

Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Perspective Volunteer Information



Estrella Pollinator Garden, 2016

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Lake Pleasant Trash Clean-up, July 2019

Welcome to Maricopa County Parks!

Volunteers are critical to the success of Maricopa County Parks, not just nice to have to supplement staff. They create an impact on what we do, and how we do it, and connect us to those who share our same beliefs and vision. The acts of volunteer service that happen are both large and small. The value of service manifests itself in countless ways, but it all starts with a value for people, for community, and for relationships. This is what constitutes the **Spirit of Service** within our Department. In reading this handbook, you will see an outline of several programs and opportunities and their expected outcomes.

Our definition of a successful volunteer program means we foster a sense of community where people can connect with nature in a manner that has meaning, purpose, and value... a community where everyone plays a part in protecting our precious, local natural resources. In the spirit of service, volunteers use their gifts and talents to benefit Maricopa County Parks in new and unique ways. These gifts extend far beyond our Department and reach the greater community in service to many of our community partners and constituents



San Tan Revegetation Project, 2016



Volunteer service builds inspiring, collaborative efforts that positively impact our regional parks. This amazing work reflects the meaningful relationships that are often formed through volunteering. Service happens spontaneously and in a plethora of innovative ways! Maricopa County Park's volunteer program has expanded to meet the skyrocketing service demands within the community. The Department now offers volunteer opportunities for both individuals and groups that accommodate interest, location, schedule, and level of commitment.

As a result of this intentional effort to embrace a new organizational culture from the top-down within our department, we hope that you will join us in the spirit of service.

Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives

Volunteers enable us to realize our department's vision of connecting people with nature through service and are the gateway to the larger community that we serve. Volunteers are the heartbeat of our operation; they bring optimism and enthusiasm, create positive energy, and share diverse perspectives that lead to enhanced experiences for our visitors.

Mission: The mission of the Maricopa County Park and Recreation Volunteer Program is to advance volunteerism through innovation, leadership, and the empowerment of all who aspire to serve at our parks



Vision: Create a successful program of diverse volunteer opportunities for all visitors and citizens of Maricopa County.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Increase volunteer engagement and participation

- Increase volunteer hours in all parks by 3.5% annually
- Demonstrate - through recognition - that all volunteers are valued for their unique gifts and abilities.
- Ensure training, mentorship, and support are provided to volunteer staff
- Implement a periodic check-in process with all core volunteers
- Maintain or increase the core volunteer retention rate

Goal 2: Improve availability and access to volunteer opportunities

- Work with park staff to determine the needs of volunteer placement and create opportunities that will meet the demand for service
- Increase yearly service volunteer opportunities in each park
- Utilize volunteers in new and innovative ways that will involve the community in the protection of our local natural resources
- Create a system for outreach and notification for individuals to volunteer at our parks in a manner that concurrently meets their needs as well as those of the Department.



Volunteer Definitions

Volunteer - A person of any age who performs or gives services of his/her own free will without financial gain. A Volunteer is unpaid. Maricopa County Parks has two categories of volunteers:

Core Volunteer: These volunteers, also known as Parks Hosts or Community Volunteers, are often interchangeable with park staff and perform similar functions including, but not limited to running the nature and/or entry stations, providing customer service/resolving customer complaints, checking in campers, maintenance, interpretive or conservation activities. In addition, Core Volunteers also meet one of the following criteria:



- 1) Live or reside in or on Maricopa County Park and Recreation lands at no cost. These individuals receive a campsite, utilities, and approved uniform in return for forty (40) hours of work per week/per campsite; 30 hours per week for single hosts.
- 2) Handle financial transactions, have county network access and email, or perform fee enforcement and possible financial collection activities) (POS and county network computer access).
- 3) Conduct interpretive or recreational programs for minors without constant and direct supervision from Maricopa County Park staff.
- 4) Operate, drive, or otherwise maintain control of any Parks and Recreation-owned vehicle.

Other Core Volunteer opportunities include Trail Ambassador and Desert Defender Steward programs. Trail Ambassadors are Community Volunteers who specialize in providing guidance and information to our trail users, observing trail conditions and reporting needed repairs, reinforcing proper trail etiquette and Leave No Trace principles, and reporting emergencies. Hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians are welcome to serve as Trail Ambassadors. All Trail Ambassadors must meet the standard requirements of Core Volunteer position, plus they must complete trail-specific training with the Park Supervisor. Trail Ambassadors should be experienced trail users and be capable of working outdoors in a desert environment.

The Desert Defender program is the baseline for our resource conservation and invasive species control program. As a member of Desert Defenders, volunteers will be trained on how to locate and map various invasive species that are located throughout the Maricopa County Regional Parks using a smartphone application. The Desert Defender Stewards will also lead volunteer groups and focus on invasive species removal, native seed harvesting/planting, and wildfire restoration.

Service Volunteer: These volunteers, also referred to as advocates, episodic volunteers, docents, probation/community service, or site stewards, perform a wide variety of volunteer functions in categories including, but not limited to interpretive, safety, recreational, maintenance, conservation or any other volunteer opportunity that does not include any of the functions provided by a core volunteer. Community groups and other organized public, nonprofit, or corporate groups are included in this category. This group does not require anything special other than a willingness to volunteer and a good attitude!



Core Volunteer Requirements

Core Volunteers are often interchangeable with Park Staff and are required to follow many of the same requirements including:

Background Report: New candidates must successfully complete a criminal history and driving record check. The background check will be conducted by Maricopa County Human Resources.



Driving Records: Core Volunteers may be required to drive county vehicles as part of their volunteer duties. Therefore, all Core Volunteers are required to maintain a “good driving history” and a valid driver’s license to retain this position. Random driving history reports will be run every year to ensure compliance.

Training: Safety and policy training is required for all core volunteers. The training curriculum is updated annually with some classes required on an annual basis and some classes taken once. Upon the completion of your background check, you will be notified of required training and the timeline to complete assigned courses. Our goal is to help you be safe, secure, and comfortable in the various situations you might find while serving in the parks.

Service Hours: Park Host positions are a volunteer opportunity where Hosts are allowed to reside at a designated host site within each park with free utilities in exchange for 40 per week (couples have the option to share the hours under the direction of the Park Supervisor). Single hosts are required to complete 30 hours per week. Service time frames for host positions are:



- Fall/Winter: Our busiest season, runs from October to April.
- Summer/Off-season: March/April to September/October
- Year-Round: Park Host resides at the park and volunteers year-round.

Community Volunteers normally reside in the area surrounding a park. Unlike Park Hosts who are required to provide 40 hours/week of volunteer service in exchange for their site, there is no service hour requirement for Community Volunteers.

Job Duties: Core Volunteers play an important role in the success of Maricopa County Parks. They have a high level of responsibility in their positions and are the backbone of successful park operations. Core Volunteer job duties include assisting in all areas of the park and completing a wide variety of tasks as assigned by your Park Supervisor. Functions may include, but are not limited to:



- Customer service/visitor interaction
- Answering a variety of questions and providing information about the park
- Routine computer use
- Cash handling
- Working at the entry and/or nature centers
- Light retail work
- Light maintenance including, but not limited to: campground cleaning, trash pickup, cleaning bathrooms, trail work, landscaping, etc.
- Fee collection
- Provide training and support to other volunteers in their work
- Interpretive programming

Disclaimer: Core volunteers are essential to successful park operations. However, this is a volunteer position in which the Core Volunteer servers at the will of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department. Service is at the discretion of Maricopa County and can be ended at any time without notice, with or without reason, and without liability to Maricopa County or its employees.

Volunteer Reporting: Core Volunteers are required to ensure their hours are correctly entered into Volgistics, the Department's volunteer tracking software. All Community Volunteers and Park Hosts are required to learn and use Volgistics to record their hours.

Equipment Usage: All Core Volunteers must be trained before operating any County equipment. This includes maintenance tools, golf cart-type vehicles, and life safety devices. Any equipment issued to a Core Volunteer (radio, transportation, keys, tools, etc.) remains the property of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department and may be redistributed by park staff as needed.

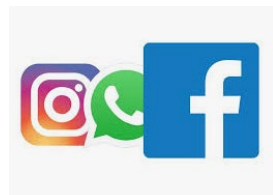
Uniforms: Core Volunteers are provided a uniform each year for use during their volunteer shifts and are expected to wear name tags while working at the Nature Center or Contact Stations. Restrictions for volunteer uniforms:

- Volunteers shall not wear the uniform outside of duty hours. This does not apply to the personal time required to commute to and from their assignment or for breaks taken during duty hours.
- Volunteers shall not attend political meetings in uniform items.
- Volunteers shall not wear uniform items while purchasing or consuming alcohol.
- Volunteers shall keep all uniform items clean and in like-new condition to the best of their abilities. Remember, you are representing Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department. Wear your uniform with pride.
- Clothing items (i.e., pants, shoes, act.) worn with uniform items must be professional, appropriate, and safe for the assigned volunteer duties as determined by the Park Supervisor.

Computer Usage: Computers are regularly used for tracking service hours, training, communication, and depending on your assignment, you will use our Point of Sale and Campground Reservation system. We will provide training on the various systems so a willingness to learn is most important. In addition, all volunteers are required to have an active email address. Park Hosts couples must have separate, individual email addresses. Volunteer schedules, training, and special announcements will routinely be made via email.



Please note, most of our parks do not have Wi-Fi outside the Nature Center and cellular service can be limited at certain locations.



Social Media Use: Any posts that Core Volunteers make to social media websites (Facebook, blogs, Instagram, etc.) must not disclose information that is confidential or sensitive in nature. Volunteers shall refrain from posting information about park emergencies, search and rescue operations, disciplinary actions, health issues, financial information, or complaints.

Confidentiality: Core Volunteers may have access to sensitive data or confidential information concerning resources, finances, volunteers, employees, and park guests. Hosts are expected to protect such information and treat it with the utmost sensitivity. Unauthorized use and/or disclosure of certain confidential or sensitive information may create legal liability, put natural and cultural resources at risk, and cause a loss of public confidence in the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department.

Host Site Occupancy: If hosts will have additional adults visiting overnight or residing with them during any part of their host tenure, they must receive prior approval from the park supervisor. Adult occupants who are regular daytime visitors or reside overnight for an extended period may be required to complete a background check. In addition, Park Hosts must have reliable transportation to move their RV/trailer and must be able to move their RV/trailer at any time for work, scheduling, or emergency purposes.



Residence Address: Park Hosts may not use the park address as a residence address when applying for or updating their driver's license or any other government-issued identification.

Service Volunteer Requirements

Service opportunities are available at all our regional parks, including the Maricopa Trail, for individuals and groups that accommodate interest, location, and schedule. This area of our volunteer program provides the most flexibility and acts as a community pipeline for introductory service experiences with our Department. Unlike Core

Volunteers who have higher levels of responsibility and require more training and background information, Service Volunteer opportunities are provided to offer an easy, hassle-free way to give back to the community in a way that is meaningful and beneficial.



To become a Service Volunteer, visit the Parks website where our various types of service events and how to register can be located. The only requirements are providing a name, phone number, and email address and acknowledgment of a legal waiver, releasing Maricopa County of all liability during volunteer service.

Training: Training and safety information will be provided at the site. After registering for an event, an e-mail confirmation will be sent that may outline specific safety or other “need to know” information for the specific event (i.e., volunteer needs to bring gloves, or the event requires extensive hiking).

Job Duties: Service experiences can vary between parks but are generally offered in the following areas:

- Providing or assisting with educational or recreational programs
- Trail Stewardship
- Natural/cultural resources interpretation
- Creating, building, or assisting with the development of educational exhibits/displays
- Park maintenance including repairs/maintenance to all park amenities, trails, campsites, fencing, etc.
- Natural resources management
- Community events

Expected Standards of Behavior

As a representative of Maricopa County Parks and Recreation, **all volunteers** are expected to behave in a professional manner and demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness while completing their assigned duties. At a minimum, the following standards of behavior shall be upheld:

- Interaction with park visitors, staff, and the public will be conducted with tact, diplomacy, and courtesy. While working or living alongside other volunteers, employees or park visitors from different backgrounds and life experiences, professionalism, and respect is a minimum expectation. Volunteers are expected to maintain a positive attitude and demeanor with respect to the spoken word, visual (non-verbal) materials, technology, and physical behavior.
- Volunteers are expected to use discretion with respect to all conversations and not to discuss or spread unnecessary information or comments about others. Providing personal information on any employee, volunteer, or group to the public or customers is not acceptable at any time.
- Harassment, including sexual harassment, is inexcusable for staff, vendors, customers, and volunteers/hosts. Discrimination or harassment based on race, gender, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by federal, or state laws is not acceptable at any time. Accepting a host/community volunteer position will require you to acknowledge you have read or will read Maricopa County Policy HR2406, *Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation*, and become familiar with the policy and comply with it. If you believe the policy has been violated in any way, you will immediately report such behavior to the Park Supervisor or other supervisory staff.
- Volunteers will report all disturbances or inappropriate conduct of park visitors to park staff. At no time shall volunteers attempt to discipline or apprehend any park violators. Core Volunteers are in the role of being an educator, not an enforcer, of park rules. Any threat of physical harm shall be reported immediately to supervisory staff.
- Volunteers shall conduct themselves in an orderly manner so as not to disrupt the visiting public. No alcoholic beverages shall be consumed or recreational drugs used while performing volunteer functions; nor shall the evidence of consumption or use be evident during the Volunteer's scheduled service time.

Behavioral or performance concerns for Core Volunteers will be handled by the Supervisor, mirroring the existing process for employees.

Next Steps

Thank you for your support and interest in becoming a volunteer with Maricopa County Parks and Recreation. Depending on the type of service you wish to pursue, the next steps will be as follows:

- Park Host positions:

If you are interested in being a Park Host, please complete our online volunteer application [Core Volunteer Application \(volgistics.com\)](https://volgistics.com). Once you submit your application, the Volunteer Coordinator will review it and contact you within seven days.

- Community Volunteer or Service Volunteer:

If you are interested in being a Community Volunteer or Service Volunteer, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator to schedule a volunteer orientation. An orientation is required for new volunteers as we like to take time to fully explain our program and answer questions before you begin service. Normally, volunteer orientation is completed via telephone and will only take approximately 15 minutes. The Volunteer Coordinator can be reached at 602-506-9512, or parkvolunteer@maricopa.gov.

For more information about volunteering with Maricopa County Parks and Recreation, please visit the “How to Volunteer” section of our website [How to Volunteer | Maricopa County Parks & Recreation](#).

