

[From Winter 2001]

Are You a Voice of Assateague?

Do you like to talk with people? Do you have a knack with crafts? Do you enjoy strolling the refuge's trails? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you qualify to be a "voice" of Assateague.

A wonderful team of volunteers has been serving as "voices" for Assateague at the Chincoteague Refuge Visitor Center as well as out in the field. However, more help is always needed and welcomed. Volunteers can connect visitors to the special nature of the refuge and make their experience a memorable event.

For example, volunteers like Charlotte Thomas have strengthened their "voice" by conducting fifteen-minute Treasures of the Touchtable programs at the Visitor Center. Very little prep time is needed and it simply requires volunteers to answer those "what-is-it" questions. Volunteers learn about the items that are featured on the table, gather a group of visitors by announcing the program, and then deliver the program.

Another way volunteers can become a "voice" is by conducting the Refuge Review program. Here's how it works. Volunteers are encouraged to select a topic or critter in which they have an interest, develop a fifteen-minute talk, and then coordinate their efforts with me. In the past, these programs have worked well outside on the deck of the Visitor Center.

Roving is another wonderful way to be a "voice" of Assateague. As volunteers walk the trails and/or work in the field, they make contact with visitors and provide them with interpretive information about refuge flora, fauna and management. Just ask volunteers Phil and Joan Moschitta how rewarding it is to stroll a trail, wear their volunteer shirts and speak with visitors.

And, if these programs don't suit you, then consider a Make It/Take It project. Volunteers can use their talents to provide children of all ages with fun and educational projects. In the past, projects have included sand painting, folded frogs and rainbow wreaths. Any ideas which relate to the refuge and have an education component will be considered.

Of course, the refuge's special events could not happen without the dedication and commitment of our volunteers. We owe them our appreciation and gratitude for pitching in, joining the work force and helping us achieve success!

For example, last year's Halloween Walk would not have been successful without volunteers who graciously donated their time and effort to portray characters, pass out goodies and create costumes and make-up. And this year will be no exception. Volunteers are encouraged to get in the spirit and come join in the fun for the Halloween Walk 2001!

Refuge staff conducts three formal training sessions each year for new volunteers. Let your "voice" be heard! Assateague Island needs you! Please contact me at 757-336-6122 for more information.

Jill VanScoyoc, Outdoor Recreation Planner, CNWR