

# Sturgeon City Environmental Education Center Volunteer Handbook

## Welcome to Sturgeon City!

Thank you for dedicating your time and energy to the Sturgeon City Environmental Education Center. Volunteers are the heart of our organization, enabling us to fulfill our mission of fostering environmental stewardship through education, research, and conservation.

This handbook is designed to provide you with the information you need to be a successful and happy volunteer at Sturgeon City. Please read it carefully and keep it as a reference. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask a staff member.

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## 1. About Sturgeon City

Sturgeon City Environmental Education Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to connecting people with the natural environment.

## 2. Our Mission and Vision

**Mission:** At Sturgeon City, our mission is to champion environmental and STEAM education, shaping the future by nurturing leaders and stewards of both the environment and the sciences.

**Vision:** Our vision embraces a future where Sturgeon City's environmental and STEAM education sparks transformative change. We foresee vibrant communities guided by individuals who are not just passionate environmental stewards but also innovative thinkers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.

### **Core Values:**

1. Educational Excellence and Innovation: Focusing on providing top-tier environmental and STEAM education while fostering a culture of curiosity and innovation.
2. Environmental Stewardship: Prioritizing the protection and preservation of the environment while nurturing a deep respect for the natural world.
3. Empowerment and Leadership Development: Empowering individuals to become leaders and agents of change, both in environmental conservation and within STEAM disciplines.
4. Community Collaboration and Inclusion: Actively engaging the community, promoting diversity and inclusion to inspire, support, and collaborate in achieving the organization's mission and vision.

## **3. Volunteer Philosophy**

At Sturgeon City, we believe that volunteers are invaluable partners in achieving our mission. We are committed to providing a supportive, respectful, and enriching environment for all our volunteers. We strive to match your skills and interests with our needs, ensuring a mutually beneficial experience. Your dedication helps us to:

- Expand our educational reach.
- Maintain a beautiful and safe facility.
- Care for our animal ambassadors.
- Enhance visitor experiences.
- Support our operational needs.

## **4. General Volunteer Guidelines**

These guidelines apply to all volunteers regardless of their specific role.

### **Code of Conduct**

As a Sturgeon City volunteer, you are an ambassador for our organization. Please uphold the following:

- **Respect:** Treat all staff, visitors, and fellow volunteers, with respect, courtesy, and professionalism.
- **Integrity:** Act honestly and ethically in all your interactions.

- **Teamwork:** Work collaboratively with staff and other volunteers.
- **Positive Attitude:** Maintain a positive and enthusiastic demeanor.
- **Inclusivity:** Welcome and respect individuals from all backgrounds.
- **No Solicitation:** Do not solicit for personal causes or businesses while volunteering.

## Safety First

Your safety, and the safety of others, is our top priority.

- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Follow all safety instructions provided by staff.
- Use equipment properly and report any malfunctioning equipment immediately.
- Know the location of first aid kits and emergency exits.
- Report any unsafe conditions or potential hazards to a staff member immediately.

## Confidentiality

You may encounter sensitive information during your volunteer activities, particularly when working with children or administrative tasks. Please respect the privacy of our visitors, staff, and fellow volunteers. Do not share personal information about individuals or proprietary information about Sturgeon City with external parties.

## Communication

Effective communication is key to a successful volunteer experience.

- **Ask Questions:** If you are unsure about a task or procedure, please ask a staff member for clarification.
- **Feedback:** We welcome your feedback! Please share your ideas, suggestions, and concerns with your volunteer supervisor or any staff member.
- **Reporting:** Report any issues, incidents, or concerns promptly to a staff member.

## Dress Code

Please dress appropriately for your volunteer role.

- **General:** Comfortable, modest clothing is generally recommended. Avoid clothing with offensive graphics or excessive wear.
- **Cleaning/Outdoor Work:** Wear clothes you don't mind getting dirty. Closed-toe shoes are mandatory (no sandals or flip-flops). Consider hats and sunscreen for outdoor work.
- **Working with Children:** Professional yet approachable attire. Avoid overly casual clothing. Closed-toe shoes are essential.
- **Identifying Yourself:** You may be provided with a volunteer vest or nametag. Please wear it while on duty so visitors and staff can easily identify you.

## Attendance and Punctuality

We rely on your commitment!

- **Reliability:** Please arrive on time for your scheduled shifts.
- **Cancellations/Lateness:** If you need to cancel a shift or will be late, please notify us as soon as possible. We understand that unforeseen circumstances arise, but advance notice allows us to make necessary adjustments.

### **Sign-In/Sign-Out Procedures**

Upon arrival and departure, all volunteers must sign in and out at the designated area. This helps us track volunteer hours, ensure everyone's safety, and acknowledge your valuable contributions.

### **Emergency Procedures**

In case of an emergency (fire, medical emergency, severe weather):

- **Listen to Staff:** Follow all instructions given by Sturgeon City staff.
- **Evacuation:** If an evacuation is necessary, proceed calmly to the nearest emergency exit and gather at the designated assembly point (which will be communicated during your orientation).
- **Medical:** For minor injuries, a first aid kit is available. For serious medical emergencies, staff will call 911. Please do not attempt to administer medical care unless you are a trained professional.
- **Active Threat:** In the highly unlikely event of an active threat, follow the "Run, Hide, Fight" protocol.

### **Reporting Incidents/Concerns**

It is crucial to report any incidents, accidents, or concerns to a staff member immediately, no matter how minor they may seem. This includes:

- Injuries (to yourself, a visitor, or a staff member)
- Property damage
- Unsafe conditions
- Behavioral concerns (of visitors, staff, or other volunteers)
- Any situation that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

## **5. Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities**

Sturgeon City offers a diverse range of volunteer opportunities. Please note that specific responsibilities may vary depending on the immediate needs of the center and your assigned area.

### **a. Cleanup & Maintenance**

This role is vital for keeping our campus beautiful, safe, and welcoming for visitors and wildlife.

- **Typical Tasks:**
  - Litter pickup around the grounds and trails.
  - Weeding and gardening in designated areas.
  - Trail maintenance (clearing debris, minor repairs).
  - Assisting with general facility upkeep (e.g., sweeping, organizing).
- **Requirements:**
  - Ability to perform physical tasks (bending, lifting light to moderate weights, walking).
  - Comfortable working outdoors in various weather conditions.
  - Willingness to get dirty!
  - Attention to detail regarding safety and environmental protection.
- **Safety Considerations:**
  - Wear appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes.
  - Use gloves when handling trash or plants.
  - Be aware of uneven terrain and potential hazards (e.g., sharp objects, insects).
  - Stay hydrated, especially in warm weather.

## **b. Education & Program Support (Working with Children)**

If you love sharing knowledge and inspiring young minds, this role is for you!

- **Typical Tasks:**
  - Assisting educators with hands-on activities for school groups and programs.
  - Supervising children during tours and activities.
  - Helping prepare educational materials (e.g., setting up stations, organizing supplies).
  - Engaging visitors of all ages with exhibits and answering questions.
  - Assisting with summer camps and special events.
- **Requirements:**
  - Enjoy working with children and people of all ages.
  - Patience, enthusiasm, and a positive attitude.
  - Good communication and interpersonal skills.
  - Ability to follow instructions from educators.
  - A background check is required for all volunteers working directly and regularly with children.
  - Prior experience in education or youth engagement is a plus, but not required.
- **Safety Considerations:**
  - Always be aware of the child-to-adult ratio.
  - Never be alone with a child; ensure another adult is always present or within earshot.
  - Report any concerns about a child's safety or well-being to a staff member immediately.
  - Familiarize yourself with emergency procedures relevant to groups of children.

## **c. Special Events & Fundraising**

Help us make our events a success and raise vital funds!

- **Typical Tasks:**
  - Assisting with event setup and breakdown.
  - Greeting guests and providing information.
  - Assisting with registration or ticketing.
  - Directing traffic or parking.
  - Helping with activity stations or concessions.
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- **Requirements:**
  - Friendly and outgoing personality.
  - Good organizational skills for setup/breakdown.
  - Ability to work in a fast-paced environment.
  - Flexibility, as event needs can change rapidly.

#### **d. Administrative Support**

Help keep our office running smoothly!

- **Typical Tasks:**
  - Answering phones and directing calls.
  - Data entry and record keeping.
  - Filing and organizing documents.
  - Preparing mailings.
  - General office tasks as needed.
- **Requirements:**
  - Basic computer skills.
  - Attention to detail and accuracy.
  - Good organizational skills.
  - Professional phone etiquette.
  - Confidentiality is paramount in this role.

### **6. Training and Support**

Sturgeon City is committed to providing you with the necessary training and support to excel in your volunteer role.

- **Orientation:** All new volunteers will receive an orientation to the facility, our mission, general guidelines, and emergency procedures.
- **On-the-Job Training:** Don't hesitate to ask for clarification or additional training if needed.
- **Staff Support:** Our staff are here to support you. Please feel free to ask questions, voice concerns, or seek assistance at any time.
- **Resources:** We will provide any necessary tools, equipment, or materials for your tasks.

### **7. Recognition and Appreciation**

We deeply value your contributions to Sturgeon City! We strive to show our appreciation through:

- **Regular Thanks:** Our staff will regularly express their gratitude for your hard work.
- **Newsletter/Social Media Shout-outs:** We may occasionally feature volunteer stories or acknowledge contributions.
- **Letters of Reference:** Upon request, we can provide letters of reference for dedicated volunteers who have completed a significant number of hours.

## **8. Contact Information**

If you have any questions, concerns, or need to report an absence, please contact:

**Sturgeon City Phone:** 910.750.5876

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**Thank you again for joining the Sturgeon City team! We look forward to working with you.**

**I have read and understand the Sturgeon City Environmental Education Center Volunteer Handbook and agree to abide by its guidelines.**

**Volunteer Name (Print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_