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Volunteer Handbook ~2017~

Dear Volunteer,

For over 26 years, the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation has been the voice for Sonoma County's most spectacular land and water asset, the Laguna de Santa Rosa, and this would not have been possible without the help of volunteers. By becoming a part of this movement, you have embarked on an adventure that will be supported by staff and other volunteers. We welcome you to the organization and **thank you** for seeing the worth of this organization and contributing your valuable time and energy in helping us continue for another 26+ years as a relevant, sustainable and impactful organization of Sonoma County.

As the Outreach Coordinator, I am honored to support you in your volunteer work. Please review this handbook and let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you!

Maggie Hart, Outreach Coordinator
(707) 527-9277 ext 100
maggiehart@lagunafoundation.org

Who We Are

The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation's **mission** is *to restore and conserve the Laguna de Santa Rosa, and to inspire public appreciation for Sonoma County's Wetland of International Importance.*

Organization History

The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation was formed in 1989 following the convening of the State of the Laguna conference, which brought together the private and public agencies and interests with a stake in the Laguna's condition and future. Incorporated in 1990 as a tax-exempt 501c3 nonprofit organization, we remained an all-volunteer group until 2002. During those years we implemented small restoration projects, made comments on public policy issues that affected the Laguna, convened Laguna stakeholders to develop a Coordinated Resource Management Plan for the Laguna which identified broad, shared goals and objectives for improving its water quality, habitat value, flood retention capacity and other public benefits, and began a Laguna docent training program and wetland education program serving local elementary schools.

In 2002, the Foundation's Board of Directors concluded that its mission to protect, restore, and educate the public about the Laguna ecosystem could not be advanced rapidly enough without the benefit of staff, and an Executive Director and a Resource Development Director were hired. Since that time, our activities and staffing levels have ramped up rapidly as we've taken on big restoration and conservation science projects, expanded our education programs, and created the Laguna Environmental Center.

Program Descriptions

The Foundation's core programs include Education, Restoration, and Conservation Science. Volunteer opportunities are available in each area. ***Your Program Coordinator, or direct supervisor, will be a staff member from the program you choose to volunteer in.***

- **Education Program:** The Foundation's wetland education program, *Learning Laguna*, provides local school children with a dynamic learning experience that inspires scientific curiosity and leads them into Laguna habitats to experience the wonders of their local landscape. Educational offerings for all ages include guided walks plus natural history and art classes in the field and in Great Blue Heron Hall at the Laguna Environmental Center.
- **Restoration Program:** The Foundation designs and implements habitat enhancement projects which are restoring the Laguna's ability to support its resident (and visiting) species.
- **Conservation Science Program:** Scientific research informs public policy decisions, future restoration project designs, and our education efforts.

We Value Volunteers

The Laguna Foundation appreciates all volunteers in all forms! Whether they are episodic volunteers or ongoing, we understand the power of community involvement and therefore believe in supporting our volunteers to ensure a positive, productive experience for both parties. ***Volunteers are the heart and soul of our efforts to restore and share the wonders of the Laguna, thank you!***

Your Role as a Volunteer

Job Descriptions

Each volunteer position is different therefore your role and responsibilities will be dependent on where you choose to volunteer. You will receive a job description, or some form listing your responsibilities and expectations, upon signing up to volunteer. Please see your direct Program Coordinator to review a copy of your job description.

Orientation

In order to fully include you in the organization, each Program Coordinator will share with you an overview of the Laguna Foundation. Orientations will vary by department and will also include the location of any equipment, sign in/out forms, staff and safety tools that are required for your position. If you would like a formal tour of the organization, please tell your direct Program Coordinator.

Training Offered

The Laguna Foundation encourages volunteers to grow in their position within the organization. Learning opportunities will depend on your role and the program you are a part of; please check with your direct Program Coordinator to hear about training opportunities within their program.

Positions

We offer a variety of volunteer opportunities and you aren't limited to just one. You are welcome to explore a variety of volunteer opportunities. We want you to enjoy your work! (Please note: The first two volunteer opportunities listed below require training in advance and a minimum commitment to volunteer.)

- 1) **Laguna Docents** – Trained Docents provide the *Learning Laguna* program to elementary school students both in the classroom and during field trips to the Laguna. The program serves over 1,300 students each year throughout the watershed. The training consists of 10 6-hour classes plus 4 mornings shadowing working docents and is held every other year in the spring. The training covers many aspects of Laguna biology, hydrology, history, and restoration as well as training in the field and classroom activities and effective strategies for working with children. Docents volunteer a minimum of 40 hours per year and commit to staying with the program for at least 2 years after training.
- 2) **Laguna Guides** – The Laguna Guides training program prepares volunteers to lead walks, activities, and tours on Laguna trails and at the Laguna Environmental Center. Guides also host events at the Center, and help manage Great Blue Heron Hall during public education talks, classes, and workshops. Training classes are focused on the natural and cultural history of the Laguna, and how to create dynamic visitor experiences. The training consists of 8 sessions on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings and is held every other spring. Laguna Guides volunteer year-round, primarily on evenings and weekends. Guides volunteer a minimum of 5 hours each month and commit to staying with the program for at least 2 years after training.
- 3) **Laguna Stewards (formerly Laguna Keepers)** – Volunteers assist in exotic plant removal, native plant and tree planting, restoration project maintenance and monitoring, etc. Workdays are on Saturday mornings from 9am -noon and scheduled once a month from September through May. No experience or prior training is required.
- 4) **Garden Volunteers** – Volunteers help maintain and enhance the Laguna Environmental Center's "outdoor classroom." Activities include planting, weeding, pruning, and general site cleanup. Workdays are scheduled the first Friday of every month from 9am-noon, year-round.. No experience or prior training is required.
- 5) **Facilities Management Support** – Volunteers assist in small to large projects, depending on their skill set, around the Laguna Environmental Center. Tasks may include carpentry, plumbing, electrical, woodworking or painting. Hours can be arranged to fit volunteer's needs.

- 6) **Office Management Support** – Periodically, volunteers are needed to assist in the day-to-day running of the Laguna Foundation and its office: clerical tasks, data entry, addressing envelopes, organizing mailings, copying and assembling training binders, etc.
- 7) **Student Internships** – Laguna Foundation offers a range of internship opportunities. Whether you are interested in working outdoors, the administrative side of environmental non-profits, education or science, our programs offer professional work experience that will help students find a career after graduation.

What You Can Expect from the Laguna Foundation

Recognition and Appreciation

Through the many programs, the Laguna Foundation has different systems for recognizing volunteers. To learn more, please ask your direct Program Coordinator.

Equal Opportunity

The Laguna Foundation serves all of Sonoma County, and does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, social/economical status, or any other protected criteria. We will attempt to accommodate volunteer needs but there may be cases where our capacity cannot fully meet the needs of the volunteer. If this is the case, we will investigate other opportunities that would be a better fit for the volunteer.

Paid Staff and Volunteers

The Laguna Foundation does not replace a paid worker with a volunteer. California law protects employees by stating that organizations cannot replace a paid position with a volunteer. We practice this policy out of respect of both employees and volunteers.

Organization Support and Responsibilities

The Laguna Foundation supports volunteers by providing clear expectations, direct supervision and continual awareness of the volunteer's experience. Direct Program Coordinators are trained to check in with volunteers to receive updates, feedback and questions to ensure open communication. The Laguna Foundation is responsible for providing training, supplies, supervision, and liability coverage for volunteers when acting on behalf of the agency.

Commitment to Volunteers

The Laguna Foundation is committed to creating a positive experience for its volunteers. If you, as a volunteer, are not having a positive experience for any reason, please discuss your concerns with your direct Program Coordinator. If your concerns are not resolved in partnership with your direct Program Coordinator, please provide a written statement to our Outreach Coordinator, Maggie Hart, at maggiehart@lagunafoundation.org.

Policies and Procedures

Application and Liability

All volunteers are required to fill out an application, plus sign a waiver releasing liability of the Laguna Foundation. In addition, if you're volunteering in the schools, you'll be required to undergo a Department of Justice background check.

Safety

Volunteers are required to report personal injury obtained while volunteering at the Laguna Foundation to your supervisor immediately. We want to respond to your needs as soon as possible!

Contact Information

Please notify your direct Program Coordinator of any changes for your contact information.

Dismissal of Volunteers

The Laguna Foundation has the right to dismiss a volunteer at any time and for any reason, as decided by the Laguna Foundation staff. Any concerns or disagreement with those choices can be submitted in written form and given to our Outreach Coordinator, Maggie Hart, at maggiehart@lagunafoundation.org.

Code of Conduct

Your conduct and appearance as a volunteer reflects the image of the Laguna Foundation. It is everyone's responsibility to wear appropriate attire, maintain good grooming and personal cleanliness, and behave appropriately when associating with this organization.

Dress Code

All volunteers are required to dress appropriately for the position they are serving when working onsite or representing the Laguna Foundation in the public, as specific to your volunteer position. In addition, we ask that cologne or perfumes be avoided for the comfort of those around you.

Appropriate Behavior

Appropriate language is expected at all times when working with the Laguna Foundation either onsite or out in the community, therefore no expletives or use of slang. Sexual Harassment is not tolerated at the Laguna Foundation.

Drug, Alcohol and Smoking Policies

Volunteers cannot be under the influence of, or using any drugs or alcohol while volunteering. Smoking is not permitted on the grounds of the Laguna Environmental Center.

Attendance and Absenteeism

Once you sign-up for a shift, we depend on you to meet your commitment. Volunteers are expected to arrive on time for volunteer work hours as arranged by your direct Program Coordinator. If a volunteer is unable to arrive on time or needs to be absent for the entire duration, that volunteer is required to notify their direct Program Coordinator at least 24 hours in advance so staff have enough time to make accommodations. (Please note: Docents and Guides are expected to find their own substitute.)

Rights and Responsibilities

You have the right to choose a volunteer position as long as your availability, skill set, and countenance match the need of the program. You have the right to withdraw from service at anytime, although we ask that you meet the commitments outlined for the position. Please notify your direct Program Coordinator with notice when you decide to withdraw so necessary program arrangements can be made.

We hope this information was helpful to you and serves you well while you volunteer with the Laguna Foundation. We warmly welcome you to the organization. Thank you for joining us!