

Volunteer Manual

2022



**nature
forward**

Connecting people and nature
in the Capital Region

This manual provides information about the policies, procedures, and approach to Nature Forward volunteer programs. Volunteers and staff are expected to be familiar with its content.

Volunteers with Nature Forward must agree in writing to abide by these standards of conduct and safety. Failure to comply with Nature Forward policies and standards of conduct may result in the termination of your volunteer relationship with us.

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WELCOME

Thank you for choosing to donate your time to Nature Forward. Our organization was founded by volunteers and continues to rely on their energy to serve its mission. We know there are many worthy causes and exciting opportunities available in our region. We deeply appreciate that you have chosen to engage in our community of nature-lovers. Together we can create a larger and more diverse community of people who treasure the natural world and work to preserve it.

MISSION

Nature Forward inspires residents of the greater Washington, DC region to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment through outdoor experiences, education, and advocacy.

VISION

Nature Forward seeks to create a larger and more diverse community of people who treasure the natural world and work to preserve it.

I.D.E.A.

Nature Forward strives to be a model of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in all ways feasible for us.

Inclusion at Nature Forward means fostering an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected and is invited to participate in the organization's activities, including decision-making.

Diversity at Nature Forward means the organization reflects the full representation and participation of all identities and experiences including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, origin, education, religious beliefs, language, and abilities.

Equity at Nature Forward means the fair allocation of resources and just treatment of all people and partners who participate in our programs and operations.

Accessibility at Nature Forward means the thoughtful and intentional removal of barriers and creation of pathways that allow for participation in Nature Forward programs and operations.

As the population of the Washington, DC region has become increasingly diverse, the opportunity to add new voices, viewpoints and experiences to the work of Nature Forward has grown. As a result, Nature Forward aims to better reflect the rich diversity of our region in the composition of our members, staff, board, volunteers, and program participants.

HISTORY

Founded in 1897, Nature Forward (formerly the Audubon Naturalist Society) is the oldest independent environmental organization in the DC region. It has been at the forefront of conservation victories such as the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the creation of the C&O Canal National Park, the preservation of Dyke Marsh, and the protection of pristine Ten Mile Creek. Through the years, Nature Forward has been a community of environmental thought leaders and conservation activists, including such luminaries as Theodore Roosevelt, Roger Tory Peterson, and Rachel Carson. Today, Nature Forward stewards two nature sanctuaries in the DC region comprising more than 100 acres. We reach more than

9,000 children annually with our education programs and offer adults a rich variety of natural history classes and local outings. In 1993, Nature Forward launched a water quality monitoring program that trains scores of volunteers, who monitor more than 50 streams in the region. We also help organize networks of civic and environmental groups to fight for local environmental protection, with an emphasis on human health & access to nature, biodiversity and habitats, the climate crisis, and sustainable land use.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

Volunteers are entitled to:

- A safe, fun, and collegial volunteer experience
- Appropriate orientation, training, and supervision
- Meaningful job assignments
- Clear guidance, direction and feedback
- Effective use of their time
- Opportunities to provide input into the volunteer program
- Recognition for their contributions

Volunteers who donate 20 hours annually receive a 20% discount in the Audubon Naturalist Shop.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers shall:

- View the [volunteer training video](#) and complete and submit the [post-training survey](#)
- Support the mission of Nature Forward
- Represent Nature Forward in a positive and professional manner
- Adhere to Nature Forward volunteer policies
- Be reliable
- Work cooperatively with other volunteers and staff
- Record and track their hours using [Volgistics](#)
- Be mindful of other Woodend users

Volunteers shall respect access at Woodend Sanctuary during times it has been reserved for a private event. Nature Forward rents Woodend Sanctuary to a variety of clients. Those clients have contractual expectations. In the event the property is rented, volunteers shall not enter the Nature Forward mansion outside of shop hours. They shall enter and exit only through the Naturalist Shop and use the back stairs to access upper floors.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COMMUNICATIONS

Primary communications regarding the volunteer program (notice of opportunities, schedule changes, trainings, etc.) are in the form of electronic messages. Active volunteers shall login to [Volgistics](#) to see their schedule and other volunteer openings, change their contact information, and track their service hours.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Nature Forward relies heavily on the support of volunteers trained through the MD Master Naturalist program. We are proud of our partnership with the University of Maryland Extension and have been a MD Master Naturalist Host Facility since 2011. MD Master Naturalists are highly trained volunteers who are sought out by staff because of their knowledge of MD Natural History and their commitment to service. All volunteers are strongly encouraged to consider Master Naturalist training. More information about that program may be found at <https://natureforward.org/master-naturalist/>.

Nature Forward offers a variety of volunteer opportunities. Details about each volunteer assignment can be found on the following pages.

[Environmental Education](#)

[Conservation](#)

[Restoration](#)

[Development](#)

[Administrative](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Afterschool Program Naturalists

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Nature Forward Afterschool Nature Clubs bring school children outside to “unplug and play” in nature. Seasonal nature topics covered may include animal habitats, watersheds, plant power, amazing insects, and more!

Requirements:

- Enjoy working with children
- Patient and fun-loving
- Some knowledge of natural history
- Background check and additional training may be required.

Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, standing and/or walking for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist Nature Forward staff to engage kids in fun, action-packed games and activities while building background knowledge.
- Assist Nature Forward staff with classroom prep and clean up.

Features:

- Helping young people connect with nature
- Learning environmental education techniques by shadowing staff
- Finding out what lives under logs in schoolyards
- Leadership opportunities available for Master Naturalists with teaching experience
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to: Denis Perez, Director of Youth Programs denis.perez@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Volunteers are asked to commit to an entire session. Sessions at schools in Montgomery County run once a week for 6-8 weeks in Fall, Winter, and Spring. Individual classes are one hour long.

Camp Program Naturalists

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Nature Forward Summer Camps provide outdoor fun and discovery for campers ages 4 to 17.

- Games, hikes, songs and lots of great camp traditions
- Environmental education in a natural setting
- Hands-on activities and investigations

Requirements: Enjoy working with children, patient and fun-loving. Some knowledge of natural history is a plus. Background check may be required. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, standing

and/or walking for extended periods of time. Leadership opportunities available for Master Naturalists with teaching experience.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist Nature Forward staff to engage kids in fun, action-packed games and activities while building background knowledge
- Assist Nature Forward staff with classroom prep and clean up

Features:

- Enjoy helping young people connect with nature
- Learn environmental education techniques by shadowing staff
- Spend your day mostly outside at Woodend
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to: Denis Perez, Director of Youth Programs denis.perez@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: During summer, volunteers are asked to commit to a week-long session or on-call full day sessions. During the school year, we offer one-day “school’s out” camps. Camp days are generally from about 9:00am to 5:00pm and volunteers are asked to commit for at least 3 hours of the session.

Preschool Assistants

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: The Audubon Nature Preschool offers nature-based, hands-on preschool programs for children 5 years of age and younger. The program builds on children's inherent curiosity about the world by using hands-on, nature-based activities to foster social, physical, and academic skill development. Our preschool teachers plan age-appropriate activities that integrate science, math, literacy, and the arts while encouraging cooperative learning and social competence.

Requirements: Enjoy working with children, patient and fun-loving. Experience with early childhood education. Natural history knowledge helpful. Physical requirements include ability to work outdoors in all weather conditions, bending, kneeling, standing and/or walking for extended periods of time. Background check is required.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist Nature Forward staff with classroom prep and clean up
- Work one-on-one with children in classroom projects
- Accompany class on outdoor explorations
- Background check is required

Features:

- Enjoy connecting our youngest audience to nature
- Learn education techniques by shadowing staff

Reports to: Rose Brusaferrro, Preschool Director, rose.brusaferrro@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Volunteers will ideally commit to visiting the preschool on a regular day of the week for either the morning or afternoon program (3-4 hours weekly).

Salad Science Leaders and Assistants

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: This award-winning program is a partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools and has created elementary school gardens in previously underutilized courtyard areas. Students in the program grow their own salad greens for six weeks while learning about plant science and nutrition through a variety of hands-on lessons taught by Nature Forward educators.

Requirements: Enjoy working with children, patient and fun-loving. Some knowledge of edible gardening and/or nutrition is a plus. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, standing and/or walking for extended periods of time. Background check may be required. Leadership opportunities for Master Naturalists with teaching experience.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist Nature Forward staff with planting days, as well as harvest and salad parties at local elementary schools
- Assist Nature Forward staff with classroom prep and clean up
- Leadership roles available for Master Naturalists with teaching experience

Features:

- Enjoy helping young people learn about gardening and nutrition
- Learn environmental education techniques by shadowing staff
- Enjoy a healthy salad
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to: Jeff Chandler, GreenKids Director jeff.chandler@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Volunteers will ideally commit to visiting an elementary school for both the planting session, as well as the harvest and salad party about 6 weeks later. The programs on each of these days can vary from about 3 hours to about 5 hours, depending on participation.

Woodend Field Trip Naturalists

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Our educational programs encourage students in public schools, private schools, homeschool groups and scouts to learn by interacting with nature. Our programs foster natural curiosity, enrich classroom experiences and help youngsters connect with their environment.

Requirements: Enjoy working with children, patient and fun-loving. Knowledge of natural history. Background check may be required. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, standing and/or walking for extended periods of time. Leadership opportunities for Master Naturalists with teaching experience.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist Nature Forward staff with themed nature hikes at Woodend
- Assist Nature Forward staff with preparation of program materials

Features:

- Enjoy helping young people connect with nature
- Learn environmental education techniques by shadowing staff
- Watch kids make the most amazing nature observations that you totally missed
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to:

Brenna Houck, Youth Programs Naturalist brenna.houck@natureforward.org and Denis Perez, Director of Youth Programs denis.perez@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Programs will be posted to Volgistics as they are scheduled by schools. Most programs run for two hours or less, and take place between 9am and 3pm. Ideally, volunteers will sign up to help with several programs per school year, in order to make good use of investments in orientation, training and background checks.

GreenKids Assistant

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Our award-winning GreenKids program fosters environmental literacy in local public schools through hands-on activities that support the Maryland Green Schools Program.

Requirements: Enjoy working with children, patient and fun-loving. Background check is required. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, standing and/or walking for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist Nature Forward staff in delivering GreenKids lessons and activities at schools.

Features:

- Enjoy helping young people connect with nature.
- Learn environmental education techniques by shadowing staff.
- Help schools working toward Maryland Green School certification.
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours.

Reports to: Jeff Chandler, GreenKids Director jeff.chandler@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Programs will be posted to Volgistics as they are scheduled by schools. Most programs run for two hours or less, and take place between 9am and 3pm. Ideally, volunteers will sign up to help with several programs per school year, in order to make good use of investments in orientation, training and background checks.

CONSERVATION

Conservation Advocates and Researchers

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: The Conservation Program focuses on four priority campaign areas:

- Human Health & Access to Nature
- Biodiversity & Habitats;
- Climate Crisis
- Sustainable Land Use.

On both sides of the Potomac, our advocates testify at public hearings, attend planning board and county council meetings, and are, in effect, the eyes and ears of our members, who are concerned with maintaining a healthy environment for people and nature through policy, advocacy, community engagement, training, and organizing.

Our expertise and experience on water quality and land use issues makes Nature Forward a potent force on redevelopment and nature protection-related challenges facing our region. Our fast-growing expertise on climate change, transportation, and environmental justice issues makes us a leader in these areas as well.

Research volunteers typically explore a new or evolving area of regulation, policy, or land use in the region, helping the Nature Forward Advocacy staff understand emerging issues and be prepared to act on them. As it has from the beginning, conservation advocacy will be an honored part of Nature Forward's mission far into the future.

Requirements: Passion for environmental protection, research, and writing skills.

Key Responsibilities:

- Conservation advocates work on individual or small group projects with our Conservation Director and/or one of our three Conservation Advocate staff members (MD, DC, VA). They may conduct online and/or in-person research and analysis or help write fact sheets, testimonies, letters to the editor, and comment letters. They may help write blog posts or articles for the Naturalist Quarterly about our Conservation activities or to highlight community successes.
- Conservation advocates may become community leaders themselves, and with the support of Nature Forward attend or testify at hearings, help organize, attend, or even lead rallies, and more!
- Conservation advocates lead and assist staff members during community outreach events located around the DMV. Examples include: staffing an information table, nature walks, watershed education activities, and interpretation (if bilingual).

Features:

- Leverage your skills and Nature Forward resources to make a difference in a cause that matters to you.
- Join a community of other conservation-minded people.

- Learn about environmental legislation, climate change, stormwater & green infrastructure, sustainable land-use policy, environmental justice, and other topics
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours (except if engaged in lobbying)

Reports to: Eliza Cava, Conservation Director eliza.cava@natureforward.org and/or Conservation Advocates staff members (MD, DC, VA)

Time Commitment: Conservation advocates typically work on individualized projects. Often, they do research and writing at home while meeting periodically with the Conservation Director and/or Conservation Advocate staff plus joining bimonthly meetings of Conservation advocates to share insights and ideas for projects. Time commitments range from a few hours per month to a few hours per week. Projects can be short- or long-term. Availability of projects varies. Volunteers track estimated hours in [Volgistics](#) but assignments are distributed in person or via email and often use Google Drive/Docs for work coordination.

Watershed Outreach Assistants and Leaders

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Our watershed outreach programming and Creek Critters® smartphone app supports Nature Forward Conservation and Environmental Education Programs in engaging people of all ages (e.g., families, kids, adults) around issues of water quality and stream health. The app walks users through finding and identifying macroinvertebrates living in streams and generating Stream Health Reports based on their findings. Nature Forward staff introduce people to water quality monitoring and the Creek Critters app at engagement events at streams and in festival settings. Engagement events are hosted by Nature Forward and Nature Forward partner organizations.

Requirements: Introductory course on water quality monitoring. Proficiency with the Creek Critters app. Physical requirements include carrying supplies (up to 15 lbs.) and bending, as well as walking and standing in shallow water across rocky creek beds.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist Nature Forward staff with demonstrating app use at events
- Assist event participants with stream macroinvertebrate collections
- Assist Nature Forward staff with materials prep and clean up
- Leadership roles available for Master Naturalists and Stream Monitors.

Features:

- Enjoy connecting people with nature and educating them about water quality
- Learn about really cool creek critters and their habitat needs
- Learn environmental education techniques by shadowing staff
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours
- Trainings may count for Master Naturalist advanced training
- Leadership opportunities for Stream Monitors and Master Naturalists

- Spend your day out in a local stream

Reports to: Gregg Trilling, Creek Critters Program Manager gregg.trilling@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Programs will be posted to [Volgistics](#) as they are scheduled with partner organizations. Most programs run for two to three hours, and often take place on Saturdays and Sundays.

Stream Monitors

Minimum age: 18; children may monitor with a parent/guardian

Program Purpose: The Nature Forward Water Quality Monitoring Program is one of the largest and longest-running community science programs in the country. Since 1993, the program has operated throughout Montgomery County and in parts of the District of Columbia. There is also one site in Howard County and two new sites in Prince George's County, for a total of approximately 30 sites. Teams of volunteer monitors visit these sites to conduct a habitat assessment and to collect and identify benthic macroinvertebrates to the taxonomic level of family. These small organisms, which dwell on the substrate and exhibit a wide range of sensitivity to pollutants and other effects on the stream, help us determine the health of the stream.

Requirements (team member): Intro to Stream Science class and field session or prior experience with approval.

Requirements (team leader): Introductory Stream Science classes and Advanced Macroinvertebrate Identification classes; field class or prior experience with approval; must pass an identification certification quiz each year prior to March 30th.

Key Responsibilities:

- Team members have variable roles depending on experience
- Tasks include in-stream collection, organism identification, data recording, and equipment management
- Team leaders are responsible for following quality assurance protocols, identifying organisms, recording data, scheduling monitoring dates with their teams, and handling equipment (i.e., picking it up and returning to Woodend). These responsibilities may be split among co-leaders as long as at least one team leader is certified in identification and QA/QC protocols.

Features:

- Enjoy the company of other nature enthusiasts
- Spend time outdoors in a beautiful setting
- Learn from your team about aquatic habitats and macroinvertebrates
- Help with efforts to advocate for protection of our local streams
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to: Gregg Trilling, Water Quality Coordinator gregg.trilling@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Most teams monitor their sites 4 times annually. Schedules vary. Monitoring visits range from about 2-5 hours.

Restoration

Stewardship

Habitat Stewards

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Teams help Nature Forward to achieve the restoration goals of the Woodend 50-year Master Plan. This includes removing invasive plants, planting native plants, pursuing stormwater management projects, and maintaining trails. The work is varied, but always out in nature!

Requirements: MD Master Naturalist, Natural History Field Studies, Weed Warrior or demonstrated knowledge of native and non-native plant species preferred. Training is available. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, lifting, digging, walking on uneven terrain, and standing for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Use tools responsibly and return them to the shed
- Cut back or dig out invasive plant species targeted by team leader
- Dispose of invasive plant cuttings, fruits and seeds in dumpster to avoid spread
- Install native plantings as instructed by team leader

Features:

- Enjoy the company of other nature enthusiasts
- Spend time outdoors in a beautiful setting
- Learn from your team about native and invasive plants, stormwater management and more
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours
- Occasional training may count for Master Naturalist advanced training

Reports to: Bradley Simpson, Restoration Manager bradley.simpson@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Teams meet for two hours each work session. Regularly scheduled work sessions are currently on weekdays. The schedule is maintained on Volgistics.

Garden Stewards

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: The Learning Garden at Woodend serves as a demonstration both of homeowner-scale edible gardening and composting. It also shows parents and others ways to engage children in outdoor work. The Blair Native Plant Garden consists of native plants that can be seen readily in the wild in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, specifically in Maryland, Virginia, and the eastern West Virginia panhandle. It is a demonstration to the public of the feasibility and value of native plant gardening. Native plants are adapted to local soil and climate conditions and have evolved to develop mutually beneficial relationships with local wildlife. Carefully planned native plant gardens require less maintenance, use fewer resources, and offer appropriate food and shelter for wildlife. They create habitat for birds, small mammals, reptiles and insects including important pollinators.

Requirements: Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, or demonstrated knowledge of gardening with native and/or edible plants. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, moderate lifting and standing for extended periods of time. Background check may be required.

Key Responsibilities:

- Staff “open house” hours in the garden during Nature Forward camps
- Help supervise children in garden tasks like weeding and harvesting
- Share any knowledge you have of special gardening methods like “permaculture”
- Maintain native garden under direction of team leader. Tasks include weeding, pruning, transplanting, and general maintenance tasks

Features:

- Enjoy the company of other gardening enthusiasts
- Spend time outdoors in a beautiful setting
- Learn from your team about gardening techniques
- Witness moments of youthful discovery (“That’s an artichoke plant?!”).
- Help Nature Forward maintain its outdoor native plant “classroom”
- Earn Master Gardener or Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to: Alice Sturm, Garden Program Manager alice.sturm@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: One to three hours weekly in the growing season.

Meadow Stewards

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: With the goal of providing habitat for a greater diversity of species, in 2013 Nature Forward began restoring a large section of its meadow adjacent to the Woodend Sanctuary entrance drive off Jones Mill Road. In 2014, the restored meadow came to life with a succession of native plants blooming among grasses, hosting a variety of fauna. Volunteers and staff continue to maintain the area, removing invasive plants, inventorying species, and mowing in February and May. The meadow improves habitat quality at Woodend and serves as a demonstration for home gardeners.

Requirements: MD Master Naturalist or demonstrated knowledge of native and non-native plant species. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, walking through uneven terrain, and standing for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Cut back or dig out invasive plant species targeted by team leader
- Participate in sessions to inventory plants and pollinators in the meadow

Features:

- Enjoy the company of other nature enthusiasts
- Spend time outdoors in a beautiful setting
- Learn from your team about native and invasive plants

- Earn Master Naturalist service hours.
- Occasional training may count for Master Naturalist advanced training

Reports to: Alice Sturm, Garden Program Manager alice.sturm@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: This team meets every other Wednesday during the growing season for two hours.

Community Science

Woodend Community Scientists

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: In order to track our progress in achieving the restoration goals of the Woodend 50-year Master Plan, teams will conduct surveys of forest and meadow habitats, as well as wildlife species richness and abundance.

Requirements: Master Naturalist Certification or other background in ecological science. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, walking through uneven terrain, and standing for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Use tools responsibly and return them to the Restoration Manager
- Learn and follow survey protocols
- Record data in the field and deliver it in appropriate format

Features:

- Company of other nature enthusiasts
- Time outdoors in a beautiful setting
- Knowledge of ecological survey techniques
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours
- Occasional training may count for Master Naturalist advanced training

Reports to: Bradley Simpson, Restoration Manager bradley.simpson@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Teams typically meet for two hours each work session.

Interpretation

Walks at Woodend Naturalist Tour Leaders

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: This fee-based set of three tours highlights the Natural Habitats, Gardens and Trees of Woodend in 90-minute to two-hour tours. Tours happen on weekdays and some weekends.

Requirements: Master Naturalist, Natural History Field Studies or comparable experience, interpretation training will be provided through an on-the-job and leader-shadowing training program.

Key Responsibilities: Lead interpretive tours of Woodend Sanctuary.

Features:

- Company of other nature enthusiasts
- Opportunity to develop interpretation skills
- Time outdoors in a beautiful setting
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours
- Occasional training may count for Master Naturalist advanced training

Reports to: Bradley Simpson, Restoration Manager bradley.simpson@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Teams typically meet for two hours each work session.

Beginning Birding Walk Leaders

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: This free program introduces novices to the pleasures of birding, as well as to the Woodend Nature Sanctuary

Requirements: Experienced birders who enjoy interacting with the public. Physical requirements include standing and walking for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Meet program participants at Woodend
- Demonstrate use of binoculars
- Lead walk around the sanctuary noting birds by field marks and calls

Features:

- Helping people connect with nature
- Spending part of your day on a walk around Woodend
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to:

Bradley Simpson, Restoration Manager bradley.simpson@natureforward.org and designated volunteer leader.

Time Commitment: Volunteers sign up to lead 1-2 walks per season. Walks are on Saturday mornings from 9am to 10am.

Family Program Leaders

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Led by our Master Naturalists, these programs encourage local families to make space in their busy schedules to enjoy spending time together outdoors. Each hike will have a unique and exciting natural history theme. Programs are appropriate for family members of all ages.

Requirements: Master Naturalist certification. Enjoy working with children, patient and fun-loving. Physical requirements include bending, standing and/or walking for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Become familiar with existing family program lesson plans and materials
- Work with volunteer team leader to develop new materials
- Meet program participants at Woodend
- Lead or co-lead themed nature walk at Woodend

Features:

- Enjoy helping families connect with nature
- Learn environmental education techniques by shadowing fellow Master Naturalists
- Get to know the hidden secrets of Woodend Sanctuary
- Earn Master Naturalist service hours

Reports to: Bradley Simpson, Restoration Manager bradley.simpson@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Programs run the first Saturday of each month from 9-10 am. Volunteers shall arrive 15 minutes early to meet participants. Ideally, volunteers will commit to leading or co-leading a minimum of 3-4 programs per year.

DEVELOPMENT

Woodend Events Assistants

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Events at our Woodend Sanctuary include fundraisers, author talks, annual membership meeting, and special programming.

Requirements: Enjoy working with the public, patient and fun-loving. Background check required. Physical requirements include bending, kneeling, moderate lifting, climbing stairs and standing and/or walking for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

Volunteer roles for events vary:

- Some volunteers help with mansion decorations
- Some volunteers help with food setup, serving and clean up
- Some volunteers help with silent auction planning and execution
- Some volunteers help with preparing event materials in advance

Features:

- Volunteers often have time to enjoy the events themselves
- There is often a meal or treats involved!
- Enjoy working with a community of like-minded people.

Reports to: Corinna Fisk, Development Assistant corinna.fisk@natureforward.org

Time Commitment: Event shifts are typically around 3-4 hours. Volunteers who help with event planning may spend an additional 4-6 hours planning and organizing.

Mailing Group

Minimum age: 18

Program Purpose: Although we live in a digital age, Nature Forward still sends some literature and correspondence by traditional post.

Requirements: Enjoy envelope stuffing and good company! Physical requirements include climbing stairs and sitting for extended periods of time.

Key Responsibilities:

- Collate literature
- Stuff envelopes
- Add mailing labels

Features:

- There are always treats!
- Enjoy the warm company of other nature lovers

Reports to: Loree Trilling, Database Administrator loree.trilling@natureforward.org.

Time Commitment: This group meets about 4 times per year for about two hours.

ADMINISTRATIVE

In addition to the above opportunities our volunteers also are encouraged to help with other assignments as needed. Including, but not limited to the below.

Communications

Volunteers are encouraged to submit high-quality, sharply focused images of native species along with a detailed caption including date, location and name of the photographer (do not submit other photographers' work without permission). Captions should also include interesting information about the subject of the image. These "Nature Nuggets" may be used on our social media accounts, or our print media.

Contact: Vince Robinson, Communications Director vince.robinson@natureforward.org

Board and Committee Members

Our volunteers are encouraged to participate at all levels of our organization. We encourage volunteers to consider service on one of our board committees and to become members of our Board of Directors.

Contact: Corina Fisk, Development Director corinna.fisk@natureforward.org.

SCOUT PROJECTS

Minimum age: 16 with adult supervision

Program Purpose: Nature Forward has had several Scouts complete projects as part of their advancement within scouting organizations. From building a boardwalk to removing invasive plant species, scouts provide a level of competence and skill as well as a committed team of volunteers who

provide valuable service to Nature Forward. Nature Forward maintains a list of approved projects for scouts to complete. While being completed, these projects are closely monitored by Nature Forward staff.

Requirements: Scouts must contact the Volunteer Coordinator at least six-months prior to their anticipated project completion date. Scouts will then complete an online application. Once approved scouts will be assigned a project and a staff liaison with whom they will coordinate closely. The Volunteer Coordinator will act as an assistant to the assigned staff liaison as required but generally does not have specific information about individual projects. Nature Forward typically does not provide funds, tools or materials for scout projects. Scouts will make sure to maintain a professional demeanor and keep a neat work site. Project work may not interfere with other events at Nature Forward which may present significant scheduling challenges. Committed scouts will overcome these challenges with the help of Nature Forward staff.

Key Responsibilities:

- Complete a project to Nature Forward specifications
- Complete all required paperwork in a timely manner
- Coordinate closely with Nature Forward staff

Features:

- Variety of shovel-ready projects awaiting willing scouts
- Projects ranging in complexity from highly skilled to all skill levels welcomed
- Easy-to-access location in the DC metro area

Reports to: Various Nature Forward Staff members

Staff liaison: Will be assigned upon completion of application.

Time Commitment: Varies based on project scope and complexity.

VOLUNTEER POLICIES

Applicability of Policy

For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or the expectation of compensation, performs a task on behalf of Nature Forward under the direction of Nature Forward staff. If at any time volunteers have questions or concerns, they shall not hesitate to contact the Volunteer Coordinator. Violations of Nature Forward policies could result in dismissal from the volunteer program. The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance and direction regarding the relationship between staff and volunteers. Nature Forward reserves the right to change these policies at any time upon the approval of the Volunteer Coordinator, the Executive Director, and the Nature Forward Board of Directors.

Volunteer-Staff Relationship

Volunteers are critical to the success of Nature Forward. Nature Forward volunteers leverage the work of staff in implementing the mission and programs of Nature Forward. Volunteers also serve as outreach representatives of the organization in the larger community. Nature Forward accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels of the organization and throughout its programs and activities. Designated staff can be expected to provide orientation, training, supervision and feedback to volunteers.

Equal Opportunity Policy

Nature Forward maintains a strong policy of equal volunteer opportunity. We recruit, accept, train, promote and dismiss volunteers on the basis of personal competence and position performance without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, marital status or ability. The sole qualification for volunteering shall be the suitability to perform a task.

Youth Volunteers

Due to the need for supervision, as well as the limitations of our schedule, there are limited opportunities for minors to volunteer with Nature Forward. Nature Forward does provide SSL hours to MCPS students through our service camps, teen naturalist program, and for participation in our water quality monitoring. School groups wishing to do service projects may contact the Camp Manager.

Application

Prospective volunteers are required to complete an [application form](#) for consideration in the volunteer program. Prior to being assigned to a position, all volunteers will be interviewed by the appropriate department to ascertain their suitability for and interest in the position. Interviews may be by phone or in person. The interview provides the opportunity to learn more about the prospective volunteer and gives the prospective volunteer the opportunity to learn more about the organization and the available volunteer positions.

Background Checks

In certain cases, the Volunteer Coordinator may contact references to verify the prospective volunteer's qualifications and personal character. To ensure the safety of children and youth participating in Nature Forward programs, as well as the security of the organization, volunteers may be subject to criminal background checks, credit checks, and fingerprinting. The cost of any background check will be paid by the department to which the volunteer is assigned.

Volunteer Placement

Volunteers have different motivations for volunteering, as well as a range of skills. Nature Forward places considerable importance on appropriate placements and developing suitable opportunities to achieve maximum benefit for both the volunteer and the organization. No placement shall be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met.

Training & Supervision

All volunteers shall be provided with training on a variety of Nature Forward-related matters including, but not limited to: I.D.E.A., Nature Forward Vision, Nature Forward History. All volunteers covered by this policy will have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for support and direction. All volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training from their direct supervisors to provide them with the information and skills they need to perform their assignments, and to understand the program for which they are volunteering. The supervisor will manage the volunteer and will be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance. No volunteer will be assigned to work with a staff person without the consent of that staff person. A volunteer may act as a supervisor of other volunteers, provided that the supervising volunteer is under the direct supervision of a paid staff member.

Feedback and Evaluation

The supervisor responsible for a volunteer offers informal feedback as work progresses. Evaluations will convey appreciation to the volunteer, review the performance of the volunteer, suggest changes in work style where appropriate, and ascertain the interest of the volunteer in continuing to work in that position. The supervisor will also seek suggestions from the volunteer concerning the position or volunteer program. The Volunteer Coordinator will periodically discuss volunteer evaluations with the supervisor.

Corrective Action

If a volunteer fails to satisfactorily perform their assignment or is responsible for misconduct, the volunteer may be re-assigned to a new task, may be required to obtain additional training or may no longer be offered volunteer work. Corrective action will be taken only after the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for corrective action with the supervising staff member and, at the volunteer's request, the supervisor of that staff member. The supervising staff shall consult the Volunteer Coordinator before taking corrective action.

Exit Interviews

Where possible, the Volunteer Coordinator shall conduct exit interviews with volunteers who are leaving their positions. The interview shall be an attempt to ascertain why the volunteer is leaving the position and record any comments the volunteer has regarding the position.

Opportunities for Advancement

Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while working for the organization through on-the-job training. Volunteers who exhibit strong skills and knowledge of particular tasks may be asked to assist in training and supervising new volunteers. Exemplary volunteers may be offered more advanced positions and, where appropriate, may be asked to participate in relevant decision making.

Safety and Liability

Although Nature Forward does its best to provide safe conditions for its volunteers, volunteers are expected to be the best protector of their own personal safety. Volunteers shall pay particular attention to safety instructions and proper equipment use. Volunteers shall speak up if they have a safety concern and report any injuries to the person in charge as soon as possible.

Nature Forward provides commercial general liability insurance and volunteer accident insurance to volunteers while they serve as agents of Nature Forward. Volunteers must be working under the supervision and control of Nature Forward to be covered. When Nature Forward assigns a volunteer to drive a vehicle that Nature Forward owns, leases, or rents, the volunteer is covered by the Nature Forward motor vehicle liability insurance. When volunteers drive their own vehicle or some other vehicle not owned, leased or rented by Nature Forward, Nature Forward liability and physical damage insurance does not apply.

Any potential volunteer who indicates that they are under the care of a physician for any physical or psychological ailment which might impede their ability to work may be asked to present a certificate from the physician as to their ability to satisfactorily and safely perform their duties. Any volunteer who, after accepting an assignment with the organization, enters a course of treatment which might adversely affect the performance of their volunteer duties shall consult with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer Conduct

The lasting impression that volunteers make on those they serve and work with reflects directly on all staff, volunteers and Board Members of Nature Forward. All communications and actions shall serve to enhance the positive reputation of Nature Forward and its programs.

On many occasions, volunteers are the first contact a new visitor may have with Nature Forward. Volunteers play a critical role as ambassadors to the community and as the public face of Nature Forward. To be an effective Nature Forward ambassador, volunteers must remember that Nature Forward welcomes everyone, from all walks of life, to participate with us. Every visitor, volunteer, shopper, class participant, parent, student and worker should feel comfortable at one of our sanctuaries or in our programs.

Nature Forward is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and as such, is prohibited from endorsing any political candidates. While volunteering for Nature Forward, volunteers shall refrain from political and ideological discussions.

Volunteers shall direct questions that they cannot answer to a Nature Forward staff member. Volunteers should become comfortable saying, "I don't know, but let's find out." The Volunteer Coordinator or any other staff member will be glad to help you.

Absenteeism

Volunteers shall do their best to be present and on time for each event or activity for which they are scheduled. If unable to be present when scheduled, volunteers are expected contact their supervisor at least 24 hours in advance if possible.

Grievance Procedures

Volunteers and staff are expected to act professionally and in accordance with their position descriptions. Volunteers having a grievance concerning their work environment shall report it promptly

to the Volunteer Coordinator, their direct supervisor, or the Executive Director. Every effort will be made to achieve speedy and effective resolution, and all complaints will be treated confidentially with the possible exception for complaints involving sexual harassment or child abuse. Staff members shall complete a [Volunteer Incident Report Form](#).

Media Conduct

Volunteers must not represent themselves as spokespersons for the organization under any circumstances without prior approval.

Alcohol & Drugs

When participating in Nature Forward activities, volunteers are prohibited from purchasing, transferring, using or possessing illicit drugs, alcohol, prescription drugs, or any other substances in any way that is illegal or that may impair the ability of the volunteer to perform his or her duties properly and safely.

Harassment Policy

Volunteering should be an enjoyable experience. Harassment is not only illegal; it also creates uncomfortable conditions and an unpleasant experience for everyone involved. Any volunteer who feels harassed may report concerns to their supervisor, the Volunteer Coordinator, or the Executive Director.

Any significant incident involving a volunteer shall be recorded on the [Volunteer Incident Report Form](#) and filed with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer Incident Report Form

Any significant incident involving a volunteer shall be recorded on the [Volunteer Incident Report Form](#) and filed with the Volunteer Coordinator. Please use the link below to submit this form to the Volunteer Coordinator whenever there is a significant issue relating to a volunteer such as: an accident or injury, a serious disagreement or argument, confusion about Nature Forward policies or procedures, inappropriate or harassing behavior, etc. Please also use this form if a volunteer has expressed that they will no longer be volunteering with Nature Forward for any reason.