

COMMUNITY HELPERS

Theme: Community Helpers
Grade Level: Kindergarten
Best Time to Plan Trip: Spring or Fall

UNIT RATIONALE

This unit is helpful to establish an awareness and appreciation of persons who help people and the environment. Letting students hear and talk with several community helpers over several weeks around this trip allows students to develop a confidence and security about the people they most often encounter such as police officers, doctors, firefighters, and mailmen.

Park Rangers are also community helpers. Rangers “wear many hats” while working in the national park such as rescuer, sanitation worker, teacher, and law enforcer. Students learn why having park rangers, like other community helpers, are important to having safe and pleasant visits to Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

STATE EDUCATION STANDARDS

Tennessee:

Science

Embedded Inquiry

- Ask questions, make logical predictions, plan investigations, and represent data (GLE 0007. Inq.1)

Life Science

- Recognize that many things are made of parts (GLE 0007.1.1)

Interdependence

- Recognize that some things are living and some things are not (GLE 0007.2.1)

Flow of Matter and Energy

- Recognize that living things require water, food and air (GLE 0007.3.1)

The Earth

- Recognize that some objects are manmade and that some occur naturally (GLE 0007.7.2)

English

- Develop critical listening skills essential for comprehension, problem solving and task completion (GLE 0001.2.1)
- Develop critical speaking skills essential for effective communication (GLE 001.2.2)

//2009 Standards//

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PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL TRIP

COMMUNITY HELPERS

SCHEDULE FOR A DAY OF ACTIVITIES IN GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Morning: Arrive at Sugarlands Visitor Center for restrooms

In two groups, students participate in teacher and ranger-led activities

Stay for picnic lunch on visitor center lawn or return to school

Planning a Successful Trip

- The Sugarlands Visitor Center is located 5 minutes from downtown Gatlinburg on highway 441. If traveling via the Gatlinburg by-pass, the Visitor center is one mile into the park after the by-pass ends.
- If you desire a ranger to assist you in teaching this program, you must make reservations with the education office by calling 865-436-1713.
- There is no cost to use this site. Bus parking is available in the visitor center parking lot.
- Safety is of the utmost importance, especially in a National Park. Be sure to read the safety information provided on the following page. You may wish to take the page with you on your trip or send it to your chaperones prior to the on-site experience.

COMMUNITY HELPERS

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS AND

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

•Park Rules and Regulations

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a federally protected public use area. Certain activities are prohibited by visitors. Be sure to read the rules and regulations of the National Park found in the appendix of this lesson. For further information or questions, you may contact the National Park at 865-436-1713. Please use common sense and appropriate planning whenever you participate in outdoor activities.

•Dressing for the Weather

Please remind your students to wear appropriate footwear and clothing for an extended outdoor program. Short pants, flip flops, or sandals are not recommended. Temperatures in the mountains can be 10-15 degrees colder than at your school. You may wish to alter portions of the program should inclement weather appear. Appendix B, found at the end of this lesson plan, may be sent home with students as a reminder of what to bring.

•Restrooms and Water

There are restrooms and seasonal water fountains at the Sugarlands Visitor Center.

•Packing Lunches

You may eat lunches on the grassy lawn near the Sugarlands Visitor Center or at another location chosen by the teacher. For ease of planning and for safety, students should NOT carry food with them on the activities. We suggest lunches be packed in a large container to be kept on the bus and distributed at an appropriate location.

•Group Size

The site can accommodate no more than one bus load of students. For safety and group management, one adult for every 8 students is recommended.

•Cell Phones and Emergency Contacts

At this location, cell phones are not always reliable. Stick to the on-site agenda. If an unexpected problem occurs, rangers do carry park radios to make contact with the park dispatch office. A phone is available at Sugarlands Visitor Center. In case of emergency call 911. For non-emergencies, call Park Rangers at 865-436-1294 or contact a park employee.

•Name Tags

It is extremely helpful if rangers assist in leading the program for students to wear clearly labeled name tags with first names only.

•Special Considerations

Ask for assistance from parents and volunteers who are comfortable in an outdoor environment. Students often gain their confidence in a new environment from the cues they receive from the adults around them.

•Poison Ivy

Please be aware of the presence of Poison Ivy throughout the park, particularly in the spring, summer and fall. Poison ivy is a three leaved plant which can grow on the ground as well as on “hairy” vines up trees. To avoid chances of an allergic reaction, stay on trails and avoid direct contact with vegetation. If contact occurs or is a concern, wash affected parts in cold soapy water immediately.

PRE-TEST

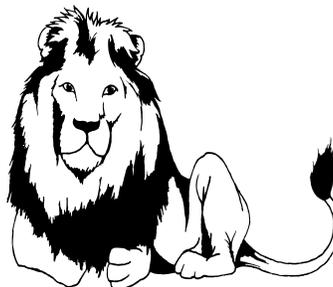
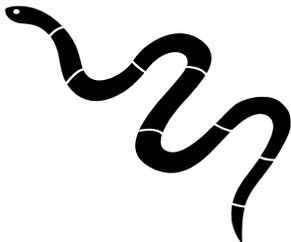
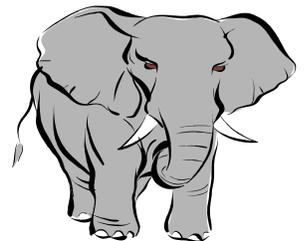
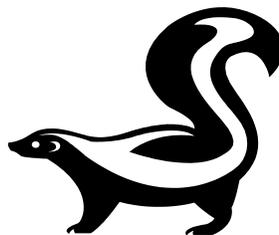
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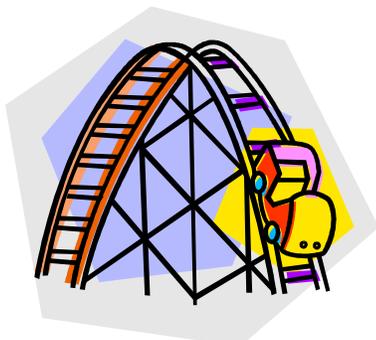
Name _____

Community Helpers Kindergarten

1) Circle which animals you might find in Great Smoky Mountains National Park?



2) Circle the things you might find to do in Great Smoky Mountains National Park?



3) Circle community helpers you might find working in a National Park?



PRE-SITE ACTIVITY

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PARK RANGER

Duration: 30 minutes

Class Size: any

Materials: ranger journal (included)

Background Information for the Class:

Much like firefighters and police officers, park rangers are also helpers in our communities. The specific duties of rangers often keep them located within the boundaries of National Parks, but many rangers in urban parks are seen on a regular basis by members of a city or town. Park rangers perform a wide variety of duties all for a single purpose: that is to protect and preserve National Parks and other federal lands. The jobs of park rangers can easily be compared to other community helpers that students may be familiar with such as construction workers, law enforcement officers, janitors, and teachers. All these same jobs must be done to protect and preserve National Park service areas.

Activity Directions:

Read the following journal narrative to the class. This journal entry describes the wide variety of work a Park ranger may encounter. Use the questions at the end to initiate discussion. The resources at the end of the passage are age appropriate for the kindergarten grade level.

PRE-SITE ACTIVITY

A DAY IN THE LIFE JOURNAL

My name is Jennifer and I am a park ranger at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina. The part of the park I work in is located on the edge of Gatlinburg, Tennessee and I can see the peaks of the mountains everyday. What a beautiful place to be every day, working in the great outdoors!

I want to tell you how I became interested in becoming a park ranger and why I love my job. When I was young, I used to love running and playing in the forest around my house in New Hampshire. My favorite things to do were climbing trees and looking for salamanders under logs. My mother grew up on a farm in Vermont and she would take me for long walks and teach me the names of flowers and trees. When I was in high school, I learned the importance of volunteering by spending my time after school helping people in my community.

I decided to go to a college in Vermont because it was in the mountains and many of the classes I took taught me about animals, plants, hiking and camping. There were many things I learned in college that made me want to keep studying the outdoors. During my second year of college, I took a vacation to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. I knew as soon as I entered the National Park that I wanted to be a park ranger. I decided to move to Tennessee to be a park ranger. The Great Smoky Mountains reminded me of the place where I grew up, and I knew that I would love a job that allowed me to teach others what I knew about the forest.

When I am not working in the National Park, I love to come to the mountains and walk on hiking trails. My favorite time to go hiking is early in the morning so that I can hear the birds singing, as the sun comes up. I also love to fish and camp every chance I get. I do enjoy being at work and dressed in my uniform, because I know I can help people who have questions about the animals and plants. I also know I can be helpful if someone gets hurt or lost in the woods. My day can be very busy, but I wouldn't change any part of it.

PRE-SITE ACTIVITY

A DAY IN THE LIFE JOURNAL

See my diary below to hear what one of my days is like as a park ranger:

September 12th

8:00 Arrive to work. Read my e-mails from my boss.

8:30 Call local school teachers and invite them to the park for a field trip.

9:00 Walk to the visitor center and answer questions from visitors. Help visitors find a nice way to spend their day.

10:00 Lead a group of Girl Scouts on a nature walk.

11:00 I spot someone trying to feed a deer! I give them a warning and remind them that it is against the law to feed wildlife.

11:30 I make a note in my journal when I see a barred owl sitting in a tree.

12:00 Lunch

12:30 I get a call on my park radio that someone has twisted their ankle while walking in the woods. I meet five other rangers and hike to where the visitor is hurt. We help carry the visitor out of the woods and send him to the hospital.

3:30 Meet with the Superintendent to talk about what information we should print in the park newspaper.

4:15 Drive to the park's campground to remind campers to help protect the bears by keeping their food and trash put away.

4:30 Go home for the day.

ON-SITE ACTIVITY

RANGERS AS COMMUNITY HELPERS

Duration: 40 minutes

Class Size: half of the entire group

Materials: ranger uniforms, other items provided by the park staff

Background Information for the Class:

National Parks and the park rangers who protect them have been in existence for close to 100 years. The National Park Service is a government agency that was created to protect America's national treasures including big areas of forests, deserts, seashores, caves and more.

Park rangers can be men or women. The place where they work can tell us more about what jobs they might have. You won't need a park ranger to plow snow in a desert, but you might need a rescue ranger in a place with lots of high cliffs and waterfalls. Let's look at some of the jobs that rangers have in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Directions for this Activity:

The ranger will present a variety of uniform items to students. Students will have the opportunity to wear the uniform pieces and guess what their job might be.

ON-SITE ACTIVITY

THE LIVING MAP

Duration: 40 minutes

Class Size: half of the entire group

Materials: the “Living Map” provided by the National Park Service, teacher narrative on following page

Background for this Activity

National Parks are special places protected by park rangers. More importantly however, National Parks are owned by the people of the United States of America. Often referred to as “America’s Crown Jewels”, the idea for National Parks originated in America in the late 1800’s.

Yellowstone National Park of Wyoming/Montana/Idaho was the first established National Park in 1872. This was the start of a movement that would lead to nearly 400 National Park Service Units including the National Parks, close to 60 of them! In this activity, students will discover why this National Park is so significant and worth protecting.

Directions for this Activity:

Unfold the living map. Allow students to take off their shoes and sit on the edges of the map. Begin the activity with the narrative on the following page.

ON-SITE ACTIVITY

TEACHER NARRATIVE FOR THE LIVING MAP

Most communities have parks, but there are many different types of parks.

What is a park? Parks are places where people go to play or just relax. Do adults play? Sure they do: they bird watch, hike, throw Frisbees, and play ball and find many other ways to enjoy time with their friends or families. What kind of parks do we find in our community? What do they have in them and who works there?

- City parks have playground equipment, picnic tables, water fountain, and tennis courts.
- Water parks have slides and wave pools. Lifeguards work at these.
- Amusement parks often have rides, shows, places to eat: ride operators and performers work at these places.

Today, we are inside of a **National Park**. This place is very different from the answers we just discussed. National Parks, like Great Smoky Mountains National Park have hiking trails, camping areas, visitor centers, beautiful plants and animals. National Parks are also places for plants and animals to live that couldn't live anywhere else.

National Parks even protect parts of history. Very old buildings, schools, churches and even cemeteries are parts of this National Park. Who do you think works in a National Park to help take care of all of these things? Park rangers do.

Discuss things you can and cannot do in a National Park.

- You can learn, exercise, relax and even play. You cannot take anything out of a National Park that belongs here. All the pretty flowers, the tall trees and the animals all have a home here. Even rocks, water and dirt belong here and you cannot take those either.

What can you take? You can take photographs with a camera, memories of a fun time and we especially want you to take any trash that you might have brought in with you.

Discuss who visits parks and why.

- People from all over the world come to visit National Parks. Out of all the National Parks Great Smoky Mountains National Park gets the most visits each year- 12 million! People come here because they want to see the beautiful scenery of these mountains and all that lives here.

Now let's see who or what lives in our National Park.

Each child is given an object from a "grab bag" of items. For each item, the teacher leads a discussion about where it could live in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Ask the student to place the prop where it might belong on the map or tell a story that includes the items. Each time you mention the item in your story let the child place theirs on the map.

POST-SITE ACTIVITY

WRITE A RANGER / SERVICE LEARNING EXTENSION

Duration: as time allows

Class Size: unlimited

Materials: computer access with e-mail or a postcard with a stamp.

Directions for this Activity:

After spending time in a national park and becoming familiar with the jobs of a park ranger, students may have thought of questions to ask a ranger upon return to their class. Encourage students to decide on a few questions that they would still like to ask of a park ranger. The teacher may write these questions on a postcard or generate an e-mail to be sent.

Send a single postcard or e-mail from your class to any national park (including Great Smoky Mountains). Log onto the following website to find e-mails or postal addresses to any one of the units within the national park system :

www.nps.gov

(from here you can select any park from any place in the United States)

If you would like a response addressed to your class, please provide the return mail information. Remind students that park rangers are not only responsible for protecting parks, but they also want visitors (in person or via e-mail) to understand more about the National Park Service.

POST-SITE ACTIVITY

EXPLORE YOUR NATIONAL PARKS

Duration: 30 minutes

Class Size: any

Materials: internet access

Background Information for the Class

The Great Smoky Mountains are world renowned for their diversity of plant and animal species. This great variety makes the park an exemplary outdoor laboratory for the study of relatively undisturbed native flora, fauna, physical environs and processes of the Southern Appalachians. The park is the largest federally preserved and protected upland area east of the Mississippi River offering park visitors a refuge from the stresses of everyday life.

You and your students can learn more about this special place as well as participate in on-line activities to further your knowledge of the National Park Service and other federally protected lands. Please check out the following web addresses:

Especially for Kids

To become a web ranger for the National Park Service, go to:

www.nps.gov/webrangers

To become a Junior Park Ranger at Great Smoky Mountains National Park or other parks, go to:

www.nps.gov/learn/juniorranger.htm

Especially for Teachers

For a comprehensive understanding of the background and development of the National Park Service that is perfect for teachers and others those who need the maximum amount of accurate information in the minimum amount of time, go to:

<http://www.ParkTraining.org>

The U.S. Department of Education is pleased to announce the newly remodeled and updated Federal Resources for Education Excellence (FREE) website. It now provides richer, more expansive resources to teachers and students alike. There are over 1,500 resources to take advantage of at FREE, ranging from primary historical documents, lesson plans, science visualizations, math simulations and online challenges, paintings, photos, mapping tools, and more. This easily accessible information is provided by federal organizations and agencies such as the Library of Congress, National Archives, NEH, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian, NSF, and NASA. Go to: **<http://www.free.ed.gov/>**

APPENDIX A

PARK ESSENTIALS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Traffic and Travel Tips

Restrictions on Large Vehicles

Trailers, RVs, and buses are prohibited on some secondary roads in the park, including Balsam Mountain Road, Greenbrier Road past the ranger station, Heintooga Ridge Road, Rich Mountain Road, Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, and the road exiting the park at Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area. Caution is also advised when traveling on Little River Road between the Townsend entrance to the park and Elkmont Campground, and on the road leading into Cataloochee Valley.

Overheated Engines and Brakes

When traveling uphill on hot days, watch your engine temperature carefully to make sure it is not overheating. If overheating occurs, stop at a pullout to allow your vehicle to cool down before continuing.

When driving downhill on steep mountain roads, it is important that you shift to a lower gear to use the braking power of your engine to prevent your brakes from over heating and failing. If your vehicle has an automatic transmission, use “L” or “2.” (Overheated brakes smoke and give off an acrid smell.) Keep an extra cushion of distance between you and the vehicle in front of you as protection against sudden stops.

Avoid Collisions with Animals

Watch for animals crossing roads, especially at night. Scores of bears and other animals are killed by motorists every year. Following posted speed limits will reduce your chances of hitting wildlife.

Use Pullouts if Driving Slowly

As a courtesy to other park visitors, slow moving vehicles should use pullouts to let other cars pass. Pullouts are located every mile or so on most park roads.

Gas Stations

There are no gas stations or other related services available in the park. Complete services are available in Cherokee, NC, Gatlinburg, TN, and Townsend, TN.

Emergency Number

In the event of an emergency, call 911. For non-emergency calls to park headquarters, dial (865) 436-1200.

Pets

Dogs are allowed in campgrounds, picnic areas, and along roads, but must be kept on a leash at all times. The leash must not exceed 6 feet in length. Dogs are only allowed on two short walking paths—the Gatlinburg Trail and the Oconaluftee River Trail. Pets are not allowed on any other park trails. Pet excrement must be immediately collected by the pet handler and disposed of in a trash receptacle. Pets should not be left unattended in vehicles or RVs. Large national parks that have extensive backcountry areas as a rule do not allow dogs on trails. These include parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Glacier, Rocky Mountains, and several others. Great Smoky Mountains National Park has prohibited dogs in the backcountry since the park was first established in the 1930's.

Hiking Safety

You are responsible for your own safety! Travel in Great Smoky Mountains backcountry areas has inherent risks and hikers assume complete responsibility for their own safety. Rescue is not a certainty!

- Carry a current park trail map and know how to read it.
- Carry 2 small flashlights or head lamps—even on a day hike. If you have trouble on the trail, darkness may fall before you can finish your hike.

(continued on next page)

APPENDIX A CONTINUED

PARK ESSENTIALS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Take adequate water—minimum 2 quarts per person per day. All water obtained from the backcountry should be treated either by filtering or boiling.
- Carry a small first aid kit.
- Check the current weather forecast and be prepared for quickly changing conditions.
- Wear shoes or boots that provide good ankle support.
- Avoid hypothermia (the dangerous lowering of body temperature) by keeping dry. Avoid cotton clothing. Dress in layers that can be easily removed or added as you heat up or cool down. Always carry a wind-resistant jacket and rain gear—even on sunny days!
- Do not attempt to cross rain-swollen streams; they will recede rapidly after precipitation stops and the wait may save your life! When crossing any stream more than ankle-deep: unbuckle the waist strap of your pack, wear shoes, and use a staff to steady yourself.

Ice and Wet Leaves

In winter, most trails at high elevation will be covered with ice. Use crampons or other traction devices for your boots. In autumn, loose, slick leaves on the trail cause many hikers to fracture their ankles. Be certain to wear ankle supporting boots.

Safety Around Wildlife

•Encounters With Bears

Bears in the park are wild and their behavior is unpredictable. Although extremely rare, attacks on humans have occurred, inflicting serious injuries and death. Treat bear encounters with extreme caution.

•Venomous Snakes

Two species of venomous snakes live in the Smokies, the northern copperhead and timber rattlesnake. Although very few snake bites occur here, visitors should be cautious where they place their hands and feet, especially around old buildings

and stone fences. No fatalities from snakebites have ever been recorded in the park.

•Insects

Yellow jacket wasps are the insects of greatest concern. They build nests in the ground along trails and streams and are aggressive when disturbed. Avoid perfume, powder, and scented deodorants which may attract yellow jackets. Stings cause local swelling and can lead to severe allergic reactions in a few sensitive individuals. Such persons should carry epinephrine kits.

•Poison Ivy

Please be aware of the presence of Poison Ivy throughout the park, particularly in the spring, summer and fall. Poison ivy is a three leaved plant which can grow on the ground as well as on “hairy” vines up trees. To avoid chances of an allergic reaction, stay on trails and avoid direct contact with vegetation. If contact occurs or is a concern, wash affected parts in cold soapy water immediately.

APPENDIX B

WHAT TO CARRY/ HOW TO PACK FOR YOUR TRIP

The following information is recommended to assist students in packing for their trip.

From experience it has been found that students will often bring too many items on a class trip, or not enough of the right items.

For the **Community Helpers** trip:

Students should wear:

- Sturdy walking shoes. Hiking boots are not necessary, but flip flops or slip on shoes are not appropriate for the walking portion of this trip.
- Long pants are suggested any time you visit the National Park. This is the best precaution against cool temperatures, bee stings and ticks and direct contact with poison ivy.

Students should bring:

- A lunch which including water to drink. A healthy meal to provide them with energy for extended periods of walking and learning.
- Lunches should be kept on the bus until lunchtime. Do not leave lunches unattended once they are out of the bus.

Other reminders:

- Students will not need anything except the materials that the teacher provides. iPods, or other electronic devices (if permitted on the bus) should not be brought off the bus during any part of the program.
- Since students will be using materials for the activities, we recommend that a chaperone or teacher be a designated photographer to preserve memories of the trip and to share with family members.

APPENDIX C

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Burby, Liza. A Day in the Life of a Park Ranger. Power Kids Press, 1999.

Eastern National. Rangers Activity and Sticker Book.

Williams Justeen, Kim and Judy Newhouse. “Hey Ranger” Kids Ask Questions About Yellowstone National Park. Falcon Publishing, 2005.