

## National Park Service VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS (VIP) UPDATE

March 2017

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area 111 E. Kellogg Blvd. Suite 105, Saint Paul, MN 55101

### IN THIS NEWSLETTER

What a great selection of volunteer opportunities this month! If you like working outdoors and sharing a love of nature with others, consider becoming a volunteer Crew Leader. This is perfect for Master Naturalists! Can't wait to volunteer? We need help this Friday! Talk informally with international high school students while making seed packets. The following week brings the opportunity to help students make seed pods and to test your survival skills! The sign-up for Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls begins on March 28. Find out about the State of the River at the free talk on March 28. We are always in need of volunteers to help with our education programs so if you know of folks who work well with youth or know of places we might recruit, let Kathy know.

March 3- Seed Packing-Discussion leader

March 8- Seed Pod assistant

March 11-Survival RAVE

March 25- Community Ambassador Training

March 28- Sign-up for Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls begins

March 28- State of the River talk

March 30- New Crew Leader training

April 27-19- Seed Pod Throwing help

### Seed Packet Making-Discussion Leaders!

March 3, 9:30-12:30

YMCA in Burnsville, 13850 Portland Ave S, Burnsville, MN 55337

St. Paul Preparatory School will again bring high school students for a seed packet making/discussion of parks and outdoor recreation service program. Last year's program was a big success as students from over 25 different countries learned about US national parks and how active Seniors enjoy the outdoors. By making seed packets, discussion is easier for these English language learners. In addition, the park distributes the packets to volunteers assisting with programs. Sit at a table with 6-8 students and talk about parks you've visited, how you enjoy the outdoors and listen to what they have to say. [Kathleen\\_swenson@nps.gov](mailto:Kathleen_swenson@nps.gov) or [651-293-8424](tel:651-293-8424) to volunteer.

### Seed Pod making assistant

March 8, 9:00-12:45

Higher Ground Academy, St. Paul

Assist students in the making of Seed Pods, small balls of seeds, soil, and compost. Rangers will give a short talk to the classroom and then students will make Seed Pods. Volunteers will help students distribute supplies, make sure the seed pods are the right size, and generally help things run smoothly. Truth told, volunteers get to help with set-up and take down too but it's all great fun! Contact Kathy Swenson at [Kathleen\\_swenson@nps.gov](mailto:Kathleen_swenson@nps.gov) or [651-293-8424](tel:651-293-8424).

### Survival RAVE!

March 11, 1-4p

Hidden Falls Regional Park, North Entrance

Participants will be helping to restore the floodplain by hauling brush, and spreading native seeds. This RAVE will challenge your outdoor skills (though no experience or previous knowledge is required). You'll learn what it takes to make it outdoors in a Minnesota winter! Do

some good while helping us to celebrate service, and our most special places – national parks! RAVEs are great for adults and kids over 10 years old. This is a free event for volunteers – your only ticket is your service to the river! Register by signing up [here](#). Contact [mhammes@parkconnection.org](mailto:mhammes@parkconnection.org) with any questions!

### **(New Program!) Community Ambassadors –**

March 25th at 10 a.m. (Training)

As works for your schedule (Volunteer times)

Do you enjoy talking to people about the Mississippi River? We are looking for a co-hort of volunteers that will work at tabling events throughout the year and talk to the public about opportunities to get involved with the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and Mississippi Park Connection. We get so many requests from farmer's markets, the State Fair of MN, wellness fairs, and neighborhood groups for information tables about the Mississippi River that we can't do them all. That's where you come in! In this volunteer position, you will have materials for kids and adults to learn about and explore upcoming opportunities happening in the park, and showcase to others opportunities to get involved with the park through volunteer stewardship and membership with Mississippi Park Connection. There will be a short interview process and training for interested volunteers. If you cannot make the training date listed above but are still interested in volunteering, please let us know and we will work with you to make up the training. Email [mhammes@parkconnection.org](mailto:mhammes@parkconnection.org) to sign up!

### **Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls sign-up**

Sign-up for stations begins March 28 at 1pm

Sign up on-line to help at stations on Big River Journey and Journey to the Falls. The field trips, for students in grades 3-6, consist of stations led by volunteers or staff from various organizations. Sign up for 1-3 shifts per field trip. Training is provided on the first volunteer day.

Big River Journey takes place May 1-5, 8-12, and 15-19- 8:30am-2pm each day

Volunteers help with stations about river geology, otters/ecosystems, macroinvertebrates, birds and urban watersheds.

Journey to the Falls takes place May 22-26, 30-31 and June 1- 8:30am-2pm

Volunteers help with a mock archaeological dig by digging "sites" in sand under the Stone Arch Bridge then seeding the sites with artifacts from the Mill Ruins Park excavation, Pillsbury A Mill, or items related to St. Anthony Falls' industrial past. Students uncover the sites to determine the site's them with volunteers asking leading questions. Training materials e-mailed in advance.

Volunteers sign up on line for these positions. To receive sign-up access, contact Brian Goodspeed at [brian\\_goodspeed@nps.gov](mailto:brian_goodspeed@nps.gov) or [651-293-8414](tel:651-293-8414) or Kathy Swenson at [Kathleen\\_swenson@nps.gov](mailto:Kathleen_swenson@nps.gov) or [651-293-8424](tel:651-293-8424).

### **VIP training opportunity: attend public State of the River talk!**

March 28, 7:00-8:00 pm

Minnehaha Academy North Campus Chapel, 3100 W River Pkwy, Minneapolis

A free, public presentation on the "State of the River" will answer questions like: "How is the Mississippi River? Can I swim in it? Is water pollution improving? Can I eat the fish I catch? What's up with invasive carp?" The talk by Trevor Russell, Water Program Director for Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR), will look at some of the 14 indicators of river health that are profiled in the new State of the River report, produced jointly by the Mississippi NRRRA and FMR. The talk is hosted by the Longfellow Community Council's River Gorge Committee. No reservation necessary. FFI: Lyndon Torstenson, [651-293-8426](tel:651-293-8426). See the report, and companion

Stewardship Guide at [stateoftheriver.com](http://stateoftheriver.com).

### **Crew Leader Training**

March 30, 9-Noon (office) and 1-4 (field)

Park Headquarters and an outdoor field training

Become a new Crew Leader! Crew Leaders work alongside rangers leading volunteer habitat restoration events for corporate and school groups. This is a great chance to work outside and share a love of nature and the river with others. It's also perfect for Master Naturalist volunteer hours. Volunteers will learn how to work with groups and about the natural world along the river. Volunteers commit to work 5-6 events within the May-October time period, WEEKDAYS. Crew Leaders get access to an event calendar and sign-up for a time and location that works for them. Scheduling is very flexible. Contact Kathy Swenson at [Kathleen\\_swenson@nps.gov](mailto:Kathleen_swenson@nps.gov) or [651-293-8424](tel:651-293-8424) for more information.

### **Seed Pod Throwing!**

April 27th-29th, times TBD

Coldwater Spring or Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary

Join us and classes of 4th-5th graders as we throw pods filled with native prairie seeds out in some areas that need additional biodiversity! The students will also learn more about the river and wildlife in three learning stations. Please contact [mhammes@parkconnection.org](mailto:mhammes@parkconnection.org) if you are interested in helping!

### **Mississippi Park Connection**

Mississippi Park Connection is the charitable partner of Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Mississippi Park Connection is committed to preserving, protecting, and enjoying the Mississippi River, the national park that runs through the Twin Cities. Among many things, we work closely together (we even share office space) to operate our joint volunteer program. Learn more at <http://parkconnection.org/>

Kathy Swenson, Park Ranger/Volunteer Coordinator, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

111 Kellogg Blvd. East, Suite 105, St. Paul, MN 55101-1256, [651-293-8424](tel:651-293-8424)

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**This is the volunteer newsletter** for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, a national park unit located in the Twin Cities. The monthly newsletter details volunteer opportunities for the given month. If you are interested in an opportunity or have questions, contact the person listed. If nothing fits your interest or availability, don't worry, next month brings new opportunities! To volunteer, unsubscribe, or for more information contact [miss\\_volunteer@nps.gov](mailto:miss_volunteer@nps.gov) or Kathy at [\(651\) 293-8424](tel:651-293-8424). Please circulate freely to interested parties.