

*ANCA fosters a network of professionals who support each other toward a common mission of connecting people with nature. Read about the professional relationship between mentor Cynthia Harrell and mentee John DeFillipo and how John has achieved professional success as Executive Director of the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center near Seagoville, Texas.*

“John DeFillipo is my success story! He worked for me as a seasonal naturalist at our residential, environmental learning center. He left Crow’s Neck to pursue a slightly different hands-on teaching experience, but we never lost touch and he always knew how much my association with ANCA meant to me both professionally and personally,” writes Cynthia.

When John was able, he started attending the yearly ANCA Summits. Now that he’s a full-time ED, he understands the value of being an active member in the organization. Today John exudes confidence and his passion for the center he helped develop in 2010. The center offers educational and research opportunities in water and wildlife management, as well as wetland systems.

“Even though I had fourteen years of experience in environmental education and a business administration background, I was not fully prepared for all that came with being a brand new director and building a new facility all at the same time. I could not have done it without ANCA,” John says.

“I was introduced to ANCA by a former employer and mentor, Cynthia Harrell. When I attended my first ANCA Summit as a lead naturalist, I knew that I had found like-minded people. Cynthia and ANCA gave me the confidence to try my hand as an executive director,” he recalls.

“I found ANCA resources exceptionally helpful. Reading *Search for an Extraordinary Leadership* provided me a good understanding of what it meant to be a director. I used that information as a template to help me land the job here at John Bunker Sands Wetland Center.”

“Once I became director, I relied on the *Directors Guide to Best Practices* for handling day to day situations. My staff and I use ANCA’s website resource page for ideas in crafting many essential work documents. When it came to planning exhibits for our new building, we turned to ANCA’s two exhibit monographs for good reliable information.”

John goes on to tout ANCA members, “They are so open to listening and sharing ideas. The formal, as well as the informal, mentorships I have formed over the years have been invaluable as our nature center moves through different phases of growth.”

“ANCA’s collective expertise and advice on everything from fundraising, programming, exhibits, marketing, human resources to board development, has helped us create a modern nature center for the 21st century.”

