

STOCKTON COLLEGE

THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Stockton College, Forsythe Wildlife Refuge Offering Volunteer Master Naturalist Program

Classroom and Field-Based Components to Cover Wildlife, Natural
Resources, Ecology, Environmental Management

For Immediate Release

Thursday, March 03, 2011

Contact: Tim Kelly
Office of Public Relations
Galloway Township, NJ 08240
Tim.Kelly@stockton.edu
(609) 652-4950

Galloway Township, NJ- Covering roughly 1.1 million acres and spanning portions of seven New Jersey counties, the Pinelands National Reserve (PNR) is home to more than 1,200 plant, mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and fish species. New Jersey's unique environment and natural diversity offer vast educational opportunities.

The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, in partnership with the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and other regional environmental organizations, is offering a 40-hour Volunteer Master Naturalist (VMN) certificate program to train nature and wildlife enthusiasts.

"The certificate program, which is based on a national model currently offered in 20 states, develops volunteer citizen stewards of natural resources through science-based conservation, education and service programs," explained Dr. Cynthia Sosnowski, associate dean of the School of Graduate and Continuing Studies.

The program, which runs from Wednesday, April 6, 2011, through Wednesday, May 18, 2011, will take place on Wednesday evenings, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., and Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The ten workshops will be held primarily at the Oceanville site of the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Field trips will explore regions of the Pinelands and Forsythe.

Dr. Cynthia Sosnowski and Brian Braudis, Deputy Project Leader at Forsythe, envisioned the program. Five years ago the development began, and Sosnowski recruited Barry Keefe, a licensed social worker and a former Stockton professor, to help build the program to what it is today.

Since the first cohort in 2008, the program has trained more than 60 volunteers from Atlantic, Ocean, Cape May, Cumberland and Gloucester Counties. The program costs have been partially supported by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

-more-

Volunteer Master Naturalist Certificate Program/ page 2

This year, Barry Keefe will lead the fourth Volunteer Master Naturalist cohort. Keefe's personal record of community service is widespread. He strives to reach children from urban areas to help set in motion their discovery and exploration of New Jersey's extensive natural world. He launched a two-year outreach program with a primary school in Pleasantville for students in the after-school program, and he has led Friday evening campfires for families in the spring and fall months at Forsythe.

Keefe's volunteerism has taken him as far as Alaska, where in June of 2009, he spent the entire month on a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service project seeking the causes of the decline of eiders (Arctic ducks).

Keefe helped to develop and is an active member of the board of the Friends of Cape May National Wildlife Refuge. He also began the Nature Champions program at Forsythe in conjunction with the Forsythe director of volunteers. Keefe explained, "This program trains health professionals to prescribe outdoor exercise for children's health. It is supported by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Audubon and the National Environmental Education Foundation."

Each of the ten workshops in this year's Volunteer Master Naturalist certificate program will be presented by environmental experts from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Environmental Protection and Forsythe, as well as faculty members from Stockton College.

To complete the certificate program, participants must complete 40 hours of approved environmental service and eight additional hours of advanced environmental training during the 12 months following the program's classes and field work. To maintain the certificate, volunteer master naturalists are required to complete the 40-hour service and eight-hour advanced training components each year.

The VMN program is open to staff of environmental organizations, teachers, retirees and any adult interested in the environment. The tuition for the course is \$229.

For more information or to register for the VMN certificate program, please contact Stockton College Continuing Studies at cs@stockton.edu or call 609-652-4227. To visit the VMN website, which includes a detailed schedule of workshops, go to www.stockton.edu/cs, click on "Browse all courses," select "Certificate programs" and then choose Volunteer Master Naturalist.

#