

Education Snowshoe Volunteers

Volunteer Position Description

Background:

Education and outreach snowshoe programs are offered for students in grades k-12 and adult learners during the months of January, February and March. Participants are organized groups, such as classes, scouts, and hiking groups. Groups schedule a snowshoe program with the education and outreach program because they have specific learning needs and interests and/or are too large a group to participate in the public interpretive snowshoe programs. Most programs focus on winter ecology or winter safety themes and content. Occasionally, programs are primarily recreational in nature.

Because the groups are fairly large, consisting of 10 – 30 people, and because there are numerous safety considerations on a snowshoe hike, such as hypothermia, altitude sickness, getting lost without established trails, and nighttime and winter safety, education snowshoe volunteers have been recruited over the years to help provide a safe and enjoyable experience for our participants.

Purpose:

To increase safety for the education and outreach groups on snowshoe programs, enhance the participants' experience, and support the participants' learning.

Volunteers will help accomplish this purpose by:

1. Trailing at the back of education and outreach groups to keep the group together.
2. Assisting with equipment problems.
3. Assisting with visitor emergencies and escorting cold or sick participants back to their vehicles.
4. Providing a second set of eyes to look out for the well-being and safety of the group.
5. Providing one-on-one interaction with the participants to enhance their experience and support their learning.

Duties:

1. Assist the education staff with the execution of winter snowshoe programs.
2. Assist participants with their snowshoes and equipment problems.
3. Provide additional group management support.
4. Hike at the end of a group with a radio to ensure that the group stays together and stays safe.
5. Communicate with the lead ranger via radio to keep the group together and to report problems.
6. Accompany sick, cold, or injured participants safely back to the trailhead or to their car.
7. Provide participants with guidance on *Leave No Trace* expectations and appropriate behavior.
8. Interact with participants at the rear of the hiking group to enhance their experience and support the learning.
9. Provide participants with accurate information when interacting with them during a program.
10. Serve as a supportive team member with other volunteers and park staff.
11. Work at high altitude in adverse weather conditions for extended periods of time.

Skills and Abilities Required:

1. Must have a broad knowledge of the park and its wildlife.
2. Must have experience working with youth. Experience working in an outdoor environment is preferred.
3. Must have knowledge of student development stages and age appropriate instructional strategies.
4. Must be comfortable hiking in snowshoes and working in wintery conditions.
5. Must be able to work at altitudes over 9,000 feet for extended periods of time.
6. Must be comfortable dealing with high stress situations (examples: medical emergencies).
7. Must be able to maintain a professional, calm, and courteous demeanor in all situations and interact appropriately with students of all ages.
8. Must be comfortable engaging and communicating with others.
9. Must be comfortable working with a team.

Working Conditions, Physical Demands, and Potential Challenges:

Education snowshoe volunteers may work at Sprague Lake, Hallowell Park, Hidden Valley, and the Bear Lake area. The majority of hikes leave from the Bear Lake Trailhead and loop up to Nymph Lake and back, a distance of one mile and an elevation gain of about 250 feet. Volunteers must be prepared to work at elevations between 9,000 and 10,500 feet, hike up to three miles and elevation gains of up to 700 feet. Volunteers can expect to hike in snowshoes through packed and icy snow and/or deep soft snow. Hiking in the snow can take up to three times the effort as hiking the same trail in dry condition. In the winter, the conditions are often cold and windy. For individuals who are not accustomed to high elevations, it is suggested they contact their health care providers about potential complications with medication or medical conditions that are aggravated by high elevations before making a commitment to this position.

Working with students can be an additional challenge of the job. Students, especially young students, often need assistance with moving through the snow and help with equipment problems. Because the groups are captive audiences, not every student who participates wants to be there or has the physical condition required for the activity. As a result, students can have behavioral issues that take patience and effort to manage.

Training Provided:

1. Radio operations and communications.
2. Site and equipment orientation.
3. Program procedures and processes.
4. Winter ecology and safety.
5. Student development levels and age appropriate instruction, interactions, and management.
6. Park rules and regulations with emphasis on *Leave No Trace*
7. Emergency procedures

Time commitment:

Attend 1 full day of training on January 6th. Be available to volunteer the third week in January through the last week in March. Programs are usually scheduled from 10am – 2pm.

Uniforms:

VIP uniforms are required for this position. The park will provide a uniform shirt, hat, wind breaker, and Gore-Tex jacket. Volunteers must provide their own dark brown pants and comfortable neutral colored shoes/boots. Volunteers may be reimbursed up to \$20 for two pair of brown pants.

Other Considerations:

No housing or stipend is provided.