Education for the Pacific Grove Museum for Natural History for three years before joining Severson Dells.

Ann is tasked with carrying out the mission of both Severson Dells Nature Center, a facility of the Forest Preserves



Ann Wasser

of Winnebago County, as well as the Severson Dells Education Foundation. She is responsible for fund development, coordinating volunteers, planning events, and maintaining the important relationships with students, parents, and school administrators as well as community members. Ann quickly integrated herself into the Severson Dells community. She joined task forces intended to coordinate and align nature education efforts in the region and reached out to other professionals through the Junior League of Rockford and Transform Rockford. Her work has also included initiatives to reach new constituents and efforts to locate new funding sources. She has

aggressively sought to understand why certain demographics do not utilize the nature center and how they can overcome demographic and cultural barriers to participation.

Daniel Huntley, who serves as the Board President of the Severson Dells Education Foundation shared the following, *“In the area it is not uncommon for non-profits and other organizations to jealously guard their share of the ‘market’ to try and hold on to what they perceive as ‘theirs’ as opposed to pursuing what might be best for the community as a whole. Ann is simply not interested in maintaining market share or in stealing market share. She has shared best practices. She has coordinated curriculum and has been unabashedly open about how nature centers and Severson Dells in particular can best operate with the idea of better serving the region’s nature education needs without regard to where Severson Dells Nature Center might fit in that picture. With regards to Ann’s community mindedness, I can only say that if I could find a thousand more of Ann for Severson Dells Education Foundation, I might be able to conquer the world of nature education. Ann is simply that good.”*

We are honored to acknowledge Ann’s leadership, professionalism, drive to constantly make positive changes and improvements, and willingness to step in when needed through the Outstanding New Leader Award and look forward to her continued success! Join us at the 2019 ANCA Evolve Summit at the Leadership Awards Ceremony, Wednesday 8/21 at 6:30 pm to honor and celebrate Ann! 🌿

Service Review

These Aren't My People

Connie O'Connor and Kristi Masterson, Cincinnati Nature Center

“I bet you can think of something that matters to you that you wish mattered to more people.” This is how Nina Simon opened a TED Talk called “The Art of Relevance”, which is also the name of her latest book.

“Why yes, Nina,” I thought as I watched on my laptop. “In fact I DO have something in mind: the whole nature/conservation thing.”

Like many people, I prefer to surround myself with others who share my interests and values. The people I work and volunteer with love nature and wildlife. They are comfortable outside and care about science, just like the people at an ANCA summit.

I can think of times and places, though, when I definitely felt like an outsider. I stood out, felt awkward, unwelcome, ignored, or misunderstood. The “in-group” might not even know when someone feels alienated. That’s because humans suffer from projection bias, a type of cognitive bias that involves **overestimating the degree to which other people agree with us**. People tend to assume that others think, feel, believe, and behave much like they do.

So while we may be telling people with different interests and values how important nature is for their children and why we should work hard to protect, restore and save natural spaces, these folks may be thinking “you are not my people, and I don’t trust you or care enough to give my time and attention.”

Nina Simon says that in order to sustain our organizations, we must find ways to matter to more people in our communities. When she worked as Executive Director of Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, she drastically increased attendance and revenue by adopting a guiding principal: To involve people in meaningful ways, you can’t just make programs FOR them. You have to involve them in their creation.



ANCA Summit Keynote, Nina Simon

We all know how hard it is to change an adult’s values and beliefs, because they are supported by emotional and social ties. So people are more likely to value and do what their friends and family value and do. To reach new audiences, we have to ask people who are different from ourselves what they value and believe. We have to ask them what matters and why, and from where they find meaning.

Humans yearn for connection through stories. When presented in a genuine, heartfelt way, we lean in. We learn, and empathize, and open up. We connect. The recent work of

Mark Stern found that the most highly rated interpretive programs with the most connected audiences relied on stories and emotion, not on facts.

So how do we begin the conversation where people from diverse backgrounds feel safe to share their perspectives and tell their stories? How do we design our programs so that participants can add something meaningful to them, feeling valued along the way? How can we make our organizations more relevant to more people?

As this year’s ANCA Summit Keynote, Nina Simon will discuss what has worked for her and others, and she’ll challenge you to think hard about how you can move beyond the choir to reach new audiences in a genuine, relevant way while serving your mission. Knowing Nina, your participation will be part of the answer. And just to mix things up, you’ll be seated at tables with some members of the art and museum community....so we can immediately begin to have dialogue with people of a different perspective. After the keynote, ANCA summit attendees will have the opportunity to join Nina for one of two small group facilitated sessions as well. We hope you will join us and add your voice to our exploration. 

Service Review

Meet the 2019 Evolve Summit Hosts and Plan Your Visit!

The 2019 ANCA Summit will take place at the Cincinnati Nature Center, August 20-24. We are excited for the fabulous selection of field trips, workshops, and facilitated discussions designed specifically for our members. We are also excited for the opportunity to explore this part of Ohio. Meet some of the Cincinnati Nature Center staff and learn about their favorite places to explore at the nature center and the surrounding area.

First, Congratulations to Jeff Corney who recently became the Executive Director of the nature center!

Dr. Corney assumed leadership of Cincinnati Nature Center in May 2019 after serving as Executive Director of The Wilderness Center in Wilmot, Ohio.



Dr. Jeff Corney

In that role, he oversaw nature and science educational programs as well as a diverse range of land conservation initiatives, including land trust, consulting forestry, and conservation burial operations. During that time, he also taught environmental studies courses at the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio.

"I am so honored to serve as the new Executive Director of Cincinnati Nature Center," says Corney. "It is truly exciting to be a part of such an outstanding nature center. I am eager to get to

work building on the fine traditions that have made this place so special, and envisioning how Cincinnati Nature Center can serve this community and protect our shared environment well into the future."

What is your favorite place to explore at Cincinnati Nature Center? My children provide the best, most honest opinions when it comes to this question. From our oldest, Tristan: "What I liked most was going to the Nature Center and taking a hike on one of the really nice trails." Our daughter, Adelyn: "I liked getting to see the Nature Center; it was so fun to feed Crush the turtle." And, from our youngest, Lukas, "I liked the PlayScape. The best part was the place with the logs; I got to help build the fort." Needless to say, all three are eager to join the Nature Center on their own terms as part of CincyNature Camp this summer! **What is your favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** It's too soon to tell! But so far, I can really say that Cincinnatians have really been the highlight of our new home. The warm welcomes have made this transition an easy one for my family and me.

Brittney Torres, Director of Human Resources

My favorite place when I'm hiking at Cincinnati Nature Center depends on who I am with. With my 6-year-old son, Jake, it is hiking down to Avey's Run. He loves looking for "things" in the water and telling me stories about

all the possibilities of who could live in the various habitats. If I am just out and about, my favorite view is the meadow



Brittney Torres

on Wildflower Trail as you are heading out to Far Ridge Trail. It is BEAUTIFUL as the sun starts to set! **My favorite thing to do in Cincinnati is actually two things.** First, is to take in the history and architecture of all the buildings, especially downtown. Cincinnati is so rich with all types of history and architecture you could spend days or even weeks exploring! And second, I love sitting atop Carew Tower and just enjoying the view (maybe even with a donut from Holtman's!).

Cory Christopher, Director of Conservation

My favorite hike at the nature center is to take the Edge Trail to Geology, and then make your way to Fox

Rock. It's the most beautiful place at the Nature Center. If you're a trail runner, Fernwood Trail is a great trail because it's got a good mix of hills and plateaus. I also enjoy a relatively new Cincinnati Nature Center tradition—seeing how far you can slide dollar bills under the door of the Conservation Director's office located on the second floor of the Center for Conservation. I encourage everyone to give it a try. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** This isn't fair—there is so much to do! I absolutely love Krohn Conservatory in Eden Park. I also love getting almond bear claws from Servatii and roaming around Hyde Park Square. And you can't leave the city without getting ice cream from Graeter's. Oh! And the Cincinnati Art Museum! Having a coffee in the museum's Terrace Café is one of the most relaxing things in the city (I was married in the courtyard!). If you really want a local experience, pick up lunch from Krishna Indian Restaurant and Carryout in Clifton, and then drive across the river for a picnic in Devou Park in Covington, Kentucky. You'll get the best view of the Cincinnati skyline from there.

Tisha Luthy, Early Childhood Program Manager/Preschool Director

My favorite place at Cincinnati Nature Center is Abner Hollow Cabin. I love to sit on the porch and think about



Tisha Luthy

the land and what it was like long ago. My favorite hike is the Fernwood Trail. It is usually pretty secluded and is beautiful when overlooking the creek. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** Two food places. The Wildflower uses locally grown food and the Valley Vineyards is located on the vineyard farm utilizing their own orchard.

Kristi Masterson, Director of Visitor Experience

My favorite place at Cincinnati Nature Center is the trail from the Herb Wall and then down to the Limestone Steps. I think it naturally celebrates the heritage of our place. The Herb Wall was created by the Krippendorfs and today is maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers. The path includes a limestone bridge, wall and steps that

were built by the Krippendorfs from limestone found in the stream at the bottom of the steps. It is a secret, historical little nook that makes me think of a time long ago. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** Cincinnati has a large German base and has a history of beer making – and drinking! The downtown Over-the-Rhine historical beer tours are amazing. They take you underground where tunnels existed to store kegs during before and during prohibition. They start at the historical Findlay Market and afterward, you can stop at for a beer tasting.

Maria Keri, Director of Finance

I love all our trails and ponds, but I especially like coming to work in a beautiful, well-cared for historic building surrounded by beauty. The presence of our two gorgeous homes—the Krippendorf Lodge and the Center for Conservation—among the woods makes



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Maria Keri

us extra special. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** Get a local beer! There is one everywhere you turn. Also go on the Over-the-Rhine brewery tour if you can.

Jake Sberna, Native Landscape Coordinator

One of my favorite activities at the nature center is going for a trail run. I do the same loop through the seasons and enjoy watching for new wildflowers blooming as the year progresses. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** Bike and brew along the little Miami Scenic Trail. Between Mariemont, Milford, and Loveland there's a beautiful bicycle trail with excellent scenery, beer and food along the way.

Marissa Tucker, Community Engagement Manager



Marissa Tucker

My favorite activity at Cincinnati Nature Center is dropping in on volunteers while their groups are working. Volunteers are integrated into nearly everything we do here and they provide such a positive energy, it's very uplifting to work alongside them, even if only for a few minutes. **My favorite thing to do in Cincy is listening to live music.** If the music is outdoors, that's even better! Cincinnati has such a diverse musical history you're able to track down good live music every day of the week.

Melissa Sabo, School Program Manager

There's a small stone bridge near the Herb Wall at the nature center that I find myself repeatedly drawn to. It



Melissa Sabo

feels secluded for moments I need to take a breath, and it offers a beautiful view down through the valley toward the stream. I often sit and watch chipmunks dance through the leaves and birds hopping through the trees. It's not a well-traveled location, even though it's close to the Visitor Center, so it's a nice place to sit and think if I don't have time to hike all the way to the stream. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** I'm probably not a great resource for this since I spend most of my time with my family in the backyard or at our Nature Play-Scape! If you have time to drive out to

the Edge of Appalachia Nature Preserve, there are some really beautiful hikes. I can't say I make it out regularly, but it is one of my favorite areas. Grabbing dinner at Bite in Milford would be my favorite close-by recommendation.

Doug Kinslow, IT Manager

I love to hike the trails that Carl Krippendorf created in the early 1900s around the nature center's



Doug Kinslow

Krippendorf Lodge. Seeing the stone lined trails, bridges and history that have spanned the test of time really amazes me. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** The Banks district in downtown Cincinnati is a wonderful place to visit for the spectacular river views, water fountains, walkways, gardens and entertainment.

Olivia Espinoza, Natural Areas Manager

Favorite thing to do at the nature center? I actually really enjoy hiking Edge Trail and Whitetail Trace. I feel both these trails in combination offer a chance to see so many different habitat types. For instance, Marsh Pond, which acts as a vernal pool, has fairy shrimp and salamander larvae. The prairie on Whitetail is small, but has so many different species of lovely wildflowers. And the overlook of Avey's Run on

Whitetail Trace is really beautiful. There is also a forested area on Whitetail Trace near the Redwing intersection that was heavily affected by Emerald Ash Borer and devastated the woods in this location. It is really interesting to see what an Ash tree dominated landscape looks like after an infestation. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** We love walking along the river to the “Purple People Bridge” into Newport. My family loves the Newport Aquarium and catching a bite to eat at Dewey’s Pizza after.

Joe Norton, Facilities Manager

I enjoy the nature center’s longer trails, or those that take longer to get to via other trails. My favorite is the Far Ridge Trail. I like the level of difficulty for that trail, including the elevation changes and the views along the



Joe Norton

trail. There’s also the new section that take you to Harmony Ridge. This is a great, peaceful location to hang out for a while and have lunch. **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** The Cincinnati Zoo is always my favorite, with the Newport Aquarium and Newport on the Levee area running a close second. The Cincinnati Zoo is a very “green” zoo. Beyond the obvious animal attractions, there are some great technological aspects on how they are conserving energy. At the Newport Aquarium and Levee there are

lots of great restaurants and bars to enjoy in the neighborhood after your aquarium visit, or you can grab take-out and eat on the waterfront.

Anne Horne, Public Engagement Manager

My favorite activity at Cincinnati Nature Center is maple sugaring. Our maple program includes everything that makes the nature center great—it is a winter weather outdoor program that engages young and old, members and volunteers—and the end product (maple syrup) is something handmade by the community, rich in tradition and comfort. **My favorite thing to do in Cincinnati is eat!** Cincinnati has a very interesting food heritage that has elements of traditional southern cooking and farm-to-table style food. There is quite a bit of craft beer, handmade spirits and house-roasted coffee to try too! Findlay Market, located in downtown Cincinnati, is Ohio’s oldest public market and is a great place to try out the local food and drink scene.

Connie O’Connor, Director of Education

My favorite trail is Whitetail Trace, because it has a nice mix of pond, meadow, and forest, just enough topography to be interesting, a view of the stream, and is not too far for a quick hike anytime. **One of my favorite things to do in Cincinnati is explore its many breweries.** I also love walking along the Ohio River at Smale Riverfront Park downtown.

Jeff Sperry, Director of External Relations

With its primordial aura, Lotus Pond is one of my favorite spots on our 1,000-acre-property at Rowe Woods. The majesty of the gigantic lotus leaves mixed in among duck-weed covered frogs and turtles provides a rare visual

experience. When you add in the croaking bullfrogs, it becomes a made-for-Omnimax event! **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** Absolutely go to one of the many Graeter’s scoop shops. The best ice cream in the world!

Marian Perkowski, Community Relations Manager

Birding at Long Branch Farm & Trails, our second location for members-only. Early in the morning, it feels like you’re away from it all! Then you can’t miss a stop at Holtman’s Donuts on the way home! **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** Anything along the river!

Laura Schmid, Membership Manager

I love to hike our awesome trails at the nature center. They are well-maintained and they take you through so many beautiful and diverse parts of our property. I especially love to challenge myself to hike all 15 of our trails with a Hike for Your Health passport. It helps me track which trails I’ve done and which trails I still need to hike. I can take notes along the way and log how long it took me to hike each trail. My son and I love to do this together! **Favorite thing to do in Cincinnati?** I love kayaking or canoeing the Little Miami River. It’s so peaceful and a great way to see wildlife and spend time with friends and family.

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From The Field:

Conserving Nature Through Civic Engagement

Ben Eldredge | Director of Civic Engagement & Land Stewardship
Cibolo Nature Center & Farm

Most nature centers foster appreciation for nature, provide nature-based education and encourage behavior that will conserve natural resources, wildlife and benefit humanity. We are involved in a long-game, and we are definitely making a difference.

However, in the face of climate change, ocean pollution, massive habitat losses, population growth, urbanization, and numerous other environmental impacts, we need to shorten that “long-game” as much as we can. Therefore, we need to up our game.

At the Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, we have discovered that civic engagement in local and regional policy can be an important tool in fulfilling our mission to *conserve natural resources through education and stewardship*. Alongside our education efforts and our stewardship of the nature center’s property, we believe that we must stand as leaders in the broader community to impact the environment well beyond our pristine 160 acres.

Nature centers are often torn about entering into any kind of activism or engagement in regional policy decisions that impact natural resources. While we know it’s important, we fear backlash from members, donors or municipal leaders if we take a stance on environmental policies. Subsequently, many local environmental issues are not adequately addressed.

Like many nature centers, the Cibolo Nature Center & Farm was hesitant to engage in civic engagement in policy until we discovered that we literally had no choice.

Through the years, we have achieved considerable success and recognition for our education, citizen science research and land stewardship. We have four beautiful and biodiverse habitats that provide an outdoor classroom, liv-



Ben Eldredge

ing laboratory, and natural habitats for wildlife. However, our nature center is not an island unto itself. It is situated on Cibolo Creek downstream from the City of Boerne.

Every rainstorm flushes trash and pollutants from the city into our nature center, where it harms wildlife and lines the stream with all manner of debris. Similarly, light pollution invades our natural area from every direction, disrupting nocturnal species while coating the starry sky in a milky veil of artificial light. None of this bodes well for the wildlife at our center, the health of our community, nor our center’s mission.

Our center is located in what is now the fifth fastest-growing county in the nation, turning our once sleepy

little town of Boerne, Texas into one of San Antonio's hottest bedroom communities. As private ranches are bulldozed into subdivisions and strip malls, our little oasis has witnessed even more light and water pollution from throughout the region.

We want visitors to have an enriching experience while modeling best practices for land stewardship, unspoiled by poor management upstream. We also want them to experience thriving natural habitats throughout our town, natural areas that calm and provide a sense of wonder.

"Belief without action is the ruin of the soul."

Edward Abby

In order to be good stewards of our nature center's natural resources, we have to influence outcomes at a regional scale. Otherwise our riparian areas will suffer and the night sky will become brighter. With this in mind, our center has chosen civic engagement in order to protect our park, while facilitating quality nature education and nature connection throughout our community.

Our approaches are multi-faceted, including cultivating relationships with political leaders, city staff, business leaders, regional organizations, groups of concerned citizens and local activists. We are often behind the scenes offering advice, connecting influencers, sourcing information and offering creative solutions.

Our approach is respectful, courteous, non-partisan, and sensible advocacy. We avoid anger, aggression, negative assumptions, accusations, personal attacks or negative comments, and we are never exasperated and desperate – (almost never) When public issues become heated, we sooth the tone as we pivot toward offering solutions. (By the way, we have made our share of mistakes, and learned from them.)

Being patient or impatient at the right moment adds clarity and power to our appeal. Our calming expertise, encouraging and supportive tenor, combined with relationship building and diplomacy has helped us foster relationships with allies, while also calming the perception that we are a deliberate threat to those with more narrow agendas.

To remove trash and pollutants from runoff, we promoted Low Impact Development (LID), also known as green infrastructure, which captures and filters storm-water. It wasn't a hard sell because our creek is a primary recreation feature in the city, so less trash in the creek is better for the community and LID is often more affordable than conventional storm water management.

Similarly, dark sky lighting is more attractive and better for security and human health than traditional outdoor lighting, while also benefiting wildlife. We led with a human-centric appeal and watched as city staff took the lead to implement a dark sky lighting ordinance.

Working as a key partner with a citizen-based advocacy group named *Inspire Boerne*, we helped to create and distribute a document to advocate for natural resource conservation in the city's master plan. Eighteen of these "Inspirations for the Boerne Master Plan" were incorporated into the master plan with potential for lasting change and can be found at www.InspireBoerne.org

We have formed watershed watch groups, spearheaded bond elections for natural areas, planned City and County parks and trails, participated in watershed management planning, advocated for recycling programs in the County, and entered into dialogue with developers of adjacent property to reduce negative environmental impacts.



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Residents and community leaders have come to realize that we are in this for the good of the community and that we are pursuing outcomes that are often mutually beneficial to citizens, businesses, and local government. As a result, we are joining decision makers at the table.

We now have a seat on the Unified Development Code committee, helping to shape the development rules for our city. This will likely include widening stream setbacks to preserve habitat and protect environmental services, while incentivizing the installation of walking trails bordering these setbacks to enable more nature exposure and improve the walkability and bike-ability of our city.

Impressed by our efforts in the community, the mayor of Boerne has recruited one of our staff members to be on the “Mayor’s Advisory Group,” providing an opportunity to influence the mayors political objectives.

The Chamber of Commerce has placed our staff on the “Government Affairs Committee,” through which we are seeking to implement the Texas Property Assessed Clean Energy Authority. This program will incentivize

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- Katie Watson, Pajarito Environmental Education Center

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businesses to retrofit their buildings to be more energy efficient and install solar panels, thereby reducing greenhouse gases.

The local groundwater conservation district has appointed a member of our staff to its board to help shape development rules that impact groundwater and the recharge zone.

We founded the *Cibolo Conservancy Land Trust*, which has promoted conservation easements and the creation of city and county bonds to purchase parks and natural areas. We are also encouraging citizen efforts to create a County Strategic Land Use Plan that will help guide development away from environmentally sensitive areas.

Education remains a hallmark of these efforts. Workshops are offered to the community with invitations

sent to specific regional leaders. Social media is leveraged to inform online groups about issues and solutions. We submit newspaper articles and cultivate relationships with news staff, who look to us for information about environmental issues. Television and radio are similarly leveraged to inform the public about local environmental concerns and solutions.

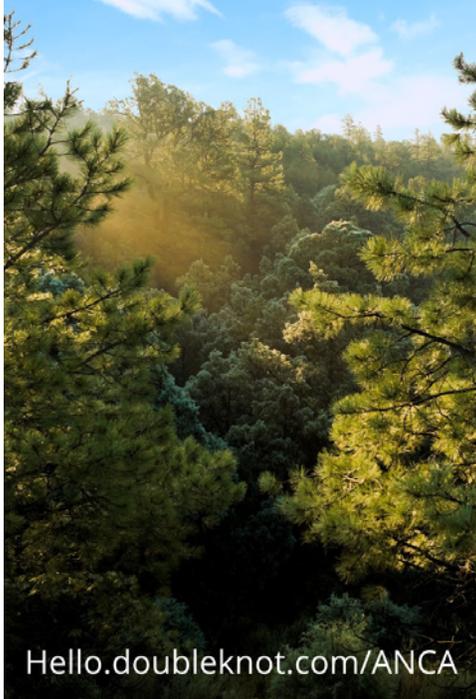
Through our book, *The Nature Center Book*, we serve as a model for other communities to create nature centers where visitors can fall in love with the local landscape and be inspired to participate in local conservation efforts. This local activism can empower a region to be more environmentally responsible and cultivate a nature-based community!

Our goal is to inspire other nature centers to take similar actions. At the

2019 ANCA Summit in Cincinnati we will be offering a workshop and discussion entitled “Community Environmental Stewardship: Advocating for Local Change”. Hope to see you there! 🌱



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Feet On The Ground:



Recent & Upcoming ANCA Activities Around the World

See all these events on our online Event Calendar [here](#)

April 12, 2019: 32 ANCA New England Region Members met at the Sharon Audubon Center in Sharon, CT and



May 20, 2019: The ANCA Minnesota Region met at the Harriet Alexander Nature Center in Roseville, MN to discuss outreach programming and share upcoming events and projects. Their next meeting is scheduled for **September 5, 2019** at Gale Wood Farms in Minnetrista, MN to debrief and share resources from the ANCA Summit, share upcoming events/projects, and participate in a facilitated discussion around Titles, Salaries, Staffing Structure, and Job Descriptions.

May 30, 2019: The ANCA Michigan Region met at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings, MI. Close to 80 people were in attendance for Our Common Ground: A Gathering of Michigan's Nature Centers and Land Conservancies, and to hear Chris Lampen-Crowell, CEO of Gazelle Sports,



discussed Building Community Engagement through nature centers with Erin Kelly, Education Manager at Mass Audubon's Boston Nature Center.



deliver the Keynote address, Increasing the Impact of Outdoor Active Experiences. Other breakout sessions included citizen science, research in natural areas, an overview of relevant state policy issues, mindfulness, and an open discussion of staff benefits.



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June 26-28, 2019: Attend the 2019 Audubon Convention. Join Audubon in Milwaukee for their biennial convention designed to bring together Audubon's vast network of dedicated chapter, state, center, national, and international leaders. This can't-miss event will feature an array of inspiring speakers, in-depth workshops and discussions, exciting field trips, and the camaraderie and networking opportunities that only the Audubon Convention can provide. More information [here](#).

August 20-24, 2019: Register for the ANCA Evolve Summit at the Cincinnati Nature Center in Cincinnati, OH! Go [here](#) for more information.



evolve
ANCA SUMMIT 2019

August 20-24
Cincinnati Nature Center, Milford, Ohio

September 15, 2020: 2020 ANCA Heartland Summit at the Indian Creek Nature Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Check back [here](#) for more details.

January 14-19, 2021: 2021 Residential Environmental Learning Center (RELC) Gathering at The Ecology School in Saco, ME. Check back [here](#) for more details. 

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