

## WELCOME VOLUNTEERS IN THE PARKS (V.I.P.)

Welcome to the new Volunteer Program V.I.P. VOLUNTEERS IN THE PARK of Rockdale County Recreation and Maintenance Department. We recruit, interview and place volunteers in a variety of positions at our various facilities. This program allows volunteers to earn student service credit hours for high school graduation or volunteer service for their own personal benefit. Committed volunteers increase the quality of our programs and represent a willingness to improve our community now and in the future.

The Volunteer Program plays a major role in the operation of the Rockdale County Recreation and Maintenance Department. Our staff is eager to begin working with you or your group. Thank you for your generous donation of your time and experience.

This manual will hopefully make you knowledgeable about the Rockdale County Recreation and Maintenance Department and answer most of the questions you may have concerning our department.

Again, thank you for volunteering.

## **General Information**

### Department Locations

Rockdale County Recreation and Maintenance Department has volunteer opportunities in numerous locations. The administration office for Rockdale County Recreation and Maintenance is located at the Johnson Park Recreation Center at 1781 Ebenezer Rd. Conyers, GA. 30094. Other park locations include Black Shoals Park, South Rockdale Community Park, Wheeler Park, Rockdale Tennis Center, JP Carr Community Room, Rockdale County Auditorium, Legion Park, Earl O'Neal Park, Costley Mill Park and JP Carr gym.

## **Vision Statement of Rockdale County**

Rockdale County is a perfectly-positioned community with a rock – solid approach dedicated to excellence in customer service, quality of life and global economic development.

## **Volunteerism**

### **Why do People Volunteer?**

People volunteer for a wide range of reasons. They understand that it is important to give back to their communities, helping others is a way to stay active in their community; others volunteer to meet people to build new relationships. People volunteer so that they can learn a new skill and perhaps change career paths. Volunteering can be the most rewarding and enjoyable experience that people from all ages and walks of life can have!

### **The Benefits of Volunteering**

The act of volunteering provides many benefits. The link between volunteering and health is real and tangible. Research has shown that volunteering can generate a better sense of self-esteem and confidence, reduce the heart rate and blood pressure, increase feelings of calm and well-being, boost the immune system and nervous system functioning, reduce life's stresses and overcome social isolation. For volunteers who focus on physical activity such as coaching, working with children or maintaining trails, one benefit can include becoming more physically fit. In short, volunteering provides opportunities to exercise the body, mind, soul and heart.

### **Volunteers – Who are They?**

Volunteers come in all walks of life. Some are interested in volunteering one time while others may choose to volunteer for a longer period of time. The volunteer experience should be a “win-win” experience for the volunteer, staff and the customer. The volunteer should be placed in positions that are meaningful and valuable. It is not intended that volunteers will replace or assume the duties of career staff; rather that the volunteer will enhance the overall goals of the program and the Department.

**Volunteer** – is a person who performs or gives services of his/her own free will (unpaid helper/assistant.) A volunteer as defined in “management of Parks and recreation Agencies” published by the National Recreation and Parks Association is:

1. A volunteer is someone who provides administrative support – governing on boards or advising on committees.
2. A volunteer is someone who provides a direct service on an ongoing basis – leading activity programs, providing instruction, supporting special events, facilitating the involvement of participants with disabilities and coaching youth sports.
3. A volunteer is someone who will receive a job description before beginning an volunteer service.

## Categories of Volunteers

**Individual** – the individual volunteer is just that – One person volunteering in a designated position. We welcome potential volunteer's ages 13 year (with parental permission) of age and over. An individual volunteer may serve one time or serve for longer periods of time depending on the need and availability of the volunteer. Individual volunteers who serve in a successful long term position have potential to become a vital part of our team. A volunteer takes pride in their position and may look for added responsibilities in the future.

**Group** – Group volunteering is a very popular trend we expect more groups inquiring about volunteer opportunities. Some examples of community groups may include:

- Scout troops
- Families
- Faith based groups
- Sororities and fraternities
- Teen groups
- School groups
- Neighborhood Associations
- Garden Clubs
- Others

Group volunteers may prefer long or short term projects (i.e. special events, park beautification, mentoring programs, natural land work, etc.) Group members often may have an idea/project in mind and may approach the department with the concept. This is an excellent opportunity for the community to be involved in our area.

**Corporate** – Corporate volunteering is any formal or organized means a company uses to encourage and support its employees and retirees to volunteer their time and skills in community service. It is an array of business decisions that are being increasingly and successfully used throughout the United States to address social needs. Corporations support volunteering and are committed to their communities.

**Incidental Assistant** – An unregistered person who assists with a program but does not meet the definition of a volunteer. Examples include someone assisting on game with keeping score, timing and other day of event activities where a formal volunteer is not recruited or required.

**Short Term** – Short term volunteers are gaining in popularity. There are two types of short term volunteers. The first type provides service that is short in duration. This may include a festival, special event, or summer day camp. People come to volunteer for a pre-established time and are truly finished when the job is done or the event has ended.

The second type provides service at regular intervals for short period of times. It includes people who work on the same annual event each year for several years in a row or an ongoing project.

**Advisory Groups, Volunteer Partnerships and Friends Groups** – These special volunteer groups are very important because of the vital role they play in our everyday existence. These volunteers may be members of a friends group or may serve in an advisory or advocacy role.

**Partnerships in Preservation** – represents a coalition of citizens, students, homeowner groups, civic and business groups who share a common interest in the future of Rockdale County Parks and Recreation facilities. Partners play a vital role in making the preservation of natural lands a success by volunteering their time to support a wide variety of activities and participate in:

- Projects to preserve and restore the wildlife habitats of our wilderness areas.
- Organizing neighborhood/community groups for community service days to assist in a park or along a trail.
- Creating opportunities for everyone to learn about recreational opportunities throughout Rockdale County.

## **Role of the Volunteer Office**

### **Responsibilities of the Volunteer Coordinator**

All volunteer information, including personal data, job data and background check results, is maintained in the volunteer database. The Program Coordinator will maintain a field on each volunteer that returns for further assignments. This file, to be similar to a personnel file, will include all agreements, jobs held, time cards, background reports, etc.

The volunteer is afforded the same liability protection as employees of the department providing that the volunteer works within the specific job description and meets and completes all paperwork including the timely submittal of time cards.

## **Recruitment Process:**

Getting started as a volunteer:

1. Volunteer application/Group application – only if the volunteer is new.
2. Volunteer Release Waiver – this form must be completed each time a volunteer begins service.
3. Background Check consent Form – must be completed yearly.
4. Emergency Medical Authorization Form – new volunteers.
5. Reference Request – new volunteers.
6. Volunteer Job Description – new volunteer or if the volunteer's job description changes.
7. Volunteer work schedule
8. Verification of Service Form – end of the volunteer service.
9. Volunteer Feedback Form – at the end of the volunteer's service.

## **Interview Process**

Upon receiving applications, the Program Coordinator or other staff will review applicants and make contact regarding available positions and arrange interviews if applicable. The Program Coordinator or any other designated staff member has the authority to select candidates for volunteer positions pending a background check.

## **Background and Reference Checks**

Personal references from the application may be checked prior to the volunteer's acceptance into the program. Reports of any personal references must be documented and forwarded to the Program Coordinator for filing. Criminal background checks will be required on all volunteers.

## **Volunteer Selection**

Volunteers may not begin their service until completion of all paperwork including application, volunteer agreement and satisfactory background check results and reference checks.

Volunteers must be notified as to their job assignment and provided the appropriate volunteer job description.

Volunteer agreements and background check form must be submitted at least ten (10) days prior to the start of the program.

The Program Coordinator will alert staff of a negative issue on a criminal background check.

## **Orientation/Training**

The volunteer's immediate supervisor will conduct orientation. Volunteers will receive the following materials at orientation and/or prior to the start of the program:

- Job Description
- Volunteer Handbook
- Time Cards

## **Supervision**

The Program Coordinator will work in conjunction with the staff to collect time cards of the volunteer at the completion of the program and record those hours in the volunteer database and file in volunteer's file. If appropriate, the volunteer will receive a certification/letter stating the amount of hours she/he volunteered.

## **Evaluation**

Volunteers, at the completion of the program, may receive a written/verbal evaluation from the supervisor or their designee of the program. Copies of evaluation must be forwarded to the volunteer upon completion to provide input on his/her experience with the department. The volunteer may be asked for feedback/evaluation on their volunteer experience with Rockdale County.

## **Dismissal/Suspension**

Volunteers serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority of the department (or their designee) and may be dismissed from their volunteer duties at any time, with or without cause. If the volunteer is not satisfactorily completing his/her job duties, the appointing authority for the department (or their designee) will notify the volunteer in writing of his/her dismissal. If the dismissal is a result of an unsatisfactory background check the volunteer coordinator will notify the volunteer by phone call or letter.

The supervisor, or the designee, of the program has the ability to suspend a volunteer.

A database file of background checks will be maintained in the office of the Recreation Superintendent.

## **Recognition**

Volunteers are truly our most valuable resource. Once a year volunteers will be recognized and thanked for their efforts.

Job Description – on file

- Trail Maintenance
- Park Site Aide
- Special Events

Forms – on file

- Volunteer Application/Group Application
- Volunteer Release/Waiver
- Background Check consent Form
- Emergency Medical Authorization Form
- Reference Request
- Volunteer Feedback Form
- Volunteer Job Description
- Verification of Service Form