

*Cibolo Nature Center & Farm and Carolyn Chipman Evans*

The secret dream of many nature center leaders is to be able to start their own center. Imagine being able to begin from scratch, create a fresh educational experience, finally have the perfect number of properly sized classrooms (indoor and outdoor), and enough storage. Oh, the dream of enough storage!

Most of us, however, won't have that opportunity. We will work hard for and love the centers we have inherited from other founders. That's not such a bad deal! But to give birth to your own center....well that's a dream, one that Carolyn Chipman Evans realized in Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, in Boerne, TX.

Carolyn and Cibolo Nature Center are well known in the ANCA community. Even more so since she received the 2014 ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award for her 26 years of working to preserve a wild stretch of Cibolo Creek develop a model nature center, and then branch out to promoting nature centers around the world. During her time with ANCA, Carolyn has served on the ANCA Board of Directors and participated in ANCA Peer Consults to other nature centers. The interactions with fellow nature center directors were important for her professional growth and that of Cibolo Nature Center.



“The Cibolo Nature Center and Farm has been my education. And ANCA provided the teachers I needed. This generous family helped me become a competent leader, and helped our nature center become a real, relevant, and successful place. Our friends at ANCA understood the challenges, and offered words of wisdom, support, advice and encouragement. It is our collective knowledge that makes ANCA work. And it is our collective knowledge that we tried to capture in the book we wrote, *The Nature Center Book: How to Create and Nurture a Nature Center in Your Community*.” Without ANCA there still would be no how-to book. The ANCA family is a creative bunch, full of great ideas and the generosity to share them.”

Under Carolyn's leadership, Cibolo Nature Center & Farm has accumulated a net worth of \$5.7 million with a \$1.6 million annual budget. Through the years, Cibolo added a new learning center and acquired additional lands through the Cibolo Conservation Corridor initiative. Realizing the dream of a thriving organization, Carolyn hasn't stopped growing. The nature center movement has been promoted across the globe as a result of Carolyn's efforts. As co-author of *The Nature Center Book*, she has traveled to Japan and China to promote the development of nature centers. Her tireless efforts benefit the entire nature center community through increased global recognition, education, and mentorship. In turn, those efforts also cast a spotlight on Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, increasing its reach and growth.

Carolyn, Cibolo Nature Center & Farm, and the nature center community are a perfect example of how people and organizations can support and grow each other through continuous feedback loops generated by creativity and passion. In turn, the ripples created fan out across our globe to help others find a sense of place and kinship with their local natural environment.