

Welcome Statement

JOHNSON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT WELCOMES you as a volunteer member and hopes your association with us will be a mutually satisfying experience. This handbook has been designed to acquaint you with the District and to serve as a guide to the operation and procedures of our volunteer programs.

Included is information regarding the various divisions, as well as a range of topics relating to volunteering. Please read it before beginning your volunteer opportunity. Continue to use it as a reference as your volunteer experience develops. Of course you are also encouraged to call our District Volunteer Coordinator with any questions or concerns.

Citizens who volunteer their time and talents are valuable assets to **JOHNSON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT**. We encourage constructive participation of groups and individuals in our volunteer programs, to perform appropriate tasks under the direction, training, and supervision of our volunteer coordinator and division liaisons. Some community volunteers (i.e., advisory committee members) do not work under the direct supervision of staff. However, they work closely with staff to ensure communication and cooperation with all District activities. The Johnson County Park & Recreation Board of Commissioners believe that community volunteers enrich our program, promote a positive environment, and improve our community relations.

Our Mission

Enhance the quality of life in Johnson County
by providing high-quality
parks, services and recreation programs.

Our Vision

The Johnson County Park and Recreation District will be the leader in
park management and recreation services.

Be responsive to our community and the people we serve.
Impact the character of our community in a positive manner.
Serve as a catalyst for program and land use innovation.
Function as a responsive steward of all our resources.

District Values

EXCELLENCE

COOPERATION

INTEGRITY

STEWARDSHIP

CREATIVITY

INNOVATION

DIVERSITY

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES & CONTACT INFORMATION

Opportunities exist for volunteers to participate in many facets of the District's operations. No particular skill or abilities are required but we will try to match you with an opportunity that fulfills your interests. Help yourself while helping others!

50 PLUS CENTERS ASSISTANTS: Centers in Olathe, Overland Park, and Roeland Park offer programs and leisure activities for the 50 Plus population. Assistance is needed in the office, to instruct classes, and to help with special events. **Contact— 50 Plus Manager, (913) 831-3355.**

50 PLUS TRAVEL: 50 Plus offers a complete travel program including one-day, regional and extended tours. Volunteers needed to assist with office work, telephone inquiries, and mailings. Must be mature, outgoing and have good telephone skills. Need to have some secretarial experience and an ability to learn some data-entry procedures. Prefer a long-term commitment of 4-8 hours per week on a fairly regular schedule. **Contact— 50 Plus Manager, (913) 831-3355.**

CHILD CARE AIDES: Volunteers needed to assist in child care centers located in the Shawnee Mission School District for preschool and school age children. Flexible hours, some age restrictions may apply. **Contact— Children's Services Manager, (913) 831-3355.**

DUATHALON AND TRIATHALON: Annual events at Heritage Park and Shawnee Mission Park. Volunteers to assist with bike counting, passing out water, number assigning and more. **Contact— Corporate & Community Wellness Manager, (913) 831-3355.**

ERNIE MILLER PARK: The volunteer program is open to individuals age 18 or older who are interested in the natural and cultural history of Johnson County. Volunteers at the nature center assist in all facets of running the center. Giving a minimum of 8 hours a month, volunteers work indoors or out, with the public or behind the scenes. They provide manpower at special events throughout the year, assist the public visiting the nature center, and have a special spirit of teamwork to get the job done. **Contact-- Outdoor Education Manager, (913) 764-7759**

ERNIE MILLER AMPHITHEATER PROGRAMS: The District presents special nature programs designed to be both educational and entertaining. Volunteers are needed to assist in setup, greeting visitors, collecting fees, and take-down. **Contact— Outdoor Education Manager, (913) 764-7759.**

GOLF COURSE MARSHALS: Needed to assist patrons with tee-off times and rules and regulations. **Contact— Tomahawk Hills Golf Course Pro, (913) 631-7050 or Heritage Park Golf Course Pro, (913) 829-4653.**

KANSAS CITY CORPORATE CHALLENGE: An annual event cosponsored by area corporations, held at various locations during June. Volunteers needed to assist in conducting all events, including swim meet, 5K run, duathlon, triathlon, football throw, and many other events. **Contact— Corporate & Community Wellness Manager, (913) 831-3355.**

PARK MAINTENANCE WORKERS: Help is needed throughout the year with miscellaneous tasks that help keep the parks clean and beautiful. Duties include: general cleaning, painting, trail maintenance, maintenance of flower beds (especially someone with specialized experience and interest in the care of rose bushes). **Contact Shawnee Mission Park Manager, (913) 631-5208, Kill Creek Park Manager, (913) 583-9985, Heritage Park /Stoll Park Manager, (913) 782-7625, or Antioch Park Manager (913) 831-3355.**

PUBLIC RELATIONS: The District's Community Education Office is responsible for public relations, promotions, and publications for the District's public informational and marketing needs. Volunteers needed to assist in various projects and special events, to freelance articles with area news media, to distribute information at special events, and other fun, rewarding areas. **Contact— Community Relations Manager (913) 438-7275.**

RESERVE PARK POLICE: Needed throughout the year in all parks to assist 16 hours per month. Police requirements to qualify. **Contact— Park Police Captain, (913) 438-7275.**

SPECIAL POPULATIONS: Volunteer opportunities exist for persons with a strong desire to learn and to help others succeed. Special Olympics relies heavily on volunteers for many different sporting events. Assistant coaches are needed during practice times. Each sport has a minimum of ten practices. **Contact— Special Populations Director, (913) 831-3355.**

STREAMWAY PARK TRAILS: Volunteers needed to help with the general maintenance of different portions of the trail. Duties could include picking up trash, painting, and trail maintenance. **Contact- Streamway Park Manager, (913) 441-8669.**

THE THEATRE IN THE PARK: The volunteer program is open to individuals of all ages who are interested in the varied aspects of the theatrical arts. Age limits apply to some opportunities. Volunteers work primarily outdoors, with the public, or behind the scenes. They provide manpower at productions and special events throughout the year, assist the public, serve as parking attendants, and have a special spirit of teamwork to get the job done. **Contact—Fine and Cultural Arts Manager, (913) 631-7050 x 445.**

For more information, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at (913) 438-7275 ext. 321 or visit our website at www.jcprd.com

District Holidays

New Year's Day
Memorial Day
Labor Day
Thanksgiving
Christmas Day

Martin Luther King Day
Independence Day
Veteran's Day
Friday After Thanksgiving

District Hours:
Monday – Friday
8:30 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Facility Information

Bulletin Boards

Information of importance to volunteers is periodically posted on employee bulletin boards. Volunteers should make it a habit to glance at their bulletin board and read any new material posted there. Any volunteer wishing to put material on this board must have it approved by the Volunteer Coordinator.

Parking Information

Volunteers may park anywhere in the parking lot except the following areas:

- * Handicapped parking
- * Emergency parking
- * Designated visitor parking

Restrooms

There are restrooms at each site. Please check with your support person or prior to starting your shift for location. When working with food, state law requires you to wash your hands before or when returning to duty.

Personal Belongings

Volunteers are cautioned not to bring valuables to work. Johnson County Park & Recreation District cannot be responsible for loss of personal property. Check with your support person for storage of personal property such as purses, shoes, and wallets.

Benefits For Volunteers

Volunteers of the Johnson County Park & Recreation District are eligible for a Volunteer Pass for each 25 hours of Volunteer Service. The Volunteer Pass entitles the bearer to one pedal boat rental, one admittance to the Shawnee Mission Park Beach or Kill Creek Park Beach, one round of play at Tomahawk Hills Golf Course or Heritage Park Golf Course, one admittance to the Athletic Training Center, one admittance to Theatre in the Park, or a 20% discount to certain District-sponsored classes. The passes may be accrued, making it possible to earn a free class with five passes. Passes expire one year from issue date. Passes can be transferred to immediate family members only.

Volunteer Recognition

Volunteer recognition is provided by each individual department on an on-going basis, and may also be included in the quarterly District-wide recognition program.

Volunteer Rights And Responsibilities

Volunteers are viewed as the most valuable resource of the District, its staff, and its patrons. Volunteers have the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated as equal co-workers, and the right to effective support. Volunteers have the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition for work done. In return, volunteers shall agree to perform their duties to the best of their abilities. They will remain loyal to the goals of the District and operate according to its procedures.

Record Keeping

Record Keeping

You will complete and turn in a volunteer timesheet at the end of each month. It is very important that you return your timesheet each month to provide information for the following:

- Dates worked
- Time of work [i.e., 11 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.]; all fractions of time are to be rounded off to the nearest quarter (.25, .50, .75).
- Total Hours worked.
- A brief description of the assignment is helpful.

Your Supervisor should maintain the time sheet and record the running totals.

Each person participating in the District's volunteer program must complete and sign a *Volunteer Hold Harmless* form. There are two forms for this: one form is for the individual volunteer and the second is for a group. It is the support person's responsibility to have these forms signed. The original should be sent to the Human Resources Department and a copy retained for the department's file.

If a volunteer is working on an ongoing project, [i.e., the Bluebird Restoration Program], a *Volunteer Hold Harmless* form should be signed each calendar year.

Volunteer Policies

This manual explains our policies and procedures. It will help you understand how to carry out your duties and give the best service to Johnson County Park & Recreation District patrons. This manual is also designed to assist you in answering questions you may have regarding operations.

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the District that there will be no discrimination or harassment in its programs, activities or employment based on race, color, gender, sexual preference, marital or parental status, religion, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, Vietnam era or veteran status. Questions or concerns related to affirmative action, nondiscrimination or equal opportunity should be directed to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Disability Policy

Johnson County Park & Recreation District welcomes volunteers with disabilities. Johnson County Park & Recreation District complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please contact your support person if you have special requirements so we may accommodate your needs.

Volunteer Support

You will be assigned to work with a staff member who will provide support and supervision. The staff member will provide on-the-job training and serve as a direct link between the volunteer and the rest of the staff. The number of hours volunteers work is based on their assignments.

Limitations On Volunteer Service

Volunteers serve Johnson County Park & Recreation District patrons at the sole discretion of the District. Volunteers may leave Johnson County Park & Recreation District at any time. Volunteers are asked to notify their support person two weeks before leaving when at all possible. The staff appreciates your time, talents and interest, and knows that changes will occur.

Recruitment Of Minors

The minimum age for volunteers on non hazardous assignments is 14 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian before volunteering. The volunteer duties assigned to a minor will comply with all appropriate laws and regulations on child labor.

A District employee who is directly responsible for the project, should be on the premises (in case of an emergency) particularly if minors are volunteering.

Special permission must be given for groups or individuals under the age of 14 who wish to serve in a voluntary capacity for the District. Adult supervision will be required for all of those under 14 years age in order to perform volunteer projects for the District. [i.e., cub scouts, etc.]

On-The-Job Training

Besides our formal training procedures, volunteers receive on-the-job training to help them with information and tools to perform their duties. On-the-job training may be provided by your support person or a qualified volunteer.

Absenteeism and Punctuality

Be on time and arrive when expected. If you are unable to arrive for your regular time, please let us know as soon as possible.

Illness

Do not come to work if you are ill. Call in as soon as possible, preferably 24 hours in advance, so that we can find a substitute for your position.

Dismissal For Cause

Volunteers may be terminated at any time for violations of agency policy or procedures as defined in this manual.

Identification

Some volunteers will receive a volunteer identification card, depending upon your duties. You should carry this card on all volunteer assignments and show it when appropriate. Your identification card is required if you are operating a District vehicle.

Dress Code

All volunteers must wear appropriate clothing. Clothing advertising alcohol, drugs, or other inappropriate activities or places are not allowed. Clothing should reflect your performance and your duties.

Borrowing and Lending

No volunteers of Johnson County Park & Recreation District shall loan or borrow any materials or documents.

Solicitation

Volunteers may not solicit or distribute literature during work hours.

Smoking

It is the policy of the District to have and provide a smoke-free, healthy, and safe work environment. Therefore, smoking is prohibited in District facilities. Volunteers who smoke must do so only in designated smoking areas.

Drug and Alcohol Use

Volunteers are subject to immediate dismissal if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol while performing their volunteer duties. Volunteers may not bring drugs or alcohol into the Johnson County Park & Recreation District facility under any circumstances.

Conflict of Interest

A Johnson County Park & Recreation District Volunteer, acting in an official capacity, shall not take any action that would result in the volunteer's financial benefit. They will not ask for or receive for themselves or for a member of their household, directly or indirectly, any moneys or gifts from patrons. Any person having a financial, personal or work related conflict of interest may not serve as a volunteer with Johnson County Park & Recreation District.

Security

Ranger Headquarters is located in the Visitor Center at Shawnee Mission Park. In case of an emergency dial 911. In a non-emergency they can be reached at 782-0720.

Theft

Theft or pilferage of cash or merchandise by a volunteer member is a serious offense and should be reported. Theft negatively affects not only our ability to deliver services, but also the trust upon which our staff structure is based. Theft is cause for immediate dismissal.

Access To Program Property And Materials

As appropriate, volunteers shall have access to agency property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties, and shall receive training in the operation of any equipment. Property and materials shall be used only when directly required for agency purposes.

Telephone Usage

The phones at Johnson County Park & Recreation District are business phones. Please limit the number and duration of personal phone calls. Long distance phone calls are not allowed. Please be brief.

Drivers Checks

A driving background check may be required for some volunteer assignments. A volunteer must pass this check to be given an assignment involving the operation of motor vehicles.

Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Physical, Mental, Or Sexual Harassment

Volunteers witnessing child abuse, sexual abuse, physical, mental, or sexual harassment must report it immediately to their support person, the volunteer coordinator, or the Human Resource Director. Johnson County Park & Recreation District does not condone and will vigorously prosecute any such incidents. If you have questions regarding what constitutes abuse or harassment, please contact the Human Resources Director.

Safety

Volunteers are responsible for:

- Supporting efforts to promote safe working conditions and habits.
- Making full use of safety equipment and safeguards provided for assigned tasks.
- Reporting immediately all unsafe work conditions to the volunteer coordinator or director.

First Aid Kit

There is a first aid kit located at each facility. Remember the location of the kit. An accident may require the immediate use of its contents. If you are not familiar with basic first aid procedures, there is a booklet explaining basic first aid in the kit. Bloodborne pathogen kits are available at each first aid station.

Reporting Injuries

If a volunteer is injured at work, the accident should be reported at once to your support person or the volunteer coordinator. An incident report must be completed on Form #112 within 24 hours to record the necessary information. Submit the completed Incident Form #112 to the District's Risk Manager. Medical assistance or treatment will be given if necessary. Report any unsafe conditions or defective equipment you observe to your support person or the volunteer coordinator.

Hazard Communication Program

Volunteers need to be aware of the potential danger of the chemicals in their work areas and be trained to use proper safeguards. Each department has a list [Material Safety Data Sheets] of known hazardous chemicals to which volunteers may be exposed through their work in that department. This list provides information on the chemicals present, proper application of the chemicals, equipment necessary to handle them and what to do in case of an emergency. Supervisors are required to provide the appropriate safety equipment.

Emergency Plan

In a life threatening emergency or with any accident tell your support person immediately. Remain calm and if necessary, call 911. Follow their instructions precisely while you await their arrival. Be prepared to give the location address and phone number, your name, and the nature of the emergency.

In the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the building, remain calm. Assist other staff in notifying patrons and helping to direct them out of the building safely and quickly. Make sure your work area is secure if time and safety allow.

Background Checking

Comprehensive background checking will be conducted on all volunteers, all existing employees and all final candidates for employment, who perform or may be assigned or asked to perform certain and identified duties or work functions for the District involving sensitive and/or specialized responsibilities as identified by the District, including the following:

- A. Those persons who will or could be working directly with minors (under age 18), in a District run or sponsored licensed childcare setting or program, as required by the provisions of Kansas Statutes Annotated 65-516, as now existing or hereafter amended, or otherwise required by any rule or regulation of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.
- B. Those persons who will be or could be assigned to supervise and/or work with minors (other than in a licensed childcare setting or program), individuals with disabilities, and/or persons with frail and fragile physical circumstances or preconditions, or other circumstances as the District deems necessary.

In addition to initial comprehensive background checks, random on-going checks will be conducted annually thereafter.

If relevant, prohibited criminal history information is received through the background check process, the volunteer, employment candidate or employee may be disqualified for eligibility for further volunteer work or for employment with the District.

If the volunteer, employee or employment candidate is a minor (under age 18), their signature on the background check authorization form must be accompanied by their parent's or legal guardian's signature in order to process the background check request.

Volunteer Guidance

VOLUNTEER STANDARDS

Productivity Tips

Your ideas and energy give life to your organization and enable it to function at its best. The more you realize your potential, the more you and Johnson County Park & Recreation District benefit.

- ✓ When you contribute to something worthwhile, you feel good about yourself. There's no substitute for feeling important.
- ✓ Your state of mind, attitudes and morale affect the quality of the work you produce. Feeling good about yourself and your performance helps you to produce work of which you and Johnson County Park & Recreation District can be proud.
- ✓ You count as a volunteer. You make a significant difference to the organization. When volunteers and staff alike keep that in mind, both succeed.

Work Standards

Johnson County Park & Recreation District expects every member to be a cooperative worker by contributing intelligent, enthusiastic, and productive work. The following are some ideas to help us do this:

Getting the Job Done:

At Johnson County Park & Recreation, District volunteers need to work independently. Providing good service to our patrons and keeping Johnson County Park & Recreation District a strong and viable organization is dependent upon an efficient, productive work force. Maintaining a cooperative approach to running our organization also requires that staff members take initiative and become actively involved in problem solving. Johnson County Park & Recreation District's success is the result of many people taking responsibility for their work. They use skills and creativity for the benefit of the organization, our members and our workers. We expect and encourage you to become a productive part of our work force. Following are some expectations:

- Be punctual and ready for work.
- Learn all you can about Johnson County Park & Recreation District's operations, goals, and objectives. Make your shift a learning experience so you can be better informed when responding to customer's questions.

- See yourself as part of a team, recognizing that your efforts contribute to the work of your teammates.
- Ask yourself, “How can I do it better?” Strive for excellence.
- Contribute your ideas and knowledge. Look for opportunities to problem solve creatively.

Working Cooperatively

- Focus on producing results, not putting in time. Develop a comfortable but efficient work speed. Don’t just stay busy, stay effective.
- When you refer a customer or fellow staff member to another person to answer a question, wait to hear the response. Use this as an opportunity to broaden your knowledge.
- Feel free to give and receive constructive criticism to and from fellow workers. We work as a team and need to support each other with useful feedback.
- Always use the proper tools and work in the safest manner possible. Ask for assistance when needed.
- Follow through on your volunteer commitments. When you can’t, be sure to let those affected know.

Interpersonal Skills

1. Tips On Active Listening

- Want to listen. Almost all problems in listening can be overcome by having the right attitude.
- Listen to the customer as you would listen to any friend. Remember, there is no such thing as an uninteresting person...only uninterested listeners.
- Act like a good listener. Be alert, sit or stand up straight. Lean forward and let your face radiate interest.
- Listen to understand. Do not just listen for the sake of listening; listen to gain a real understanding of what the customer is saying.
- Ask questions when you don’t understand, or when you need further clarification. Ask questions when you want the other person to like you, or when you want to show you are listening. Don’t ask questions that will embarrass or “put down” the other person.
- Concentrate on what the other person is saying. Actively focus your attention on the words, the ideas and the feelings related to the subject.
- Look at the other person. Face, mouth, eyes and hands will all help the other person communicate with you. These will help you concentrate and show that you are listening.
- Smile appropriately but don’t overdo it!
- Get rid of distractions. Put down any papers, pencils, etc. you have in your hands; they may distract your attention.
- Share responsibility for communication. Only part of the responsibility rests with the speaker; you as the listener have an important part. Try to understand, and if you don’t, ask for clarification.
- Remember, listening is fun! Work at developing this constructive attitude. Make a game of seeing how well you can listen and really understand the customer’s needs.

Effective listening is an art. It can only be developed by conscientiously applied practice on a daily basis!

2. Tips On Giving Good Information

Provide only correct information. The only thing worse than not knowing an answer is giving the wrong answer! Never be too proud to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out for you.” If you don’t know an answer, say so. Then do your utmost to find the correct information!

- Don’t assume anything. Ideas that may be clear and easy for you may not be to a visitor.
- Be specific. When directing a customer to an address of a service provided, use terms that are universal (north, south, right, left). Don’t use terms that are only known locally, like “next to the Jones’ place.” Use names of streets and landmarks when possible. Give specific measurements if possible (four blocks, one half mile).
- Speak slowly and distinctively.
- Reinforce your instructions with something visual. Provide a brochure or map. Always hold the information facing the customer, with north at the top for them. If possible stand so that you, the customer and the information are all oriented the same. Use a highlighter to mark important information.
- Give added information when it will help. Be careful not to confuse when giving added information.
- Recheck. Let the customer repeat the information back to you if they want to and listen for points of possible confusion.
- Be patient. Be patient and considerate, especially with people who have speech and language difficulty. Think how you would like to be treated if the situation were reversed.
- Maintain a helpful attitude. Be friendly and courteous. You should try not to rush the customer. Don’t let the customer leave until you both feel you have a clear understanding.
- Speak with confidence. True professionals provide their information and answers with quiet certainty, because they know their material. They know they are doing their job well. Learn to be a true professional in everything you do. Your confidence also will help put the customer at ease.

3. Tips On Handling Complaints

A few simple procedures can help anyone who has to deal with customer complaints. Good customer relations don’t depend on the innate ability of getting along with people. You can learn to handle complaints by following the simple procedures outlined below:

- Listen to the entire complaint. How else will you find out what the customer wants? Don’t interrupt. People who complain about a product or service are feeling a need to tell you something.
- Accept the feelings of the customer. Their need to “tell you something” is often complicated by the feeling of frustration, or even embarrassment about complaining. The best way to deal with feelings is to accept them.
- Don’t take the customer’s complaint as a personal offense. Chances are it is not really directed at you. Don’t defend yourself or your organization either. If you oppose the feelings, they will continue; if you accept them as valid for the client they tend to diminish.

- You may feel like disagreeing with many things the person is saying. The key is to look for that feeling with which you can agree and then tell them that you understand. Manage to filter through the customer's feelings by accepting them, and then move into solving the specific problem.
- Clarify the complaint. Now filter out the feelings to find out exactly what it is the client wants you to do. Simply ask, "How can I help you?"
- Follow through on anything you say you are going to do. Don't ever promise something you don't intend to do. If you are authorized to handle the matter then take care of it without delay, preferably in front of the customer.
- When you are dealing with an unhappy customer you have an unparalleled opportunity to create a positive impression of yourself and your organization. This is the time to be at your very best.
- Refer matters that you can't handle to someone who can. If you can't take immediate action on the customer's complaint yourself, refer them to someone who can.
- If it is a matter of referring them to another agency or office, be helpful in providing the name, address and phone number. Suggesting exactly what steps they should take. At the very least, take down their name, address, phone number and the nature, location and date/time of the problem and give it to your supervisor.

Telephone Inquiries

- Answer on the first ring if possible. Greet the caller pleasantly. You might say; "Johnson County Park & Recreation District. This is (your first name), how may I help you?"
- If you are extremely busy and have walk-ins, other calls holding, or need to ask another staff person for assistance, ask the caller "Will you hold please?" You may want to say, "Please hold, someone will be right with you." It could be a long distance call so don't forget them.
- If you are free answer a "holding" call by saying: "Thank you for holding. How may I help you?" You may want to ask, "Is someone helping you?"
- Fill out a *How Are We Doing?* card for any customer comments. Take complete, accurate information and write legibly! These forms then go to the Community Education Director who in turn will send them to the appropriate department to provide a written response.
- If you don't understand something the caller has said, ask them to repeat it. Wrong information means an unhappy client and wasted postage!

All Inquiries

Again, remember the customer is number one. It is the policy of Johnson County Park & Recreation District to answer every inquiry as fully as possible.

If you find you are unable to answer a question fully make sure the customer understands the situation and does not feel ignored. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't guess at the answer. Ask your support person for the correct information. Keep learning all you can about Johnson County Park & Recreation District and other services we provide.

Customer Service

Make the customer feel at home and at ease. Treat the client as a “special customer” and give the extra “helpfulness” that may be needed. It will be appreciated and can help to keep up your spirits!

Know your “product.” Being able to provide a warm, friendly welcome to the customer is very important, but you also need to be able to supply accurate information on a variety of subjects. Your product is provided by Johnson County Park & Recreation District.

Sometimes you can be your best resource. Keep your eyes and ears open to new things to see and do. By experiencing them yourself you can give first-hand information to the client. There is much information to track and you will need a system to keep things organized and up-to-date. Some of your basic resources are brochures, the *Activities* catalog, a rolodex, and handouts. It might be helpful to have a brochure notebook with a sample of each brochure that is available.

There are many reasons why we should not depend on just memory in providing client information:

- Memory is fallible! It’s good to be able to look back at a brochure or other written resource material. It will refresh our memory or confirm what we thought was the correct information.
- Information grows and changes. We need an easier way to keep a vast amount of detailed information accurate and accessible without spending our entire day memorizing it.
- Training patrons is easier if you have written or printed resource information. Organize it in a logical, easy-to-use manner. This is also important if Johnson County Park & Recreation District is staffed with volunteers or other part-time employees who have not had the same opportunity to learn and absorb the wide range of information available.
- Perhaps most important, written or printed information helps reinforce what we have told the client. Try to provide patrons with a brochure or other written information, as well as a verbal response. This gives the client an additional way to absorb the information. Once they are out of the office they can refer to the information provided.

Working With Patrons

Service to Patrons

We can provide our customers with attentive, helpful, and prompt service. We should try to anticipate their needs and problems. If someone looks puzzled or troubled ask if you can help. Your job entails more than just doing the tasks assigned to you. Public relations are also a part of your duties. What you do or do not do can affect Johnson County Park & Recreation District.

Show courtesy. Help new customers feel at ease. Be an “ambassador” for Johnson County Park & Recreation District. Answer their questions considerately or locate a staff person when you are

unable to answer. Take the opportunity when time allows to explain our mission to those who are interested. Patrons are not an interruption of your duties. They are the reason for your duties.

Our first job is to serve customers. Service applies especially to those who constantly deal with the public. The most important factor in client satisfaction, is the treatment they receive from our staff. You are the “face” of Johnson County Park & Recreation District to every client. Their impression of Johnson County Park & Recreation District depends on you. This translates into specific things that you can do:

- **Friendliness:** Smile and greet our members and patrons. Learn their names and thank them for visiting our facility. Invite new patrons back.
- **Helpfulness:** Go out of your way to get the answer to a question, to find a resource, or to solve a problem. Look at problems as opportunities.
- **Efficiency:** Efficient service supports client satisfaction.
- **Professionalism:** Perform your duties to the highest standards possible.

Working with Children

Young people bring much joy and satisfaction to our lives. Kids are fun. Kids are the future. Kids can create problems on occasion. If you find a child running, screaming repeatedly, or mishandling products:

- Deal with the child directly if the parent is not aware of the problem. Approach the child, get down on his or her level, eye to eye. Calmly and kindly ask him or her to stop. Explain why the behavior is unacceptable.
- If a somewhat light approach does not work, or if the parent is aware of and ignoring the problem, refer the situation to your support person.
- Never use physical force to restrain a child except when behavior significantly endangers the child or others, or may cause serious property damage.

Your most important role as a staff member is showing genuine concern for customers. They want to know they are being heard. When patrons come to you with problems, complaints, or questions:

- Listen to them and ensure they feel heard. It is often useful to check back with comments like, “Would it be helpful to you if I...?”
- Solve their problems or find someone who can.
- Follow through. Remember, all our efforts are pointless if we “dead-end” patrons or neglect to get back with them.
- Help customers provide the staff with comments and suggestions by using a suggestion box.
- If a customer’s complaint involves a personnel issue he/she should be referred directly to your support person or the volunteer coordinator.

Working With Elderly People

- Treat the individual with respect. Do not confuse diminished hearing or eyesight with diminished intelligence.
- Listen to them. Your interest in their feelings conveys respect and concern.
- Begin each conversation by identifying yourself and calling them by name. Say, “Good morning, I’m June.” Do not ask, “Do you remember me?”

- Use short, specific, familiar words and simple sentences. “I’m Jane. I’m here to help Johnson County Park & Recreation District.”
- Speak slowly and softly in a low pitched voice. Approach gently, with an open, friendly, relaxed manner.
- Give one direction or ask one question at a time. “Are you finished? Here is the hall.”
- Wait for an answer and if there is no response, repeat exactly, “Are you in pain? Are you in pain?”
- Stand or crouch face-to-face and maintain eye contact.
- Move slowly and touch gently on the arm or hand to gain attention. Be careful not to startle. Some participants do not like to be touched.
- Use facial expressions and hand gestures to show your concern or how to do something. Beckon, use gestures, hold out your hand, or smile.
- Talk in a noise-free, non-distracting place. Turn off/down the stereo or television when speaking to the participant.

Working With People With Disabilities

Working with people who have disabilities should not be awkward, yet many people feel unsure of how to act. Much of this discomfort is due to lack of exposure to those with disabilities and a lack of awareness of issues facing them. Take the time to know your client and their needs. You may find a friend and possibly gain new knowledge.

Physical or mental impairments or disabilities may be present at birth, or may be due to injury, disease or aging. The major barrier people with disabilities face is not the disability itself but lack of acceptance by others. This lack of acceptance is caused by:

- Ignorance: Not understanding that people with disabilities have the same concerns and many of the same capabilities as other people.
- Indifference: Not caring about the issues and concerns facing those with disabilities. (This can be counter productive since all of us are only an accident away from having disabilities ourselves.)
- Discomfort: Being uneasy and unsure of how to act around people with disabilities.

By removing these barriers we can help all people reach their full potential.

There are many kinds of disabilities:

- Physical disabilities, which hamper mobility or cause speech problems.
- Sensory disabilities, such as blindness or deafness.
- Mental disabilities, like mental retardation or learning disabilities.
- Emotional disability, such as severe depression or anxiety.
- Mild disability may only minimally interfere with normal activities while a severe one or multiple disabilities may sharply limit functioning. In addition, disabilities differ in duration so some may be permanent while others are only temporary.

Wheelchair Etiquette

Many people are unsure how to act when they meet someone in a wheelchair. This can create some embarrassing moments. Here are some suggestions:

- Ask Permission: Always ask the wheelchair user if she/he would like assistance before you help. An unexpected push could throw the person off balance.

- **Be Respectful:** People's wheelchairs are part of their body space. Don't hang or lean on them unless you have permission.
- **Speak Directly:** Be careful not to exclude the wheelchair user from conversations. If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to get yourself on the same level as the wheelchair.

In Closing

We appreciate your willingness to volunteer with JOHNSON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT. We hope you will enjoy your experience as a volunteer. As you learn your volunteer duties feel free to ask questions. Our staff is happy to help you. It is your commitment and that of volunteers like you that allows JOHNSON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT to most effectively serve our community. We thank you.
