

# Becoming a Nature Mentor

by Laura Veloz, Park Naturalist/Volunteer Coordinator



*Docents (from left) David Jobe, Judy Coberly, Betty Zajac, Beth Barber, and Gary Lacey eagerly await the next wave of inquisitive students. FWNC&R Staff Photo.*

**A**utumn is the season in which we notice changes in temperature, fall foliage, and length of day, providing cues for the Nature Center to prepare for school-age students to once more visit our park. It is a memorable sight to see children's amazement when they notice a dashing dragonfly pass in front of them or their wonder when a lizard scurries along the road. Their exploration of nature's treasures along a trail is made possible, in part, from our enthusiastic, informed, and gracious group of volunteer nature interpreters known as docents. The docents become valuable nature mentors for future generations from all over the Metroplex.

Every fall and spring, the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge seeks nature enthusiasts who like to share their time, understanding, and appreciation for the outdoors with young students by becoming a docent. Interested individuals participate in a four-day hands-on training program to begin the process of becoming a tour guide to wide-eyed and eager participants. These weekday-morning trainings bring awareness to the different types of interpretation that can occur along a trail plus a greater grasp of concepts of ecology and natural history.

The current team of remarkable Nature Center docents comes from many different backgrounds. Some are scientists, while others are avid hikers, grandparents, moms, and former teachers, and all see the value of bringing awareness of nature to students in hopes of creating an everlasting impression of the outdoors. Every docent imparts a little of themselves on the trails and makes a lasting impression on the onlookers. The next docent training will be held October 15–19 from 9:30 am–1:30 pm. The Nature Center encourages all nature seekers to be part of this ongoing mission.

For more information or to register for the upcoming training, please contact Laura Veloz at [laura.veloz@fortworthtexas.gov](mailto:laura.veloz@fortworthtexas.gov) or (817) 392-7413.