

Want to Volunteer?

By Kenneth Nalley, Natural Scientist / Volunteer Coordinator



Greenhouse volunteers collect seed. FWNC&R Staff Photo.

What a long year it has been. A year ago, in June 2020, we were just beginning to reopen the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge to the public—and to our volunteers. We held a group training day for volunteers to reacclimate after almost three months of not being able to enter the park—and to get used to the new safety protocols that we would have to follow to keep everyone safe. Volunteers are critical to what we do. With a small staff, hiring freezes, and attrition as staff moved on to other careers, we had to rely on volunteer support more than ever in 2020. Our dedicated group of volunteers consistently showed up every time we needed them—and still do.

Another lifesaver has been our docents, who assisted us with guided hikes, group tours, and outreach. Our docents have been essential to our successful environmental education initiatives. I cannot express how much appreciation I have for all the volunteers who dedicate their time to helping the Nature Center thrive, especially with everything that has happened this past year.

Now that we are getting back to normal, we are seeing an influx of volunteers who are eager to help. We have many opportunities available for volunteer work on the Refuge. Natural Guard and greenhouse efforts are great if you're interested in getting your

hands dirty and working outside. Greenhouse volunteers assist in the collection, propagation, and maintenance of native plants. Plants that are grown are used in restoration projects throughout the Refuge. Training is onsite, and volunteers meet every Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon.

Natural Guard volunteers assist with various projects that benefit Refuge visitors, wildlife, and plants. Removal of invasive plant species, trail-clearing, and bridge building are some of the many projects our Natural Guard volunteers have tackled. Training and tools are provided onsite. Natural Guard is scheduled on Thursdays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon. If you're interested in any of these opportunities or would like to see everything we have to offer, check them out at fortworthtexas.gov/volunteer.

We usually celebrate all of our volunteers and their contributions at our Hands & Hearts volunteer appreciation event at the end of February. This year, we weren't able to do that because of COVID restrictions. Thankfully, we were able to reschedule for mid-July and still give our volunteers the recognition and appreciation they deserve. I want to thank our volunteers again for all the hard work and dedication they have put into our park. We would not be capable of accomplishing all that we have without them.