

STOCKTON COLLEGE

THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Stockton Collaborates with Environmental Organizations to Offer Volunteer Master Naturalist Certificate Program

Certified Interpretive Guide Certification Program Also Offered

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Galloway Township, NJ- The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, and other regional environmental organizations are offering a program to train Volunteer Master Naturalists (VMN's). The 40-hour certificate program is based on a national model, currently offered in 24 states, to develop volunteer citizen stewards of natural resources through science-based conservation, education and service programs.

The 40-hour VMN certificate program is planned for Wednesday evenings and Saturdays between April 14 and May 26. The program will take place at a variety of locations, including at the Oceanville (Atlantic County) site of the Forsythe NWR. The certificate program also includes a full day field experience at and around the Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center with an optional overnight experience on Sedge Island.

The VMN program, with both classroom and field-based learning components, will offer a broad range of natural resource and wildlife topics, delivered by field experts in environmental education. Certificate program instructors include a number of well-known Stockton faculty members, including Jack Connor, Rudy Arndt, and Patrick Hossay, and environmental experts from organizations throughout the region.

The program will also provide trained volunteer opportunities for conservation services, interpretation activities and outreach at the Refuge or at other environmental organizations within local communities, focusing especially on the habitats of the southern New Jersey coastal region - Great Bay and Barnegat Bay and other local tidal areas and on coastal plains and forests in Atlantic, Ocean and Monmouth Counties. Other organizations participating in the development of this program include the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, the Barnegat Bay National Estuary Program, Ocean County Parks and Recreation, the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Forest Resource Education Center and the Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center. **-more-**

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To receive the VNM certificate, participants must also complete, during the subsequent 12 months, 40 hours of approved environmental service either at the Refuge or another site, and complete an additional eight hours of advanced environmental training. The 40-hour service and eight-hour advanced training component must be completed each year to maintain one's Volunteer Master Naturalist status.

Stockton and the Refuge are also collaborating to offer the 32-hour National Association for Interpretation training for Certified Interpretive Guides. Successful completion of this training, scheduled for March 26-29, will lead to national designation as a Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG). The VMN and the CIG training may be taken together or separately.

These certificate programs are open to staff of environmental organizations, teachers, and any adults interested in the environment. To learn more about the programs and to register, please go to: www.stockton.edu/hshs under 'Certificate Programs' or call Stockton College Continuing Studies for Health Sciences and Human Services at 609-652-4227.

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