



VIP2VIP



Season 9, Volume 5

Big Bend National Park's Volunteer Newsletter

February 1, 2010

Current Volunteers

Castolon

Ted & Maryann Rowan –Visitor Center (4th)
 Ron & Jane Payne—Visitor Center (2nd)
 Phil & Margaret Hodgens—Camphosts (new)
 Bob & Ruthine Hennessy-Camphosts (4th)
 Skip Jiru - Special Projects (new)
 Tina & Steve Ehrman—Backcountry (4th)

Chisos Basin

Ed Davis—Camphost (5th)
 Marty & Howard Benham—Camphosts (4th)
 Jim & Ginny Herrick—Visitor Center (11th)

Persimmon Gap

Teresa & Gary Cowan—Visitor Center (2nd)
 Bob & Kay Foster—Visitor Center (new)
 Mark Kirtley—Visitor Center (14th)

Panther Junction

Elaine & John Jonker—River Rangers (3rd)
 Bud Frankenberger—ScRM (7th)
 Christine Harris (Interp SCA)
 Debbie Ambrose (Interp SCA)
 Michelle Cason (ScRM SCA)

Patricia Wheelless—Backcountry (new)
 Elton & Esther Homan (Special project)

Rio Grande Village

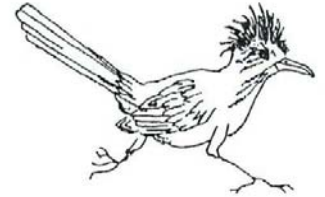
Roy, Aletha and Kenny Ellis –Camphosts (4th)
 Mike & Nancy Coe—Camphosts (new)
 Marshall & Pat McCall—Visitor Center (3rd)
 Don & Carol O'Brien—Visitor Center—(new)
 Linda & Kenn Sutton—Backcountry (3rd)

Part-time

Robert Bowie—Maintenance (1st)
 Barbara Holliday—Resource Management (new)
 Steve Wick—Resource Management
 Reine Wonite— Interpretation

*Number in () indicates years of service at BBNP

Highlights of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act



By Jane Brown

On April 21, 2009 President Obama signed into law the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. (H.R. 1388) which reorganized and expanded the mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service by increasing the opportunities of all American to volunteer. The bill enjoyed broad bi-partisan support, which is something that has been in little evidence in Washington since its passage. I attempted to find out more about this bill paying special attention to any ramifications that might affect the volunteers here at Big Bend National Park.

As might be expected much of the focus of the legislation is on engaging America's youth in service work. The Americorp program received a healthy portion of the attention, which could affect Big Bend positively as we often have Americorp groups here working in the backcountry. However, I wanted to see if our dedicated older volunteers who man the campgrounds and visitor centers stood to gain from this legislation.

The following is what I found:

H.R. 1388 improves service options for experienced Americans by expanding age and income eligibility for Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions, authorizing a Silver Scholars program, under which individuals 55 and older who perform 350 hours of service receive a \$1,000 education award, and establishing Serve America Fellowships and Encore Fellowships allowing individuals to choose from among registered service sponsors where to perform service. Also permits individuals age 55 and older to transfer their education award to a child or grandchild.

This portion of the legislation could be significant for those of you who volunteer with "Meals on Wheels" and other programs that are part of the "Senior Companion" umbrella in your home town. (continued on page 5)

New Faces New Places

Bob & Kay Foster fled Iowa between snow storms, as they worried about extracting their RV from the snow drifts! They managed to occupy themselves in Ft. Stockton for a few weeks before arriving for orientation. They will be volunteering at Persimmon Gap Visitor Center for the spring session. Bob is a retired Methodist minister and a pilot. His hobbies include working in his workshop and teaching Bible study classes. Kay's hobbies include cooking and traveling, plus Bob taught her how to fly their plane.



Mike and Nancy Coe got put to work before they made it to orientation. They arrived from Plano, Texas on January 20th to take up where the Lightbourns left off as RGV campground hosts. With the help of Roy, Aletha and Kenny Ellis, they seem to have picked up the basics of camphosting quickly. Both are recently retired high-school teachers; Bob taught computer science and Nancy taught physics. Dealing with the RGV campers should be a piece of cake and spring break may seem like old home week! We are happy to have them aboard!

Don and Carol O'Brien are experienced volunteers who have been assisting most recently just up the road at Ft. Davis NHS. Big Bend is the 7th park that they have volunteered at. The others include Dinosaur National Monument, C&O Canal National Historic Park, Everglades National Park twice, Elmbrook Park, an Army Corp of Engineers site in New Hampshire, Acadia National Park, Ft. Donelson National Battlefield (Tennessee) and Ft. Davis National Historic Site. We are glad to have them at Rio Grande Village Visitor Center this spring. Carol's hobbies include birding, horseback riding, playing clarinet and woodworking. Don is a military history buff and a lover of music. Retired from the US Army, they have 2 dogs who are travelling with them from their home base in Leesville, Louisiana.

Phil and Margaret Hodgens travelled here from Saluda, South Carolina with Phil on his motorcycle and Margaret driving the truck and 5th wheel, with bad weather chasing them all the way. They spent a few days in Balmorra where the weather finally caught up with them. The ride from there to Big Bend was very frosty but they made it safely and will be staying in Castolon as camphosts and attending orientation.

AND THE NEXT STOP IS.....



Bob Douat is headed for Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge south of Albuquerque where he will be manning the visitor center this coming summer. He will be resting up in Galveston in the meantime.

Robert and Glenda Overfelt are headed back to Del Rio where Bob is running for judge very soon. If he wins, his upcoming plans will be rather straightforward...here comes the judge!!

John and Linda Lightbourn are going to Benson, Arizona to meet up with a group of people to convoy down to Copper Canyon and on to the Sea of Cortez. Sounds like fun!

Jim and Jan Allen report: "Our next date with the National Parks is in mid-April, with Acadia National Park, in Maine. We will stay there until mid-October, after which we will head slowly back towards Big Bend. Six months in Maine at Acadia, working for interpretation, behind the main visitor center desk, at Hull Cove Visitor Center with an occasional interp day at their nature center. A big CONTRAST for us: Big Bend and Acadia!" They plan on being back at Big Bend next December.

Joan and Ray Kane will be staying in Texas at various Thousand Trails Campgrounds until the middle of April when they will head north to New York. Hopefully the snow will have melted by then! We look forward to their return next October!

Roy and Mary Urban write, "We plan to visit Carlsbad Caverns then meet my brother in Guadalupe National Park for a week of hiking. Mid-February when he leaves, we will travel to Fredricksburg in the Hill Country and meet my sister to tour some wineries and LBJ Ranch. (And more hiking.) Yes, we are going to be grandparents this spring so need to be home for a baby shower March 27. We are so excited, it's going to be a girl and it's our first one."

For **Steve and Toka Smith**, after leaving Big Bend, they are going to spend a few weeks visiting national/state parks in New Mexico and Arizona. They will be heading home to Alaska about March 1st. They are looking forward to returning to the Castolon VC in the Fall 2010.

Gary and Teresa Cowan are planning to go to Louisiana to see Teresa's sons in February then spend most of March at our timeshare in Overgaard, Sedona and Flagstaff. Then its is back to College Station for Texas A&M Open house with graduation ceremonies for Gary's daughter in May at the Veterinary School.

Many thanks for all your hard work and happy trails!

Volunteer Opportunities from the Jonkers

Two river opportunities exist for VIPs and SCAs that count as extra volunteer hours and/or as a special project day.

- First, the RIO Rangers count on volunteers to help with their river shuttles which is a great way to see the park.
- Second, the RIO VIPs will attempt to get VIPs & SCAs on one of their river patrols when a mutual date can be agreed upon and if the required canoe skill levels are present. The RIO VIPs will email the VIPs and SCAs with more details. You can find the Jonkers in person at the River Cache (Maintenance Bldg. 477-1137) unless they are shuttling or canoeing.

Hiking Club News

The hike to Swirl Tenaja was lot of fun and the turnout was spectacular. A total of eighteen folks showed up to join in the fun. We also hiked around the Croton Springs area and had a picnic lunch. Kudos to the group from Castolon who traveled to the hike with 8 people in their vehicle...what fuel economy!



The next hike will be **February 18 to Tuff Canyon** led by Ted Rowan—we will be leaving Panther Junction at 9am and gathering at the Tuff Canyon parking lot at 9:45. Let me know if you want to catch a ride from PJ. Lunch at the porch of the Castolon Store. After lunch we will explore the new Dorgon Sublett hike. We should be returning to PJ by 3:00 pm at the latest. We will be reimbursing for mileage for getting to and from these hikes at 14 cents a mile. I will send out emails to remind everyone of the dates and it would be great if you could email me back if you are coming, especially if you want to catch a ride from PJ.

(Highlights of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act continued from page 1)

A second website provided the following information about the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act: Senior Corps

- Codifies “National Senior Service Corps” as a program name.
- The purpose for all three Senior Corps programs is to provide opportunities for senior service to meet unmet needs, to empower people 55 years and older to contribute to their communities through service, enhancing the lives of those who serve and those whom they serve, and provide communities with valuable services. More specifically:
 - **Senior Companion Program (SCP)** purpose is to provide opportunities for older volunteers to provide critical support service and companionship to adults at risk of institutionalization and who are struggling to maintain a dignified independent life.
 - **Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)** purpose is to provide opportunities for older volunteers to share their knowledge, experiences, and skills for the betterment of their communities and themselves. For example, this organization matches volunteers with work opportunities, ie. sponsors help with tax returns for low-income seniors at the local senior center.
 - **Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)** purpose is to provide opportunities for older volunteers to have a positive impact on the lives of children in need.
 - Lowers minimum age from 60 to 55 for Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions in line with current law RSVP volunteers.
 - Federal share of hourly stipend may not exceed \$3 (increase over \$2.65).
 - Individuals up to 200% of poverty may be eligible for hourly stipend (increase from 125%).

Much of the grant money to fund these programs will be administered at the state level. In Texas the organization that will be handling this task is OneStar Foundation Texas. The burden of exploring grant opportunities will fall on volunteer coordinators as we watch the progress of this legislation unfold. Due to the fact that much of the grant funding is geared towards improving community life at the local level, it may be difficult for the volunteer program here at Big Bend to qualify. However, there may be increased opportunities for you to serve in other locations and some of these opportunities might have some additional incentives, such as the chance to receive educational money, which can be passed on to grandchildren. As the details of these programs develop and information sifts down to the local level, I will be anxious to hear how these changes will be implemented in your homebase areas.

Events in the Area

Feb. 11-13 There will **not** be a Mas o Menos Bike Race this year, but other rides are planned that weekend. Go to www.desertsprotstx.com/masomenos.php for the latest update.

Feb 13, 2010 - . Roadrunner Cookoff. Held at Terlingua Community Center. Entry fee \$20, turn-in 2 PM. Contact Dorothy Williams 432-371-2595. Bronze Roadrunner Trophy for first place chili. Benefits the Big Bend High School Activity Fund in Memory of Carolyn Hejtmancik. Fish fry dinner at Noon.

Feb. 18—Hiking Club Hike to Tuff Canyon. Leave PJ 9:00 am; gather at Tuff Canyon parking lot at 9:45 am. Lunch at the Castolon Store picnic tables; Dorgon Sublett stroll after lunch. See page 5.

Feb. 18, 2010—Thursday 7:00 pm, Betty Alex will be presenting a program on “Orchids in the Desert” at Sul Ross State University in Alpine. Lawrence Hall, Room 300.

February 20—Dutch Oven Cookoff in Terlingua For more details see the January 12th issue of the Terlingua Moon at www.terlinguamoon.com/2010/January/moon011210.htm

February 24—VIP Community Potluck in the Panther Junction Community Room. 6:30 pm. This is going to be a special potluck as we start to gather recipes for the proposed volunteer cookbook. In other words, hit us with your very best potluck recipe as we taste and compare potential recipes for inclusion in the cookbook. We are looking for recipes that contain ingredients that are available in the Big Bend area and are relatively simple to prepare.

February 26-28- Cowboy Texas Poetry Gathering, Alpine. For more information go to www.cowboy-poetry.org

We are looking for a few good stories!

There is now a blog on the Volunteer Page of the BIBE website and we are looking for stories, reminiscences and personal narratives about your volunteer experience at Big Bend. Email any contributions to me at Jane_Brown@nps.gov and I will post your musings and a photo.

Hiking for Smokey

Do you like to hike in your free time at Big Bend? Here is a new opportunity to have fun, get some exercise, and make yourself even more useful than you already are! Plus you can earn a very cool T-shirt! After your hike, you would need to write up a short report describing what you did. I can provide you with an example of a Fire Prevention Report upon request.

If you are interested in getting involved in the “Hiking for Smokey” program, email or see me at the Volunteer Office.

SUGGESTION: To save time, please submit your paperwork for reimbursement to Jane at least two weeks before you plan to leave the park. Once your paperwork has been submitted, please wait a week, then call Christiann Tillman at 477- 1103 to see if your check is ready. You will need to see Christiann in person, in the Administration Office, Mon.-Friday., 8-5 to sign for your check. If you wait to submit on the day you leave or until after you leave, you may be waiting awhile for your reimbursement to catch up with you.