



Asbury Woods

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME TO ASBURY WOODS

Welcome to Asbury Woods! You have joined an organization steeped in history yet on the verge of amazing new directions. We are thrilled to have you join our dedicated and passionate team. We believe that the work we do here at Asbury Woods touches the hearts, minds, bodies and souls of those who engage with us. We'll strive to provide you with an unparalleled opportunity to be part of something remarkable. We encourage you to be part of bringing our mission to life for all who visit Asbury Woods.

As a new member of our team, becoming acquainted with our programs, history, operating procedures and policies is an important part of your orientation. This handbook is one way to help you do that and answer, in a general way, questions about your volunteerism, expectations, policies and benefits. Please read the handbook carefully. If you have any questions, please discuss them with our Constituent Relations Coordinator who manages our volunteer program.

Once again, welcome!

Jennifer Farrar, CFRE
Executive Director



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Asbury Woods is to provide all members of the community with meaningful environmental, educational and recreational experiences that inspire a greater sense of awareness, sustainability and stewardship.

VISION STATEMENT

Asbury Woods will be the Northwest Pennsylvania Region's premier destination of choice for nature education, exploration, recreation and environmental stewardship. Asbury Woods Partnership is the guardian of Asbury Woods and its legacy, ensuring its long-term sustainability through community support, volunteers, programming and fundraising.

Volunteers at Asbury Woods

Volunteers are vital to the success of our mission at Asbury Woods, serving as ambassadors, stewards and friends. Volunteers impact nearly all areas of our organization, contributing more than 13,000 hours each year. Volunteer opportunities include such things as greeting visitors, giving tours, sharing unique expertise at public programs, assisting at special events, grounds maintenance and so much more. Sheila Nordin, Constituent Relations Coordinator, serves as the primary contact for our volunteers, although specific projects or programs will be managed by various staff. Sheila will be pleased to work with you to design a volunteer opportunity that fits your interests, availability and goals while helping Asbury Woods to advance our mission. We ask that you take the time to acquaint yourself with the organization, our programs, staff areas of responsibility and history as when you are here as a representative at Asbury Woods, you are likely to be asked questions by our visitors. While we don't expect you'll be able to answer every question, we encourage you to be familiar with the staff and resources available to help you direct that visitor with how to get the right answer.

Sheila Nordin, Constituent Relations Coordinator

814-836-6176

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Volunteer Opportunities

Visitor Services Volunteers

Volunteers share their love of Asbury Woods by ensuring each guest has a meaningful experience when they visit the Nature Center. Their responsibilities include greeting guests, answering phone calls and other inquiries, taking program registrations and running the cash register in the Squeaky Frog Gift Shop.

Gardeners

Volunteer Gardeners help maintain the garden areas at the Nature Center and at Brown's Farm.

Trail Maintenance

Volunteers help to maintain our trails by cleaning up litter, trimming branches, repairing boardwalks and mulching trails.

Weekly Work Crew

Volunteers meet weekly to complete a variety of jobs such as carpentry, painting and general maintenance. You must be able to follow staff directions, be physically fit and able to lift 30 pounds safely.

Animal Care Crew

Youth volunteers (ages 12-16) help care for the animals in the live animal exhibits. They clean cages and exercise the animals every Saturday morning. A training program is required and offered periodically throughout the year.

Summer Camp Assistant

Youth volunteers (entering 9th grade or older) work with children ages 5-12 by assisting the camp educators with supervision, preparation of craft projects, clean-up and snack time.

Festivals

Our seasonal festivals are a favorite with volunteers and visitors alike. A variety of jobs are available at each festival: education stations, tour leaders, craft room helpers, greeters, ticket booth and much more.

Maple Program

Asbury Woods' maple sap collection and syrup production program is highly dependent on volunteers helping us to tap trees and collect and boil sap in our very own on-site sugar shack. This engaging and educational program is a fantastic way to learn about a natural product unique to our part of the world.

Watershed Education

One of the cornerstones of our school-based programming is our watershed education for 5th and 8th graders. Held each Fall and Spring at Brown's Farm, this program relies on volunteers to help us teach various stations in the field at Brown's Farm and then hike down to Walnut Creek with the school children.

Social Media Influencers

Volunteers may help us maintain an active presence on social media by working with our Marketing Director to create and post content including pictures, blogs, sharing relevant research, and more through our Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and website channels.

Visitor Engagement Volunteers

Volunteers with specific interest and expertise in various nature and environmental topics create and present short programs to enhance the visitor experience. Examples of topics include tree talks, blue bird walks, animal exhibit tours, green building tours and more. If you have a passion for a specific topic, work with our education team and Constituent Relations Coordinator to be part of our visitor engagement team.

Volunteer Procedures and Policies

Recording Hours

Please record your hours each time you volunteer in the Volunteer Binder located in the office. Festival events and trail work days will have a group sign in sheet for everyone to sign in and out. Tracking volunteer hours helps Asbury Woods demonstrate community involvement when seeking funds from grants or foundations and is also helpful for budgeting and volunteer recognition purposes.

Punctuality, Absenteeism, and Illness

Report on time and ready to work on your volunteer assignment. If you are late or unable to fulfill your commitment for any reason, please call the main phone line 814-835-5356 to notify the Constituent Relations Coordinator or an Asbury Woods staff member as soon as possible so that alternate plans can be made.

Liability Release Waiver

All volunteers are required to sign and return the Liability Release Waiver prior to the first volunteer assignment. Minors must obtain a signature from their parent or legal guardian.

Professionalism

Adhere to the same rules, regulations, and standards as Asbury Woods' staff. Volunteers are issued name tags that should be worn whenever on duty. Protect confidential information, do not transport any students at any time, and always exercise good judgment, remembering that you are a representative of Asbury Woods. Refrain from using tobacco, alcohol or controlled substances, or being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while on Asbury Woods' property.

Personal Belongings

Volunteers are welcome to use the kitchen, library and restroom facilities. Please remember that we cannot be held responsible for any lost valuables or personal belongings.

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Immediately notify any Asbury Woods staff member if you witness an accident, unusual incident or you observe any safety or health hazard. If an emergency occurs and you need help immediately, dial (9) 911 on any telephone. Tell the operator your location, the nature of the emergency, your name and status. An AED is located in the Nature Center adjacent to the gift shop. First aid kits are available in the kitchen, craft workshop, maintenance workshop and Brown's Farm's upstairs classroom for your personal use. Do not treat visitors or other volunteers. Please report any injury or illness (no matter how small or insignificant it may seem) while on duty to any Asbury Woods staff member at once. All injuries must be evaluated and documented as soon as possible. Work with a staff member to complete a student and/or adult Accident/Injury form.

Clearances

Volunteers whose assignments will include direct and regular interaction with children are required to obtain their volunteer clearances. These include Child Abuse History Clearance (no fee for volunteers), PA State Police Criminal Record Check (no fee for volunteers) and an FBI Fingerprinting (\$27 fee), although fingerprinting requirement is waived for individuals who have been continuous residents of Pennsylvania for at least 10 years. Our Constituent Relations Coordinator can assist with the clearance process and help determine whether your volunteer assignments require clearances.

Smoking Policy

Smoking is prohibited on Asbury Woods property, including within any building located on the property of Asbury Woods. All varieties of tobacco use or smoking are prohibited, including but not limited to traditional cigarettes, vaping, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco, etc. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, board members, customers, and visitors.

Personal Communication Devices

Please use discretion when using personal communication devices while volunteering at Asbury Woods. The experience of our visitors is our first priority; so please limit use to periods when visitors are not present. If you must handle a personal matter or emergency, please ask a staff member to temporarily cover your volunteer post while you handle your personal matter.

Resignation and Termination

Either the volunteer or the Constituent Relations Coordinator may terminate services at any time if the position or fulfillment of duties is not agreeable or acceptable.

Volunteers are asked to give a minimum of two weeks notice if interrupting the volunteer assignment for an extended period of time or resigning from volunteering. A volunteer may be terminated if he/she fails to meet basic standards of professionalism set by Asbury Woods or fails to meet the responsibilities identified in the volunteer job description. If a volunteer displays conduct that is not in the best interest of Asbury Woods, the volunteer will be counseled by the Constituent Relations Coordinator and/or other staff members and may be asked to leave.

Volunteer Benefits

Beyond the benefit of assisting one of your favored organizations to succeed, Asbury Woods is pleased to offer several additional benefits to our volunteers. Volunteers receive free snowshoe and cross country ski rentals, a 10% discount on most items in the Squeaky Frog Gift Shop and access to our resource library. Additionally, throughout the year, various volunteer thank you and recognition programs take place such as annual lunch and annual picnic.

Conflict of Interest & Ethics Statement

Any information that a volunteer learns about Asbury Woods, or its members, donors, or volunteers as a result of working for Asbury Woods that is not otherwise publicly available, constitutes confidential information. Volunteers may not disclose confidential information to anyone who is not employed by Asbury Woods or to other persons employed by Asbury Woods who do not need to know such information when rendering services. The protection of privileged and confidential information, including trade secrets, is vital to the interests and the success of Asbury Woods. The disclosure, distribution, electronic transmission or copying of Asbury Woods' confidential information is prohibited.

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Harassment has no place at work. It is against Asbury Woods' policy and a violation of the law. It will not be tolerated by Asbury Woods. Any harassment, whether based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability as defined by law, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other class is prohibited. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other offensive conduct that is either sexual in nature or directed at someone because of his or her gender. Sexual harassment undermines the employment relationship by creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Harassment, whether sexual or based on the other classes listed above, may take many forms including but not limited to:

Verbal Conduct - such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, name calling, innuendos, demeaning slurs, or unwanted sexual advances;

Visual Conduct - such as leering, derogatory or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings, graffiti, electronic mail, or gestures;

Physical Conduct - such as assault, offensive touching, blocking of normal movement, or interfering with work;

Threats or Demands - to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment benefits.

Asbury Woods does not tolerate any such conduct. Employees or volunteers who violate this policy are subject to immediate and appropriate discipline, up to and including termination. If you observe such conduct or believe it has happened to you, tell the harasser the behavior is offensive and needs to stop. Immediately report the incident to the Executive Director. Asbury Woods will initiate a prompt, thorough investigation and will take remedial action as appropriate. If the incident involves the Executive Director, then employees are encouraged to go directly to the Asbury Woods Board Chair. Although Asbury Woods encourages the reporting of all incidents of harassment, Asbury Woods also recognizes that false accusations can have serious effects on innocent persons. Any employee who, maliciously or recklessly, makes a false accusation of harassment against another person will be subject to appropriate corrective action, up to and including termination. Reports of alleged harassment are treated discreetly and confidentially. No employee will be retaliated against for lodging a complaint under this policy or participating in an investigation of such a complaint. Any employee who believes he or she is being subjected to retaliation should promptly report this to the Executive Director or the Board Chair. An accurate record of the objectionable behavior is necessary to resolve a formal complaint of harassment or retaliation. Any such formal complaint, therefore, must be reduced to writing (either by

the complainant or by an individual designated to receive the complaint). Upon receipt of any formal complaint of harassment or retaliation, Asbury Woods will conduct a prompt, full and fair investigation. In all cases, reasonable measures will be undertaken to maintain confidentiality and to protect the privacy of the persons involved. Upon completion of the investigation, Asbury Woods will communicate its findings to the complainant and to the person accused of the harassment or retaliation and will take corrective action, if appropriate. This corrective action may include, but is not limited to, a written reprimand, referral to counseling, reassignment, suspension or termination.

Programs and Events

Public Programs

"Woods Talk", the Asbury Woods newsletter, is published three times per year and available online. All programs and events at the Nature Center and at Brown's Farm Barn are listed in this newsletter.

Pre-K through 12th School Group Programs

Programs are taught by Asbury Woods Educators and are available for all age levels and abilities. Programs are designed to meet school curriculum requirements and the Pennsylvania State Education Standards.

Scout Badge Requirement Programs

These programs enable Scouts to attain badge requirements. Eagle Scout candidates may also complete projects for their Eagle Scout awards.

Drop In & Discover

A regular schedule of free programs that requires no pre-registration and happens at regular intervals are intended to further engage visitors in the Asbury Woods experience.

Preschool Nature Discovery and Tots in Nature Classes

Preschool Nature Discovery Classes for 3-5 year olds and Tots in Nature Classes for 18-36 month olds are presented in six week sessions for our youngest visitors. An adult stays with the child during class which includes a lesson, story, craft, game and visit with one of our animals. Classes include outdoor activities when the weather permits.

Birthday Parties

Themed birthday parties can be reserved for our Discovery Room. Party reservations are for two hours and begin with an hour of naturalist led activities. Descriptions of the party themes are available at www.asburywoods.org.

Summer Day Camps

Children who have completed Kindergarten are able to attend week long summer day camps with various themes each summer. These popular programs typically are through grade 5 and often have some nature art options as well.

Self-Guided Visits

Educators are welcome to bring groups to the Nature Center without an environmental educator-led program. However, reservations are still requested. Individual visitors and families are welcome to participate in self-guided activities on the property including geocaching and the compass courses. Visitors can obtain instructions and materials at the front desk.

Snowshoe and Cross Country Ski Rentals

Snowshoe and cross country ski rentals are available at the Gift Shop during the winter months. There must be at least 6" of snow to rent the equipment. Check out our newsletter or website for this season's pricing.

Maple Festival

Held in the spring at the Nature Center, Maple Fest teaches the public about maple syrup production from early Native Americans to the present time.

Schoolhouse Craft Festival

There will be over 120 premier juried crafters. These local and regional artisans sell beautiful handmade items. This event is held at the McDowell Intermediate High School and benefits Asbury Woods.

Wine and Dine in the Woods

Celebrate the beauty of nature at our annual Wine & Dine in the Woods signature event. This enchanted evening offers delectable food pairings, delightful wines, craft beer and live music.

Earth Day Clean-up

Held in honor of Earth Day to clean up the grounds and trails of Asbury Woods, this event is typically held the 3rd Saturday in April.

Trails Day

Our volunteers and the public join together for maintenance on our trails.

Honey Harvest

On the last Saturday in September, the members of the Northwest Pennsylvania Beekeepers Association join with Asbury Woods volunteer Beekeeper, Charlie Schroeck, to celebrate and teach the public about honey bees.

Scary Creature Feature

This Halloween festival includes a 30-45 minute walk through the woods where "scary creatures" in costume teach about the creatures of the night and why they are not actually scary.

Winter Wonderland

Held in December, Winter Wonderland gives the public the opportunity to walk the lighted boardwalk trail, enjoy our musical display, explore our toy train town, engage in outdoor winter activities, and participate in hands-on educational programs and more.

Facility Rentals

Various areas of the Nature Center, Browns Farm Barn and the grounds are available for rental for individual, family and group events. The website provides information on specific areas, costs and policies.

Into the Woods 5 Miler

This annual 5 mile trail run on Asbury Woods' network of trails is held in June with proceeds benefiting Asbury Woods.

About Us

Asbury Woods is owned and operated by Asbury Woods Partnership. The property that the Nature Center now occupies was owned by the Nicholson and Von Buseck families from 1797-1915. It was used for dairy and general farming. In 1915, Martha Thompson of Detroit purchased 118 acres of the property. In 1920, Dr. Otto Behrend, co-founder of Hammermill Paper Company, purchased the property from Martha Thompson to use as a country retreat but maintained it as a working farm, hiring Clarence Baker as a caretaker. Under Behrend's ownership, the farm had dairy cows, pigs, chickens and crops of hay, oats, wheat and corn. Behrend also planted Chinese chestnut trees, fruit trees, berries and grapes. In 1931, Otto Behrend replaced the old cottage on the property with a new cottage suitable for entertaining. That same year he also planted stands of evergreen trees. In 1950, Dr. Behrend donated a portion of his land to the Millcreek Township School District for the original Asbury Elementary School at the corner of West 38th Street and Asbury Road. This laid the groundwork for the subsequent donation of the remainder of his property through his will upon his death in 1957. Those parcels encompassed where the present day Asbury Park (white barn, tennis courts, baseball fields, playground, picnic shelter) is located as well as the property the Nature Center and trail network are located. The property was donated to the Millcreek Township School District for educational and recreational purposes. To this day, Asbury Woods carries forward the intent of Dr. Otto Behrend's gift through our environmental education and outdoor recreational programs.

In 1967, a National Audubon Society survey and usage plan identified 40 acres of land

east of Asbury Road as ideal for an arboretum and nature center. Trails and a parking lot were added near the cottage and a full-time teacher/naturalist was hired in 1968 to conduct environmental education classes, nature hikes and teacher workshops. The teacher lived in the cottage. In 1974, the cottage was converted to a nature center and programs were expanded. In the early 1990s, the Millcreek Township School District purchased Brown's Farm Barn and the adjacent property as a possible location for a new school. The property was ultimately deemed not suitable, but the School District retained ownership of the property. In 1995, Douglas James donated 25 acres of land to Mercyhurst College. This 25 acre parcel was adjacent to the School District Asbury Park land. The Millcreek Township School District, Millcreek Township Parks Department and Mercyhurst University formed a partnership to establish a 200 acre Greenway from the Nature Center to Brown's Farm. In 2003, a generous gift from retired Rear Admiral Charles A. Curtze, USN, and Louise Vicary Curtze enabled construction of a footbridge over Walnut Creek. This completed the final section of 2.4 miles of trail connecting the Nature Center with Brown's Farm Barn.

Recognizing the need to expand and renovate the Nature Center, a community driven group, Friends of Asbury Woods formed in 2000. They were the driving force in raising funds for the renovation which was completed in 2005. In 2008, the Friends of Asbury Woods changed its name to Asbury Woods Partnership and received 501 (c) 3 nonprofit status. In 2009, the Millcreek Township School District and the Asbury Woods Partnership reached an agreement whereby the School District owned and maintained Asbury Woods and administered curriculum based science and environmental education programs to the students of the School District. The Asbury Woods Partnership took on the role of providing community and public programs. In 2016, the Asbury Woods Partnership purchased 115 acres from the Millcreek Township School District, including the Nature Center and adjacent properties and Brown's Farm Barn and adjacent properties. The Asbury Woods Partnership became solely responsible for the ownership, maintenance and programs of Asbury Woods.

In 2018, Asbury Woods announced the successful completion of *the Preserving a Legacy Capital Campaign*. The campaign was launched in 2015 and raised \$5.2 million, surpassing the goal of raising \$4.5 million to protect Asbury Woods now and into the future. Major gifts to the campaign include a gift in excess of \$1 million from Andrew J. Conner, which constitutes the largest private gift in Asbury Woods' 61-year history. The Nature Center at Asbury Woods was rededicated during the *Preserving a Legacy Capital Campaign* celebration reception on October 9, 2018.

Today, Asbury Woods serves more than 13,000 school children each year from all across Erie County, employs 12 people and allows more than 100,000 people each year to have a nature based experience through environmental education programs, outdoor recreation, summer nature camps, adult learning opportunities and more.

Asbury Woods today consists of over 200 acres of preserved land which represents old growth forests, wetlands, meadows, and the Walnut Creek watershed. A wide diversity of wildlife and plant life can be found along the 4.5 miles of trails. A .33 mile boardwalk trail near the Andrew J. Conner Nature Center provides easy access to viewing several habitat areas, including a deck overlooking a swamp. The Nature Center is a green building incorporating green technologies suited for our area, a green roof, sustainable materials and a geothermal heating and cooling system. The Nature Center also houses live animal exhibits featuring animals native to our area as well as a gift shop, Discovery Room with hands-on touch and learn activities, classrooms and library.

Commonly Asked Questions

When is Asbury Woods open?

Trails are open daily from dawn until dusk.

The Andrew J. Conner Nature Center is free and open to the public year round during these hours:

November 1 – March 31

Tuesday- Saturday: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Sunday: Noon - 4:00 pm

Closed to public on Mondays

April 1— October 31

Monday- Saturday: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Sunday: Noon - 5:00 pm

Where is Asbury Woods located?

Asbury Woods' mailing address is 4105 Asbury Road, Erie, PA 16506 and is .25 mile south of West 38th Street across from Asbury Barn. This is the location of the Andrew J. Conner Nature Center.

Brown's Farm Barn is located at 5774 Sterrettania Road, across from Asbury Elementary School.

Will Asbury Woods take an injured animal?

We are not licensed to do this. The nearest wildlife rehabilitator for waterfowl or birds of prey is the Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center in Cambridge Springs. For all other animals, the closest rehabilitator is the Sky's Spirit Wildlife Center in Venango. Please see the phone numbers posted by the visitor services communication log.

How can I raise this baby bird or rabbit I found?

It is against the law to have a wild animal in your home, so you may not keep them. Only a licensed wildlife rehabilitator can legally care for them. You should immediately

return the baby to where it was found. Mammal mothers have a strong mothering instinct, even if a human scent is on the baby, and will return to care for the baby probably after nightfall. Replace fallen bird nests and return baby birds to their nest.

Does Asbury Woods take animals we have raised at home?

Unfortunately, we have limited space in our animal room and Asbury Woods is not able to accept additional animals.

Where do I find the Grandfather Tree?

The Grandfather Tree Trail starts behind the building near the Little Woods play area. The Grandfather Tree is a large red oak tree believed to be over 150 years old.

Where are the Trails?

Trail Maps are available in the Nature Center and outdoor kiosks. The Asbury Woods Greenway Trail consists of 205 acres of green space including Andrew J. Conner Nature Center, Asbury Park and Barn, Brown's Farm and the James Wildlife Preserve. Trails at the Nature Center include handicapped accessible boardwalks and several trails through the woods. Trails west of Asbury Road take you to Brown's Farm Barn located at 5774 Sterrettania Road. A bridge allows you to cross Walnut Creek. The round trip hike is approximately 4.5 miles.

Are we allowed dogs or bikes on the trails?

Dogs on leashes are permitted on the Greenway Trail and at Brown's Farm Barn. Pets are also permitted on the Guided and Touvell Trails near the Nature Center. A dog waste station is located at Brown's Farm Barn. Dogs must be leashed and waste disposed of in appropriate trash receptacles. Dogs are not permitted at events at the Nature Center. Bikes are permitted on the trails on the west side of Asbury Road, connecting to Brown's Farm. They are not permitted on the trails adjacent to the Nature Center on the east side of Asbury Road.

How do I register for a program?

Program registrations and payments are accepted online at www.Asburywoods.org or at the Gift Shop. We do not take registrations for Millcreek Parks and Recreation (White Asbury Barn).

Can I rent a room or shelter at Asbury Woods?

Rooms and outdoor spaces may be rented for a variety of uses including meetings, baby or bridal showers, graduations, birthday parties, weddings, family gatherings, etc. Please contact Asbury Woods for more information or visit www.asburywoods.org.

