

Welcome!

Dear Volunteers and Staff,

Thank you for your interest in supporting the Rusk Ranch Nature Center (RRNC) and ONE Discovery. As a volunteer or staff, you are a vital member of our team and we value your time and energy. This manual is intended to help you become more familiar with RRNC and can also be used as a reference for our policies and procedures. Please know that we are always open to your input, suggestions, comments, and concerns.

We are committed to building a mutually beneficial relationship by encouraging you to use your strengths, passions and dedication to not only benefit RRNC but to positively enhance your own life and the community.

Volunteering and working at RRNC shows that you support our mission and are dedicated to making a positive impact in our community. Thank you for your support and we look forward to working with you!

Patty Downing
Executive Director

Mission

The Mission of the Rusk Ranch Nature Center is to benefit the community with enrichment, jobs, housing, and with opportunities for the public, particularly young people, to appreciate the natural world and instill a sense of stewardship toward the earth and its inhabitants, and to preserve and conserve nature and wildlife.

~ Adopted Oct 12, 2021

Values

At Rusk Ranch Nature Center we value the healing power of nature and nature's ability to nurture creativity, to inspire a sense of belonging, and to build community by showing us our deep inter-connectedness. We value the long term wholeness of recognizing that people and nature are inseparable. We strive to nurture whole families, multi-age groups and children.

What We Do

Rusk Ranch Nature Center provides safe, outdoor recreational and enrichment activities for both children and families. In addition, the Butterfly Pavilion, Discovery Exhibits Missing Links Mini-Golf and Natural Playground offer an interactive learning environment for visitors to enjoy. Revenue from these seasonal attractions helps to support the center's programs for families in our area.

Attractions and Programs

- Missing Links Mini-Golf Discovery Trail
- Nature Discovery Exhibits
- Butterfly Pavilion and Garden
- Natural Playground
- Pollywog Play - Free kids and care givers play group
- Nature Club - Free Nature crafts and Outdoor fun
- Nature Service & Immersion Program - Glamping to help conserve nature
- Girls Can Do! - Empowerment workshops for girls
- Public presentations - By request
- Pollinator & Habitat plant sales

Why Volunteer?

Benefits of Volunteering for the Rusk Ranch Nature Center:

In exchange for your participation we provide our volunteers with a free two-year family membership to the Rusk Ranch Nature Center. You will also be recognized for your service at the Mothathon event, end of July, and invited to Volunteer and Staff Picnic (family members are welcome!) At end of season. This is an excellent opportunity to develop new skills and interests, meet new people, and make an impact in your community. Participants will gain knowledge about our natural history, native butterflies and their life cycles and habitats. This is an opportunity to actively improve our community's enrichment activities and economic development, become a positive role model and inspire youth. Volunteering can be both fun and rewarding as you help foster an awareness, appreciation and respect for nature in others.

Ways to Volunteer

- Docents at the Butterfly Pavilion - greet guests, discuss butterflies
- Grounds and garden maintenance
- Children's program - facilitate, lunch help, set up, clean up, marketing
- Nature Service Program- planting trees, maintenance of landscape
- Seed sorting, planting, greenhouse work
- Exhibit Design, Implementation and Maintenance Committee
- Animal Habitat and Care Committee
- Your special skill area

Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

Please read the policies of the organization on the web site > Home, About Us, Documents

Hours

Please log in with the Volunteer hours sign in book (either in lower greenhouse or in Gift Shop) to help us keep track.

Staff must sign in on their personal time sheets. In summer these are both located at the Gift Shop. Staff are responsible for recording their work hours.

We ask that you respect our time, as we will respect yours, **by being punctual.**

If you are running late or need to cancel please give us a call.

The center is only open to the public at specific times. Volunteers and staff are not allowed to visit the center, or bring visitors to the center, during times when it is not open unless cleared with your supervisor. In the private areas, if they are not assigned to work there at the time, volunteers and staff should not be visiting those areas or bringing visitors to those areas. The center is a private nonprofit organization, and only certain parts of the property are open to the public, and only at specific times of year. Some areas are completely off limits at all times. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure what areas are off limits.

Supervision

You will be assigned to a supervisor for the program or project area where you are volunteering or working. Please follow their directives.

As a member of the team, you are expected to conduct yourself in a kind and gracious manner. You must be respectful and courteous in your interactions with the public and with staff. Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior, sexual harassment, threats, disparaging remarks, discrimination or vulgar language will not be tolerated and you may be asked to cease your work as a result of such conduct. This code of conduct applies to online social media and/or written material as well as personal interactions with staff, other volunteers, and members of the public. We commit to providing excellent service to our visitors, staff, fellow volunteers and our community.

Animal Care

It is expected that volunteers will treat all animals at the center with compassion and gentleness. No animals or insects are injured, trapped or destroyed, with the exception of ants, spiders and wasps WITHIN the Butterfly Pavilion. Volunteers should ask for assistance from staff when needed, and use caution at all times. Notify staff of any observations or information you feel may need to be noted for an animal. Volunteers are not to remove animals or plants from the center without permission from the Executive Director or management.

Injuries

You are responsible for your own health and welfare, so be sure to mind all signs and safety precautions. If you are injured while at the center, you must notify your supervisor immediately.

Dress Code

While we want our workers and volunteers to look clean and well groomed, come prepared with the mindset that anything that you wear will get dirty. As a volunteer, we suggest you wear the following for work at the center:

For garden/landscape work, both staff and volunteers:

- Sun hat and /or sun screen & Gloves
- Long pants – This includes jeans, khakis, or other long pants (NO sweatpants or pajamas). No excessive holes or worn areas. No very short shorts.
- Comfortable close-toed Shoes – No sandals, flip flops, or heels. Rubber soled shoes or boots preferred.

For Docents, both staff and volunteers:

- Sun hat and /or sun screen
- Clean, business casual clothing with no holes
- No sweatpants or pajamas. No excessive holes or worn areas. No very short shorts.
- Clothing should not too revealing, no bellies/bottoms/breasts hanging out; clothing not too tight or thin.

No clothing with obscene writing and/or graphics is allowed. Please limit use of perfume or cologne since some people may be allergic. No religious or political statements on clothing while working at the center please. Please come to work clean with excellent personal hygiene.

Cell Phones & Electronic Devices

In order to maintain focus on the work and/or customers, the use of cell phones while on duty is prohibited unless work related or an emergency. If it is necessary for you to have your cell phone with you while volunteering, set the ringer to vibrate or silent, and use your cell phone in non-working areas only.

Smoking

Smoking or vaping is prohibited everywhere on center property, indoors and out, except inside your own vehicle with windows up.

Drugs & Alcohol

Under no circumstances shall a volunteer or staff work at our facility under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If suspected of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, you will be asked to leave immediately and will be subject to termination from work or the volunteer program. If you have a medical condition needing on-going medication, please speak with your supervisor. Be aware that much of the work at the center requires focus and alertness.

Weapons

No weapons are allowed on the center property, concealed or openly visible.

Pets

Please leave your pets at home.

Friends and Family

Please do not bring family to work with you or invite friends or family to join you while you are working or volunteering.

Complaints/Conflict Resolution

Any issues or complaints regarding a staff member, other volunteers, the general public or center policies, should immediately be brought to the attention of your supervisor. If you are not satisfied with the resolution, you may escalate your complaint to the Executive Director. We want to resolve issues as soon as possible so that we can all work effectively as a team. Please read the Harassment Policies on our web site.

Equal Opportunity

RRNC provides an equal volunteering and work opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon one's ability to perform the job, as well as one's dedication to RRNC's mission and needs. If you need special ADA accommodations or assistance, please DO let us know.

Expense Reimbursement

You must have your supervisor's written authorization prior to incurring an expense on behalf of RRNC. To be reimbursed for all authorized expenses, receipts are required.

Soliciting

You may not promote or solicit for your own business enterprise, private charity, political agenda or religious beliefs while working or volunteering for RRNC.

Vehicles and personal property

For everywhere on the property the speed limit is 5 MPH. Please abide by this and please always give wildlife the right of way.

Come to a full stop for animals or people crossing the road.

RRNC does not assume any liability for loss or damages that your vehicle may sustain while parked on the property. Also, RRNC does not assume any liability for loss of or damages to personal items brought onto the property.

Youth Volunteers

Children and youth can contribute in the following ways:

Families and children of all ages can...

- Become a Nature Center Ambassador by volunteering at center events.
- Help with the Cans for Kids fundraisers for our Children's Services.
- Help keep play areas clean by putting away toys, parts and tidying up when done.
- Families can volunteer as a unit to "adopt" an exhibit and help us keep it tidy and maintained.

High-school-aged (14-17) volunteers are welcome to volunteer with a parent or guardian present, or on special volunteering days.

Youth under the age of 13 are welcome to volunteer with an accompanying parent or guardian.

Parents and Guardians of Young Volunteers

We are grateful to have you. We take seriously our responsibility to provide you and our youth with a safe, fulfilling experience.

Our organization has implemented policies that strive to safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for their development.

Transportation to and from meetings/work is generally not part of organizational activities. Parents or guardians are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. Parents are discouraged from asking workers to transport children. However, if a worker does transport a child at the parent's request, this should be recognized as an informal personal contract (not a part of the organization's activities).

Children and youth volunteering at the center are the responsibility of the parent or guardian working with them and all organization policies should be maintained.

Youth between 14 and 17 years of age who are volunteering at the center must follow all guidance from their supervisor. **If youth wish to invite friends to volunteer as well, they should get the approval of the supervisor.** While volunteering youth will be expected to maintain focus on the task that is assigned, stay within site of the supervisor and maintain all policies of the organization.

PLEASE read our policies online on our web site - (Home-> About Us-> Documents) and below.

If you are a DOCENT, **please read DOCENT GUIDELINES attached here** or in the three ring binder in gift shop and also please read through the items below.

- **When using the center's tools**, please return them to the location where they "live" so others can use them. **Never leave tools (shovels, power tools, etc) setting out or setting at the work site. This goes for staff and supervisors. PUT TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT AWAY WHEN DOENE FOR THE DAY.** Never take home tools and supplies without completing a "check out sheet" in the check out book at the office. All power tools "live" in the locked office. Please plug them in to recharge.
- **PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE drive only 5 mph** on all center roads - to save the road surface, especially in the wet months, but also keep our wildlife safe and relaxed. PLEASE avoid potholes. In winter these are made worse by driving through them. The road between the meadow turn off to glamping and all the way up to the Butterfly Pavilion, is closed to vehicles during the rainy season. Use the "soccer field" road, slowly, when needed. PARK in employee sections.
- **After working on a project, please pick up debris, waste and tools.** Do not leave debris laying around for days on end.
- **Please do not use RRNC resources and supplies for your personal use.** Exploring the nature center property may only take place with permission from the Property Manager(s) or the Executive Director. We are a private facility, not open for public, staff or volunteer drop in to areas outside the Butterfly Pavilion, Natural Playground & Mini-Golf - and those only during working hours.
- **Disease safety :** To prevent flu spread, covid spread and even colds, if working outside, with others -- no masks necessary but keeping several feet apart is helpful for all. But if you feel sick please mask up to protect others, or go home. If you are with other staff or with guests on the gift shop porch, or inside the gift shop, or inside the glamp kitchen - if you choose not to wear a mask, PLEASE try to keep several feet away to protect yourself, guests and all of our relatives. Wash or sanitize hands frequently.
- **We never use pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers.** We do not kill, chase, harass or capture wild animals or insects. (Exception: inside the Butterfly Pavilion we do kill spiders, wasps and ants, & capture and remove lizards....gently. We also sometimes have a wasp trap in the outer garden.). We can kill Black Widows in the work or public areas.
- **NO Smoking anywhere on the property** inside or out. You may smoke inside your vehicle with windows up.
- **PLEASE Stay on the trails**, roads or paths and do not enter the wildlife areas.

Thank you for your dedication & helping make the center a stable gem of service to our community.

After reading our guidelines, please sign and return the last page.

Thank you so very much for your service to our community!

PLEASE sign this page and leave with your supervisor.

I have read and agree to keep all Rusk Ranch Nature Center guidelines and policies.

Print Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____