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It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference.
~Tom Brokaw

Recognition Gifts!

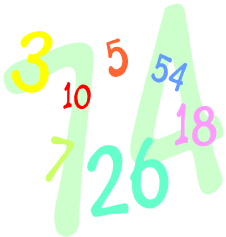
If you volunteered 40 hours or more between October 1, 2011 and now and have yet to receive your volunteer tote bag, please stop by the VIP Office!

Volunteer Program Reports Fiscal Year 2012 hours

Every year around this time, volunteer programs throughout the National Park Service are busy collecting volunteer paperwork, last-minute timesheets and calculating hours. Volunteer program participants and hours are submitted to the regional office who then report those hours to the Washington Office. Regional VIP Program budgets are determined based on the number of hours and volunteers reported each fiscal year… and each park gets a percentage of funding based on their hours compared to the rest of the region.

This year, Rocky volunteers got a tremendous amount of work done in the park… from making informal visitor contacts, presenting programs, participating in resource stewardship projects, working in the museum, to camphosting, among many other duties. All of us at Rocky Mountain National Park are grateful for the work of our volunteers and their commitment to the park! Thank you for all that you do!

And now… the numbers!
Fiscal Year 2008: 1,440 Volunteers served 104,492 hours
Fiscal Year 2009: 1,623 Volunteers served 106,475 hours
Fiscal Year 2010: 1,697 Volunteers served 102,240 hours
Fiscal Year 2011: 1,698 Volunteers served 104,725 hours
Fiscal Year 2012: 1,670 Volunteers served 102,201 hours!



If you're wondering why the numbers are slightly down this year, we had several groups cancel early in the summer due to the fires in Colorado.

Additional Fun Facts about this year's hours:
110 volunteers donated 100-199 hours
48 volunteers donated 200-299 hours
37 volunteers donated 300-399 hours
27 volunteers donated 400-499 hours
10 volunteers donated 500-599 hours
10 volunteers donated 600-699 hours
10 volunteers donated 700-799 hours
3 volunteers donated 800-899 hours
2 volunteers donated 900-999 hours
4 volunteers donated over 1,000 hours this year!

A special thanks to Bud Lester for creating our Access Database, which has allowed us to accurately track each volunteer's contributions to the park. Also thanks to, Flo Bielat, Penny Windsor and Don Seedle for spending hundreds of hours entering volunteer information and time into the database!

We appreciate each of you and every hour that you have donated to Rocky Mountain National Park. We look forward to working with you in Fiscal Year 2013!

Rocky Nominees for the George and Helen Hartzog Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service

"When a VIP agrees to share his talents, skills and interests with the National Park Service, he is paying us one of the highest compliments possible by offering a most valued possession – his time"
–George B. Hartzog Jr.

George Hartzog was the Director of the National Park Service (NPS) from 1964-1972, during which time he understood the need and created the NPS Volunteers in Parks Program. Each year, the NPS recognizes volunteers at the park, regional and national levels for their service above and beyond the call of duty. This year, Rocky Mountain National Park submitted two nominations for the Hartzog Awards.

Leslie Glover – Outstanding Volunteer Service – Individual -Nominated by Rainey McKenna

In Leslie's first year of volunteer service to the National Park Service, she has committed over 40 hours a week to the education program at Rocky Mountain National Park, as well as volunteered additional time to work with the interpretive and emergency service operations. Her volunteer contributions to the education program have brought more continuity and efficiency to our program, enabled us to serve more students, and enabled us to develop a distance learning program.

The education program, like many programs in the park service, operates on a shoe string and is continuously striving to do more than we can. When Leslie arrived, she brought a willingness to tackle all of the small day-to-day needs of the program that are often missed due to limited time and resources, but are critical to the success and efficiency of the program. Additionally, she has participated in over six weeks of training to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to support the program as a field educator, coordinates the Discovery Day program and Discovery Day Docents, and coordinates the Estes Park school programs. While these incredible contributions have enabled our program to do more and do it better, her most significant contribution to our program and our park has been the development of distance learning resources. Leslie is managing and coordinating the development of a series of online teacher guides, as well as series of educational podcasts. These online resources will enable us to reach a larger audience and promote greater understanding of the park's resources. The development of these resources has been a goal of the education program for many years, but could not have been accomplished without Leslie's efforts.

Leslie Glover has donated 2,234 hours of service to Rocky Mountain from June 2011 – September 2012.

Cheley Camp – Outstanding Volunteer Service – Youth Group – Nominated by Flo Bielat

In the 2011/2012 season, 177 Cheley Camp volunteers did exceptional work in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), resulting in improved visitor experiences, safer trails and improved visibility along roadsides. Additionally, by manually removing non-native plants, these campers helped Rocky maintain its original and natural state. The campers, ages 11-17, completed twelve service projects over eight weeks and contributed 1,193 hours of service to the NPS. This group carried on Cheley's 90-year tradition of volunteering in Rocky Mountain. The first group of Cheley volunteers came in 1921 and camped at the then, Bear Lake Trail Camp in RMNP. About 400 campers arrive at Cheley each year. Of the 400 campers, 100 are supported by the John Austin Cheley Foundation (named after Frank Cheley's son). These 100 campers are deserving kids that otherwise would not be able to afford the camping experience. These campers are integrated into the population and all are treated equally. Their financial status is not considered important.

Three Cheers for Cheley!

This year's volunteers that are being nominated proved themselves especially reliable and dedicated, and they had a fun, positive work ethic. This group always displayed and practiced the Cheley Camp motto, "integrity, service before self and excellence in all you do." All supervising rangers reported their tasks were successfully completed. Of the Cheley Camp volunteers, the rangers said, "Bring them back." It's the ultimate compliment.

Work included trail construction at Alpine Ridge Trail (which is nearly 11,800 feet above sea level) smoothing tread around Sprague Lake and road maintenance with Road Hog volunteers (included cleaning ditch line, hauling logs uphill and loading them into dump trucks). Cheley campers are now experts in identifying and removing non-native musk thistle from meadows, roadsides and around campground areas. They planted, salvaged and watered plants along Trail Ridge Road.

These amazing volunteers always created a positive work environment. They would discuss current events, sing, play games, quiz each other on names of mountain peaks, while always learning and interpreting the environment around them. On several projects, the Cheley volunteers challenged themselves to find the first musk thistle, and the longest mullein root. On one occasion the Cheley Girls came dressed in tiaras and tutus. After all, they were coming to pick up trash on the *Gem* Lake Trail. They made potentially mundane jobs fun.

Cheley Camp always instills stewardship of the environment in its programs and campers, realizing that Rocky is a conduit in this process. The Cheley volunteers enjoy a memorable experience in Rocky and they help other visitors enjoy the park. When these volunteers are in the park, they partner with staff to respect, protect and preserve their playground. While they don't use the term "stewardship," these young volunteers are stewards at heart. They've learned that not partnering with "Mother Nature" will have consequences for the outdoor places and spaces they love.

Cheley volunteers represent the past, present and future of Rocky Mountain National Park. Many of their parents and grandparents camped at Cheley and volunteered in Rocky … many are veteran volunteers at Rocky Mountain today. They passed on to their children and grandchildren the memorable wilderness experiences and lifelong commitment to volunteerism. From this 2011/ 2012 season, the Cheley volunteers will take away not only the pride of accomplishment in what they achieved, they will also take away that spirit of stewardship and volunteerism. And, no doubt, they will pass it on to the next generation. This partnership is a circle of family and friends that will continue for many generations to come!

Kid Power by Flo Bielat

Ever wonder how the Western Painted Turtle became our Colorado state reptile? I'm thrilled to share this little tidbit.

In 2007, Jay Baichi's 4th grade class began the process to get the Western Painted Turtle designated as the Colorado State Reptile. The following year, his new 4th grade class completed the legal process and on March 18, 2008, Governor Ritter signed HB08-1017 designating the Western Painted Turtle our state reptile.

These two remarkable 4th grade classes researched Colorado reptiles and decided that the Western Painted Turtle was most representative of Colorado reptiles. The turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*) is a common sight around many Colorado ponds and lakes. Next time you are hiking and near a pond or lake with your kids or grand-kids, look for this turtle and share the POWER OF KIDS.

A morning at Brainard Lake
by Flo Bielat

I recently spent one of my days off traveling to Brainard Lake with volunteer friends. Our plan was to enjoy the fall colors and, hopefully, photograph moose. Many cars were parked along the road near the lake. One of the many photographers already there was on the roof of his car. So I'm thinking, this must be the place. We get out of the car and immediately see a family of moose. We grab our cameras and begin taking pictures. A very excited lady runs over to us pointing out the mother and a baby moose. She exclaimed the dad was not far off watching the family. Within minutes, we hear the male moose grunt and move toward the female and baby. Our friends immediately recognized that the moose wanted to cross the road.

The photographers are now running and lining up to capture this family crossing. The female moose saunters across; the baby moose follows. Now comes the "Big Boy." Dad is grunting and not looking too happy. However, to the delight of the photographers, he struts across the road and begins rubbing the velvet off his antlers on the trees and brush.
At one point, when the moose were crossing the road, the photographers, with their long lenses and expensive gear, were in their glory. Their cameras firing sounded like a presidential news conference. It was very exciting.

All of this happened in a matter of minutes. We were amazed at the joy and happiness of that very special moment. We were so close to these magnificent animals. Everyone just turned to each other and had the broadest of smiles. I sensed a feeling of contentment and accomplishment. We were, for a few moments, in the inner space of these wild animals. Reflecting later on this wildlife encounter, I realized how fortunate we are to live in this beautiful and wondrous part of the country.

The Polish Tatra/Rocky Mountain Volunteer Programs By Lindsey Prell

From September 14-29, I had the unique fortune of going on a staff exchange to Rocky Mountain's sister park in Poland, the Tatra National Park. In 2007, Rocky and Tatra signed their first sister park agreement and then renewed it again in April of this year during a visit by Vaughn Baker, Ben Bobowski and Kyle Patterson. The sister park agreement sets the stage for an exchange of technical support and assistance between the two parks. In April the request was made by the staff at the Tatra to send staff from Rocky Mountain for assistance with rehabilitating, building and managing trails and assistance with the development and management of their volunteer program. At that time, the decision was made to send Danny Basch, Rocky's Facility Manager of Operations, and me, Rocky's Volunteer Program Manager, to provide this assistance. Needless to say, Danny and I both felt incredibly honored to be chosen for the exchange.

The Tatra National Park began their volunteer program in 2007 after the first visit by their staff to Rocky Mountain. Through that visit they learned how Rocky incorporated volunteers into nearly every aspect of park operations. It was easy to see that the program was successful here and they wanted to see how it would fare in Poland.

Beginning a volunteer program in the Tatra wasn't nearly as easy as it sounds. Through their dynamic country's history, there has been a low rate of volunteerism. In fact, "volunteer" is a new word in the Polish language. Since Poland is just twenty-three years out of communism, the idea of volunteering is still associated with compulsory collectivism promoted during that time. The country also has a low standard of living amongst older people, with low retirement pay and pensions. So, the staff of the Tatra got creative with how and where they would find their volunteers and how to promote this new idea.

Although their volunteer program began in 2007, it really gained momentum in 2009 with the designation of Jan Krzeptowski as the park's Volunteer Coordinator. Jan was already working in the park and had a degree in forestry. In fact, he has just completed his Masters of forestry with a thesis on the development of the volunteer program in the Tatra. Because of the statistics required for his thesis, Jan has a tremendous amount of graphs and charts about the demographics of his volunteers. He also had ties to universities and began recruiting volunteers through their schools and through creative use of social media (like Facebook and YouTube).

The Volunteers from the Tatra National Park along with Danny Basch and Lindsey Prell, September 2012

Although the volunteer programs of Rocky and Tatra are very different, Both Jan and I had a lot to learn from one another. One of the things that I thought was most interesting was that despite the demographic of our volunteers being different (generally), the reason why people volunteer at Rocky Mountain and the Tatra are quite similar… for the love of the mountains, nature and to give back.

Danny and I spent one evening out with the volunteers in an area outside of Zakopane in the Koscielisko Valley. Jan was doing a training for the volunteers that evening and invited us to join them. Jan does an incredible amount of training with his volunteers and has a test that has each one of them take before they begin volunteering. They get tested on the natural and cultural history of the park. If they pass, they can volunteer, but if they fail, they have to go home.

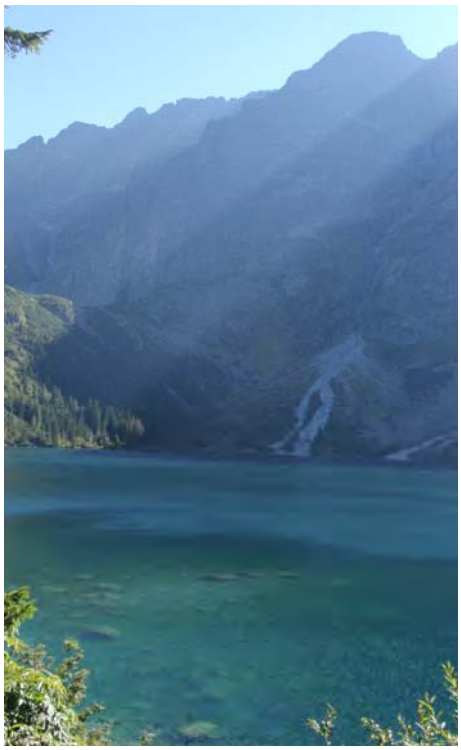
That evening, we walked up the Valley with Jan and several of his volunteers. He stopped at various points along the way to teach them about the history of the area so that they could pass the information along to visitors through their interpretive programming. The majority of the interpretive programs at the Tatra are run by volunteers! As we were walking, we also picked up litter and had some great conversations. The volunteers were very curious about our volunteer program at Rocky and were amazed that we had nearly 1,700 volunteers in 2011!

That evening, we roasted kielbasa at a campfire back at the volunteer housing area. No 'smores in Poland! The entire trip was a great learning experience for me and I hope to incorporate some of their ideas into our volunteer program here (don't worry, though… you won't be tested).

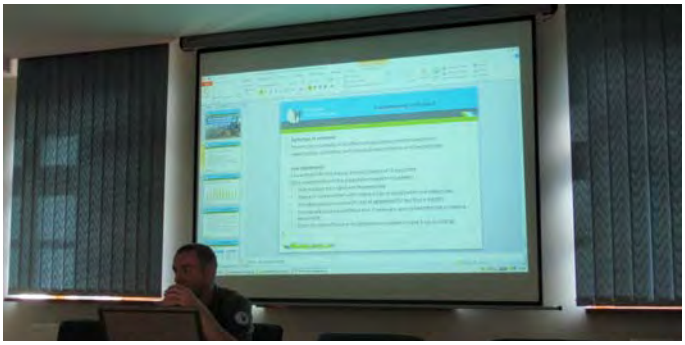
Danny and I will be doing a brown bag lunch/talk and I'll also be doing an evening presentation to share pictures and stories from our trip at some point this fall or winter. Stay tuned for dates and times!

Lindsey and Jan, Volunteer Coordinators

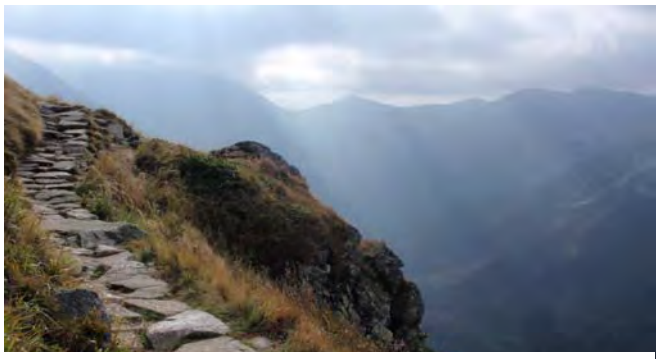
Jan doing a training activity with the volunteers of the Tatra National Park



Morskie Oko, a beautiful lake in the Polish Tatra



Learning about the Tatra's volunteer program



A view from the trail on the border of Poland and Slovakia

The Fern Lake Fire. This photo was taken from the front porch of the Volunteer Office, October 9, 2012

A special thanks to all of the volunteers who have assisted park staff this year during emergency events such as search and rescues and fires in and around the park. Most recently during the Fern Lake Fire, we have had volunteers call and stop by the office to see what they can do to help. Thank you!

If you live within a thirty-minute drive of the park and are interested in getting on our local call-out list to assist in emergency situations, please email: Lindsey_Prell@nps.gov with your name and home or cell phone numbers.

Thank you for all that you continue to do to help us protect park resources and keep our neighbors and visitors safe.

Rocky Mountain National Park wins the 2012 Take Pride in America Award For Outstanding Volunteer Program Nomination by Larry Frederick

Drop by the VIP Office to see the beautiful TPA award!

In the early 1990's Rocky Mountain National Park created a part-time position to fulfill the duties as Volunteer Program Coordinator. The 1990's were a period of economic prosperity and early retirements. Talented, skilled and passionate supporters of the park joined the park as volunteers in large numbers. The Volunteer In Parks (VIP) program at Rocky grew enormously during the decade to one of the largest and most successful programs in the National Park Service (NPS).

Over the last 10 years park management has shown leadership in the area of volunteerism by continually supporting the program, encouraging expansion where practical, and seeking funding to grow the operation. Using Centennial Challenge funds, the lead position is now a full-time GS-301-9 Volunteer Program Coordinator. The same funds were used to expand staff assistance to include a six month GS-303-04 Volunteer Program Assistant. In 2012, a GS-303-5 summer seasonal position was added to the staff on the west side of the park to provide support to over 100 summer volunteers. The VIP Office uses a 32 hour per-week volunteer and local volunteers to supplement the administrative needs of such a large program. In 2011, 1698 volunteers contributed 104,725 hours of time valued at $2.236 million to the park. The program stands as the ninth largest (based on hours) program in the National Park Service and is on track in 2012 to be as large or larger than last year. The VIP Office now consists of its own office building and a separate uniform and awards cache building.

Each year two major volunteer recognition events take place – one of each side of the park. Park Managers are in attendance at both, participate in the recognition and awards ceremony and welcomes the opportunity to thank volunteers for their service to the park. Over 300 volunteers attend the two events annually. At the events, not only are volunteers given non-monetary awards based on the total number of hours contributed (fleece VIP vests, fleece VIP jackets and nametag drop-down bars for hours contributed starting at 3,000 hours) but a NPS supervisor or work leader receives a $500 Star Award for their leadership within the volunteer program. This is meant to inspire other supervisors to not only seek out and work with volunteers but to do so in a positive and meaningful way.

One of the unique features of the program is that many of the volunteers contribute their time to a park group or team. The Sled Dawgs assist the ranger staff in running the winter snow play area starting each December. The Elk Bugle Corps, numbering over 60 VIPs, are in the park each evening in the fall educating visitors on the elk rut, seeking compliance with meadow closures and assisting with traffic flow and congestion. The Tundra Guardians work above treeline in the summer managing wildlife jams, keeping visitors off the fragile tundra, and assisting visitor centers alongside paid staff increasing our capacity to answer visitors questions and help plan their visit. The VIP Office has over 100 position descriptions for jobs that volunteers can sign up to accomplish throughout the park.

Many of the park volunteers who are assigned to work in teams accomplish work related to resource protection. The Tundra Guardians (new in 2011), Chow Busters (keep visitors from feeding animals), the Bighorn Brigade (protect bighorn sheep), the Elk Bugle Corps, the Resource Wranglers (exotic plant management), Road Hogs (road upkeep) and others directly improve and protect park resources beyond what the park staff could do alone. When a resource issue is brought to management's attention, one of the questions asked is "what can volunteers do to help us solve or manage this problem."

Not only does the park organize individuals into teams of volunteers, but they also seek out different groups from throughout the region to come and volunteer as a unit. Many of these are organized non-profits such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H, church groups, but even corporate groups as well. In 2011, 85 groups consisting of 999 volunteers contributed 12,604 hours. A sample of some of the diverse groups includes: American Alpine Club, Whole Foods Market, American Conservation Corps (locally organized youth work program), Wildland Restoration Volunteers, Cheley Camp, Roncalli High School, Student Conservation Corps, Glenwood Lutheran Church, Texas Trail Tamers, Larimer County Youth Conservation Corps and Rocky Mountain Nature Association (primary park partner).

(Take Pride in America Awards cont.)

One unique program has been developed with the local Eagle Rock High School, an alternative high school program funded by the Honda Foundation.

Based on faculty recommendations, a small but very diverse group of students are chosen to volunteer at the park, take additional park related course work and secure a late summer seasonal position with the park as a result. Many of the students have returned as seasonal employees, have been inspired to further their education in land management related majors after high school, and/or sought out employment opportunities to continue working for the NPS.

The NPS has a national agreement with the Student Conservation Association and Groundwork USA. Using local or national funding under Superintendent Bakers leadership, the park has funded SCA high school trails crews and a three week program with Groundwork Denver which specializes in working with underserved populations and exposing them to meaningful park work and career opportunities.

Each year the VIP Office staff seeks out and submits nominations for the NPS George and Helen Hartzog Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service. In the past, the Colorado Mountain Club, a major contributor to the park VIP program, won the national award for the most outstanding volunteer group that year in the NPS. Recently, the park VIP program was recognized as the most outstanding VIP program in the Intermountain Region of the NPS and last year a volunteer researcher won the Enduring Service Award at the regional level. The Sled Dawgs have received the regional safety award. When and where it makes sense, and we feel that we can compete well, groups and individuals are nominated for awards or recognition.

Additional volunteer efforts are underway or being considered. Each September the park supports and provides volunteers for the Public Lands Day initiative in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service who is the local lead agency. With input from the new VIP Coordinator, who transferred to Rocky from Yosemite this spring, the park is looking at adding "work vacations" to the offerings next year through the "Road Scholar – Adventures in Life Long Learning" program. Finally, experienced park volunteers are being trained as mentors for other volunteers so that leadership of the program can expand.

Overall, the VIP Program at Rocky Mountain National Park is vigorous, successful and effective. Leadership and support from Superintendent Baker and park Managers have allowed the program to strive and contribute to the successful management of the park. Volunteers "rock" at Rocky!!

Larry Frederick, (top right) at the Take Pride in America Awards on behalf of the park, October 2012. The Service-wide VIP Coordinator for the NPS is Joy Pietschmann, (top middle)

"Volunteering at Rocky"
By Larry Frederick, Chief of Interpretation (Retiring January 3, 2013)

While attending Colorado State University during my senior year, 1971-1972, I learned of the volunteer program at Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). I was studying Park and Recreation Management in the College of Forestry and had met several park employees. Not only was I impressed with the quality of the staff but also the mission of the National Park Service (NPS). I thought it would be a good fit for me so I applied to be a volunteer. In January of 1972 I started working weekends at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center (BMVC) and at Hidden Valley. At BMVC we sold RMNA books, issued backcountry permits, served as the weekend radio dispatcher, and assisted visitors. When we had time, we grabbed a bite of lunch! At Hidden Valley Ski Area, the NPS operated a building which included a public lunch room, a first aid room/ranger station, a large viewing area, an information booth and a small auditorium. I answered questions, gave short programs or showed movies in the auditorium, helped in the first aid room, handled lost and found and conducted a few snowshoe walks in the area. Both locations gave me a chance to experience the field of interpretation and helped launch my career. I worked most every weekend that spring until I graduated. The next winter I was hired as a GS-3 to do much of the same thing – they only had enough funds to hire me for five weeks! I then stayed on as a volunteer until I started work at Wind Cave National Park in April – my first summer seasonal position. When I travelled the hallways of park headquarters in 1972, I saw the Chief of Interpretation working in his office. It was then that I decided that I wanted to be a Chief in a large park. While the thought of returning to RMNP was always on my mind, little did I know at the start of my career that I would occupy the same building at the end of my 40-year career. I have had the pleasure of adding seven other assignments to the list of wonderful parks I worked in yet returning to Rocky has been one of my greatest joys. And, working with volunteers has been a simple pleasure. Thanks for all you do as volunteers for the park. You make a huge difference! I look forward to seeing you on the trail!

The Sled Dawgs at Hidden Valley are looking for a few more volunteers for this season!

Duties:

Snow Play Area VIPs work at the designated snow play area at Hidden Valley to provide information and assistance to visitors who wish to engage in permissible winter recreational activities. Duties include:

1. Greeting visitors.
2. Providing information about the park's winter recreational activities and associated regulations.
3. Providing emergency assistance to visitors in need.
4. Reporting significant law enforcement, search and rescue, and medical incidents to proper authorities.
5. Performing minor resource management and maintenance projects, such as picking up litter, installing and moving signs, and removing snow jumps.

Skills, Experience and Other Factors:

Snow Play Area VIPs must be comfortable meeting and dealing with a variety of park visitors. They must be familiar with park regulations, especially those related to winter activities, and be able to convey this information to visitors. Volunteers may be required by their supervisor to drive and/or ride in a government vehicle. Volunteers with vehicle requirements will need to possess a valid driver's license.

Working Conditions and Physical Demands:

Snow Play Area volunteers work outdoors in winter conditions at elevations between 7,500 and 9,000 feet. They must be in good physical condition and accustomed to cold weather. For individuals who are not accustomed to high elevations, it is suggested they contact their doctor about potential complications with medication or medical conditions that are aggravated by high elevations before making a commitment to this position.

Time Commitment:

Snow Play Area VIPs usually work one or two days per week.

Season:

Normally late November to early April. Weekends only except for during Holidays (see below).
During Holidays (i.e. Christmas and Spring Break) open 7 days a week.

For more information, please call the VIP Office: 970-586-1330

From the Westside Volunteer Program

News! Rocky Mountain National Park would like to congratulate Andrew Redman for his new permanent Federal position in Lakewood, Colorado at the National Business Center! We were sad to see him leave – what a guy! – but we're so happy for him and his new endeavor. Maybe we can convince him to come up and volunteer at Rocky next summer!

Dear Volunteers,

With the season coming to an end, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for an amazing summer. I wake up every day thankful to be in this magnificent place and to work with such inspiring people.

The Volunteers-In-Parks program is crucial to the National Park Service (NPS). Many programs, NPS-wide, are dependent on the generosity of volunteers such as yourself. Whether this is your first or 10,000 hour, you are truly an invaluable asset to the NPS.

Know that your gift to the park is of the utmost importance. Every hour you give this park, is an hour that will help preserve it for us and for future generations. While our time will come and go, the time we give to the land will be here forever. You are environmental stewards and a part of a legacy that includes the greats John Muir, Enos Mills and Aldo Leopold. If the land could speak it would thank you and hold you in the highest regard.

Thank you for the most valuable gift; the gift of time,
Andrew Redman, Volunteer Program Assistant
Rocky Mountain National Park, CRD

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Volunteer Program Office
Rocky Mountain National Park
1000 Highway 36
Estes Park, CO 80517

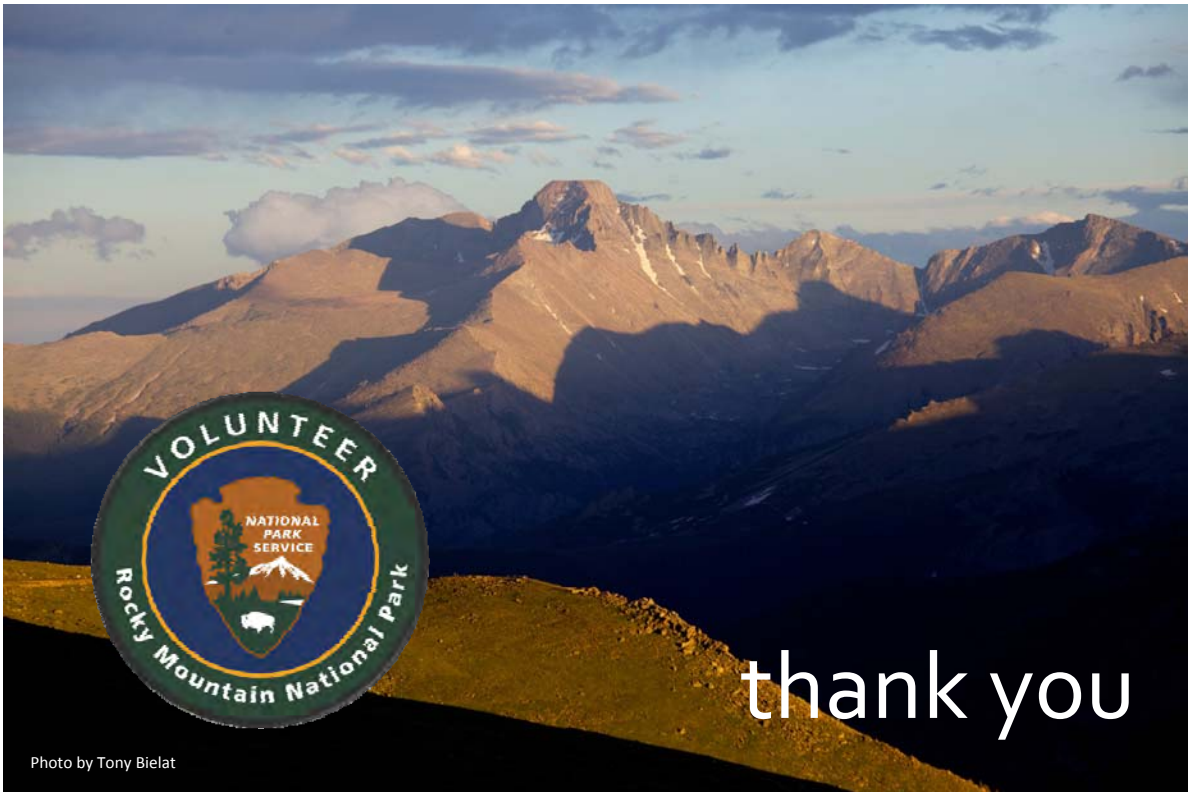


Photo by Tony Bielat

VIP Office Hours:
Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

VIP Office Location:
In the Utility Area behind the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center

VIP Office Phone:
970-586-1330