



Intern Handbook



The Liberty Nature Center's mission is to enhance the lives of citizens by promoting wildlife conservation through environmental education.

Welcome & Introduction

We are pleased to welcome you to our volunteer team at the Liberty Nature Center. You are joining a group of incredible people who dedicate their time to helping wildlife. From waking up at 3am to feed an orphaned animal to cleaning up after an event, volunteers play a vital role in our success and the success of the hundreds of wildlife patients we see each year.

This handbook has been written with the intent to serve volunteers as a reference for operating policies and procedures. Additionally, this version of the volunteer handbook provides incoming and current interns with information they need to be successful in their positions. By abiding by these policies and procedures, you will be contributing to the successful rehabilitation and care for the animals at our facility. This handbook also will serve as a rulebook. The rules and regulations set forth are direct orders from the director, CEO, and/or Board of Directors. Volunteers in violation of rules or policies will be subject to discipline which will also be covered in this handbook. Our rules and policies are in place for your safety and the wellbeing of our animals and organization.

Furthermore, this handbook should keep everybody on the same system. Consistency is key to ensuring smooth operation of our procedures. Amendments to the handbook will occur and should be kept up with as needed. If at any time, you have questions about any of the material in this handbook or anything that involves the Liberty Nature Center, please feel free to ask a leader in the club or the Director.

Thank you again for choosing to intern with us. We are happy to have you on board with us and hope you find your duties challenging, rewarding, and enjoyable.

About Us

The Liberty Nature Center (LNC) began in 2013 when the former SWHS Raptor Rehabilitation Center decided it would be best to break away from a single school and open the program to anyone interested in caring or learning about native wildlife. Once the decision was made to move off of a school's campus, the LNC purchased 28 acres and began building a state of the art wildlife center. In April of 2014, the organization officially moved into their new home.

While we focus on the rehabilitation of Birds of Prey, we also care for sick, injured, and orphaned reptiles, mammals, and other types of birds. In most cases, we are a temporary stop for rehabilitation animals before they are transferred to a more apt facility or released. However, we do have the responsibility of caring for multiple animals that cannot be returned to the wild. Caring for them means ensuring fresh food & water and enrichment opportunities each day, as well as medical care when needed. Dedicated staff and volunteers provide the man force needed to care for our collection, which also includes maintenance of the 28 acres & facilities.

Most of the animals that we must keep are then used as educational ambassadors. The Liberty Nature Center delivers multiple education programs each month with live animals that touch the heart of thousands each year. Our education department has expanded to include multiple programs for varying ages and backgrounds.

The Liberty Nature Center is recognized as a 501(c)3 organization, making us a tax exempt, non-profit organization. We also operate with Federal and State permits. We hold a Federal Eagle Exhibition Permit, a Federal Rehabilitation

Permit, and a State Rehabilitation Permit through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA Licensure and the KY Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources. These permits enable our organization to legally care for the wildlife species at our facility. The Liberty Nature Center adheres to the IWRC & NWRA Minimum Standards of Wildlife Rehabilitation, 4th Edition. In addition, we are currently working towards AZA Accreditation, a highly prestigious credentials.

What is Wildlife Rehabilitation?

Wildlife Rehabilitation is the “treatment and temporary care of injured, diseased, and displaced Indigenous wildlife and the subsequent return of health animals to appropriate habitats in the wild... Successful rehabilitation results in the release of wild animals that are able to recognize and obtain the appropriate foods, select mates of their own species and reproduce, and show the appropriate fear of potential dangers (People, cars, dogs, etc.)” –National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA)

We try to keep wildlife wild. This means that when we receive an animal from the wild, our top priority is providing the necessary care to ensure a healthy recovery and release for the animal.

Unfortunately, being a wildlife rehabilitator means accepting the inevitable. Some animals will not make it through the rehabilitation process. When LNC accepts an animal for care, we also accept the responsibility to ensure the animal will have a good quality of life. This includes ensuring no animal is subject to prolonged physical or psychological suffering. In order to meet this standard, some animals will be humanely euthanized by our veterinarian. Volunteers are not required to be a part of this, however, volunteers should prepare themselves for death and euthanasia of animals.

The NWRA Wildlife Rehabilitators Code of Ethics states:

“A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to provide professional and humane care in all phases of wildlife rehabilitation, respecting the wildness and maintaining the dignity of each animal in life and in death. Releasable animals should be maintained in a wild condition and released as soon as appropriate. Non-releasable animals which are inappropriate for education, foster-parenting, or captive breeding have a right to euthanasia.”

A copy of the minimum standards is available to ALL volunteers to use at their leisure on property. The standards provide a detailed account of standards we must maintain at the Liberty Nature Center.

Intern Requirements, Duties, and Rights

A complete job description detailing the duties and rights of interns is included in the initial folder interns receive. The job description and contract should be signed and brought the first day of orientation. Interns will keep a copy and a copy will be on file at the nature center in the intern's file.

The Internship Program- An Overview

The following are some of the components we will be implementing this summer.

1. **Weekly Staff Meetings**- Every week at 6:00pm we will host a MANDATORY staff meeting. Interns are required to attend. At the meetings, we will discuss things that went well in the past week, upcoming events or projects, and address any major issues that should be addressed.
2. **Seminars**- We will have 5 seminars spaced out throughout the 10-week window. In most cases, seminars will be two hours and begin immediately after the weekly staff meetings. Seminars will be a continuation of training and will cover a different topic each seminar. Seminars are also mandatory. You can check the calendar for seminar dates & times.
3. **Intern Boot Camp**- We will set two full days to have Intern Boot Camp. Boot Camp will be where most your training is done. We will focus on hands on applications and knowledge development (and a few team building activities). At the end of Boot Camp, interns will be ready to fully immerse in day-to-day operations at the nature center. Intern Boot Camp will include learning how to safely handle wildlife and successful completion will result in the issuance of a key to the facility.
4. **Projects**- During your internship, you will be responsible for completing and aiding in projects. We will discuss project due dates and specifics during orientation.
 - a. **Individual Project**- You will work on a project that directly relates to your focus area and develops a skill or experience you will need for your future job.
 - b. **Team Project**- You and three other interns will team up to work on a large project for the nature center.
5. **One-on-Ones**- You will have a one-on-one meeting every four weeks with the director to discuss the internship, your perceived success, evaluations, and progress. The one-on-ones will ensure clear communication and that you are gaining the experience you need to get a job post-graduation.
6. **Cross-training**- Interns will participate in cross training so that they gain at-least some experience in other departments.

Working in an animal environment is very rewarding for animal lovers, however, the job also has a lot of challenges. Consistency is one of the main challenges workers in the zoological field face. For this reason, while we try to plan everything as much as possible, changes to the plans will occur and flexibility on the intern's behalf will be beneficial to their success in the zoological field.

An Ideal Workplace & The Grievance Process

The Liberty Nature Center will strive to offer all staff & volunteers the ideal workplace. This means that harassment, bullying, or discrimination of any kind by volunteers will not be tolerated. Instances constituting a non-ideal workplace include but are not limited to ethnic or racial slurs, inappropriate verbal or physical conduct, jokes or comments relating to one's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, income, disability, or more. Contributing to an unhealthy workplace will result in serious consequences that may include termination of your position. No volunteer should experience unsolicited or unwelcome sexual overtures from an employee or volunteer. Any incident that contributes to an unhealthy workplace should be reported to the Director in a timely manner.

A volunteer who has concern about a volunteer work-related issue should discuss the issue with their direct supervisor or director. Every attempt will be made to resolve the problem in house. If a matter remains unresolved, further actions may take place.

Conflict of Interest

Volunteers have the duty to act in the best interest of the program and are to refrain from engaging in any activity resulting in potential, perceived, or actual conflicts of interest including personal, professional, or business, with those of Liberty Nature Center. All volunteers of the organization are required to observe the highest standard of business ethics.

Good Samaritan Service

Volunteers are subject to public interaction in all positions. It is vital for volunteers to offer our clients, visitors, and donors the best customer service possible. We must remember that the general public is not familiar with the day to day knowledge and situations we take for granted. Thus, good Samaritan dropping off an injured animal or a visitor seeing a bald eagle up close may be in a heightened emotional state. Volunteers must remain professional and respectful always.

When dealing with the public, remember that as a volunteer you represent the Liberty Nature Center and have a vital role in enhancing the visitors' perception of Liberty Nature Center. Always be friendly and helpful. Make each experience educational and personable. If you experience frustration with a visitor or client or cannot assist them, politely direct them to the appropriate staff member (including unruly visitors).

In addition, please remember that discussing the "negative" parts of rehab is not recommended. Regardless of if an animal is in bad shape, reassure the client the animal is in good hands and NEVER discuss euthanizing animals or death. ALWAYS thank clients and visitors for their support.

Visitors of Volunteers

Visitors are not allowed on premises unless prior notice is given or the facility is opened to the public. This is for the safety and comfort of the animals and facilities. If your family, friends, or acquaintances want to visit, they should schedule a visit in advance.

During public hours, visitors are welcome but must check in at the main office with the Supervisor on duty.

Scheduling

Interns will be given a schedule at the end of orientation. The schedule is in place to promote structure and organization. However, as mentioned earlier the zoological environment is almost never consistent and scheduling may vary slightly from week to week. In addition, we understand the need for interns to vary from their schedule from time to time and will approach scheduling with flexibility.

Schedules are made and distributed online using Volgistics, an online scheduling software. At orientation, volunteers will be given their login information and a tutorial on how to use volgistics. Volgistics allows interns to pick up shifts, drop shifts, and communicate with their team.

Recording Hours

It is very important for funding opportunities and quality control to have an accurate reflection of volunteers. Additionally, interns are required to complete 25 hours of service and must log these hours to ensure the requirement is met.

You will keep track of your hours in two places. You will have an Intern time sheet to write down the exact times you work and a short description on what you worked on. There is also an online section of Volgistics that you will be required to report the total number of hours too.

Non-working hours such as breaks do not count as a part of your 25 hours and must be recorded separately.

Resignation

Interns wishing to resign should notify the Director or CEO in writing. We ask that you spend a few minutes to allow us a follow-up discussion. This feedback will help us as we improve the internship program.

Purchasing/Reimbursement Policy

- No volunteer, staff, or board member shall make purchases on behalf of the Liberty Nature & Raptor Center Boosters Inc.
- Volunteers, staff, or board members may, with a signed FA-2 form, use personal funds to purchase supplies for the Liberty Nature Center.
- Volunteers, staff, or board members may request reimbursements. They must submit a FA-3 form along with any receipts or other documentation to receive a reimbursement.
- Reimbursement request must be turned in within 30 days of the original purchase.
- No reimbursement may be made if the above conditions are not met.

Additionally, if a company vehicle is not available, Liberty Nature Center will reimburse the gas used in personal vehicles if it is being used for business. This must be approved by the Director or CEO prior to using gas if you want to be reimbursed. **ONLY GAS USED FOR BUSINESS WILL BE REIMBURSED.** *

* The proper procedures for tracking mileage will be discussed during orientation.

Injury Policy

If you are injured, please report the injury to the director, CEO, or highest ranking volunteer IMMEDIATELY. Injuries include bites, scratches, stings, or any other ailments occurring during your volunteer shift. Please complete an Incident Report at the time of the injury.

Substance Abuse Policy

Liberty Nature Center takes the problem of drug and alcohol abuse seriously and is committed to providing a work place free of such substances. We expect that when you arrive to your shift you will come to work sober and ready to perform necessary duties required effectively. If employees are hung over, they will be sent home and will face further disciplinary action including the possibility of termination of the position. No alcohol may be consumed on property or on company trips. Any intern under the legal drinking age may not drink at any time, on or off duty.

Liberty Nature Center also does not allow anyone to operate a company vehicle or work in animal areas within 12 hours of consuming any amount of alcohol.

No intern can consume, possess, sell, or purchase any drug or any other controlled substance except for prescription medication prescribed to the person at any time, on or off duty. All volunteers may be subject to random drug throughout the duration of the summer internship. If any volunteer is suspected being on any drugs they will be subjected to drug screening.

Additionally, interns may not discuss the consumption, sell, purchase, or possession of alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs in front of any student volunteer. This subject matter may only be discussed with your fellow interns. The volunteers are very impressionable and every effort must be made to communicate responsibility.

Failure to abide by this policy will result in immediate termination.

General Policies

- **Food & Drink-**
 - Please keep all human food or drink in the refrigerator located in the lobby. The refrigerator and freezers in the food preparation area are for animal diets ONLY.
 - Also, please only consume food or drink in non-animal areas.
- **Social Media Policy-**
 - Volunteers May:
 - Post videos/photographs on social media that are APPROVED by the CEO or Executive Director.
 - Share/" Like" photographs/video/content posted on the LNRC Facebook Page.
 - Forward content to the Director to put on our Social Media profiles.
 - Comment on post made on our Social Media profiles so long as the comment is informative, appropriate, and careful to not portray the organization in a negative light.
 - Volunteers May NOT:
 - Take photos/videos during any LNRC activity or procedure having to do with rehabilitation animals without consent from the CEO or Executive Director.
 - Post your own LNRC related photos/videos/commentary on any social media websites at any time without consent from the CEO or Executive Director
- **Interview & Media Policy-** To maintain a positive image in the media & public eye it is critical to have a consistent message that is factual and supports our mission and vision. Volunteers are the Liberty Nature Center so we encourage participation from everyone in our publicity efforts. However, to ensure we're presenting the best image, we have established the following guidelines:
 - Please do not contact the media on behalf of the Liberty Nature Center without prior approval.
 - If you are contacted by someone from the media, direct them to the Director.
 - If you have a great idea for a story, contact the Director.
 - Please do not agree to be interviewed in any manner without prior approval from the Director or CEO. (Including phone, email, or other types of interviews.)
 - Please do not speak on behalf of the organization without prior approval.
- **Phone & MP3 Policy-**
 - While we recognize playing music or playing on your phone makes the work process more entertaining, we ask that you refrain from the use of cell phones or MP3's as much as possible while working at the center
- **Strong Scents & Colognes-**
 - Please refrain from using strong colognes or deodorants on days when you work with the animals.
 - Also, please do not use air fresheners in the immediate area of animals.
- **Dress Code-**
 - Dress Codes vary from day-to-day and event-to-event. Please ask for the event dress code prior to an event. When working at the center, please wear comfortable but respectful clothes you do not care to get wet or dirty.

- **Use of Company Property-**
 - The use of company property is restricted to activities directly related to fulfilling your duties.
 - At no time, may company property be used for personal use.
 - Company property must be used professionally, including not removing the property without supervisor permission.
- **Employee Parking-** Interns may use the gravel parking lot located between the wildlife rehabilitation center and gift shop.

Questions/Comments/Concerns

Please direct all questions, comments, or concerns to your direct supervisor, the Director, the CEO, or a board member.