

Director's Matters

Tips to help manage your NAI Account, emails, etc . . .

Each time I send out an email to all the Chesapeake membership I get quite a few emails bouncing and always a couple of members reaching out to change their email preferences. Here's a quick overview of how to manage these options in your NAI account.

Log into interpnet.com. Sign into your account through the Sign in link at the top right of the page. If you need help recovering your username or resetting your password email jkling@interpnet.com.

After you sign in, click on (your name here)'s Account. That will be the one on the top slightly to the right. On your **"My Account"** page you can view your public profile, add a photo, find your NAI ID number, date joined, membership level and status, paid through date. There is also a button to renew your membership and a listing of what committees you serve on. You can also access eight tabs to manage your information, preferences and look up information about your communications, trainings, recertification portal and credits.

"About me", you can add or change information about your work location(s), education history and any website you're linked to. You can add links for social profiles; FB, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Scroll on down to you home and work addresses. If you have a new job, email address or phone number this is where to enter the update. You can also update your logon, password and security details here.

The **"Preferences"** tab takes you to where you can change what emails and announcements you get from the National Office; ie interptalk, webinar announcements, certification and training opportunities and more.

"My Billing" tab gives you information on current billings, recent transactions, invoices, and donation history.

"My Participation" lists out your organization, committees, networks, and upcoming, recent and past events

"My Communities" lets you add or delete what regions and sections you receive emails from. One of our newest sections, Justice, Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion has been added to your options.

"My Certifications" lists your certification history including date certified, date expired, course status and your continuing education history. The recertification portal also has a link here.

"My Credits" is the last tab and includes information about any credits you might have, how to use them, expiration dates etc.

Hope this helps with managing your information, emails and certifications.

Yvonne Johnson
Director NAI Region 2

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Region 2 Leadership continued

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Region 2 Conference: A Virtual Experience

Mary Massie

As much as one hates to say anything positive came out of such a devastating event as the COVID-19 pandemic, a bright spot for me was all the virtual conferences and programming I was able to experience in 2020. Many organizations could have easily just skipped holding annual conferences last year and I doubt anyone would have batted an eye, but the organizers at the National Association of Interpretation went above and beyond to create a virtual conference accessible throughout the country. This was truly exciting for me as I'm rarely able to attend conferences in person so I was thrilled at the chance to connect with other interpreters and learn as a group in this new virtual format. I was also incredibly honored to be a scholarship recipient for this year's conference, a much needed financial break for me and my organization.

The conference offered an excellent variety of topics spanning several facets of museum organizations from leadership to programming to diversity. I was particularly impressed at how the NAI Conference was still able to bring in St. Augustine (where the conference was supposed to be held before COVID struck) offering virtual tours of Castillo de San Marcos and a talk about the Apaches in St. Augustine. It was really great to be able to still experience a little bit of one of my favorite cities safely from my home!

The vast amount of concurrent sessions was quite impressive as well. The entire conference took place in the late afternoon and evening (for those of us in Eastern Standard Time), allowing participants from all time zones to join in at reasonable hours which benefitted everyone. More people participating meant more viewpoints and perspectives which meant everyone could get more out of each session. Session topics were wide-ranging spanning virtually any interest area a person could have.

Unsurprisingly there were several sessions regarding virtual programming. One of the most useful of these I attended was "Distract or Engage: Interpretation during #stayhome" presented by Sarena Randall Gill, Chris Smith and Kevin Wright. We are all well aware that once the pandemic forced museums to close, we all had to make the switch to virtual programming to try to keep our audiences engaged, but that opened up new issues. Were people getting too saturated with virtual programming? Would people want to attend more Zoom sessions after being on meetings all day? How do you make your institution's programming stand apart from all the other options out there? And is it even worth it? This session offered tons of information and ideas about virtual programming designed to engage audiences or simply distract them from the chaos happening in the world.

So much of the COVID-19 pandemic depended on how museums function. Sessions on how to conduct virtual internships, trainings, and activities were certainly useful and very welcome, but I also

appreciated the numerous sessions on interacting with nature. "Reconnecting Families to the Outdoors" presented by Susan G. Marchand, "Nature Journaling: A Meaningful Connection" by Julie Gee and Lari Jo Edwards, and "iNaturalist: Every Guest is an Observer" presented by Nathan Taxel all provided excellent ideas for using the outdoors and nature in Interpretation. This year especially, many organizations may be looking to incorporate more outdoor programming if they can and these sessions were great resources for programming ideas and logistics.

COVID-19 has been devastating to the cultural sector. Museums continue to be closed pending state permissions to reopen and face daunting financial challenges, but I'm incredibly grateful for organizations like the National Association of Interpretation going above and beyond to allow museum staff to continue professional development. We've all had to rethink many aspects of our positions in museums, especially those of us in the interpretation field and it's wonderful to have such incredible resources to turn to. I hope this trend will continue with organizations offering virtual opportunities. I have very much enjoyed them this past year!

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When Technology Meets History

Adam Larson, CIG

Seasonal Park Ranger, Maryland Park Service

When people think about the Underground Railroad, they usually don't associate it with up to date technology. But when the term was coined in the 19th century, railroads were fairly new and increasing in popularity, and at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center we seek to have a similar relationship with modern advancements. The visitor center is the main focus of Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park, which is operated in partnership with the National Park Service as part of a National Historical Park of the same name. The visitor center's exhibits focus on the life and legacy of Harriet Tubman, who not only liberated herself from slavery in Maryland but returned at least 13 times to guide dozens of friends and family members to freedom.

Videos are shown throughout the visitor center, including in our theater, which plays the 17 minute long video "Harriet Tubman: Soldier of Freedom." In the opening exhibit, visitors see a slideshow with period engravings, newspaper advertisements, and photographs as well as pictures of the contemporary landscape around the visitor center accompanied by a singing choir. These images, shown without narration, pique the interest of visitors while giving them a preview of the challenging subject matter. Curved walls keep the audio from interfering with the sounds of the other videos without needing doors. In the largest exhibit hall, a video illustrates the trials and tribulations of some of Tubman's most notable missions, and at the end of the exhibits, a small television next to a seated statue of Tubman allows visitors to sit next to Tubman while listening

to community members and elected officials speak about the impact she has on the world today.

Besides the videos and interpretive signs, the exhibits have interactive and accessible touch screen panels that focus on different aspects of the Underground Railroad. In "Maritime Communities," visitors are sent on an errand into a waterfront town and must gather information from friendly and unfriendly sources in time before they leave. "Escape to Freedom" takes visitors along on three escapes from the Eastern Shore of Maryland and immerses visitors in the difficult choices made by freedom seekers by actively asking them if they agree with the decisions made by the freedom seekers about who to trust and where to go. Visitors may be surprised to learn that not all escapes were ultimately successful, and that even successful ones could have painful consequences.

"Tubman's Rescue Missions" shows visitors the known details of Tubman's missions, and "Harriet Tubman's Network" focuses on the specific individuals that assisted freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad, from well known figures like William Still and Thomas Garrett to people whose names have been lost to history. Using electronic programs to contain large amounts of specific, detailed

information frees up exhibit space to provide a better overview of Tubman's life as a whole.

The visitor center also functions as an introduction to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, which connects 45 sites related to Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad in Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. In addition to the physical byway map and guide freely available at several sites on the byway, the byway has an app with augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) components, which allows visitors to see sites as they would have been in the 19th century, as well as actors portraying notable figures on the Underground Railroad. Additionally, the byway app has an audio guide, which features historians, local residents, and voice actors. Together, the printed guide, AR/VR, and audio tour help connect the many sites to each other and brings them to life in a way that interpretive signs cannot. As interpreters, we can't be everywhere our visitors are. But with the right technology, we can provide them a fuller experience whether or not we are able to talk to them.



All photos with this article courtesy of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Connecting Through Interpretation

Gina Sando

I was first introduced to interpretation in 2015. I was an intern with the Student Conservation Association, serving as an invasive species program coordinator in the lower Hudson Valley. My job tasks involved a whole lot of field work, and some office work to study and analyze results. My roommates were both interpretation interns with the Trailside Museums and Zoo, where I was also based out of. One requirement of my internship was to participate in "A Day in the Life of the Hudson River," a field trip for K-12 students living in the Hudson Valley region. The age group assigned to my area was fourth graders, so approximately ten years old.

I was terrified. I had barely ever had any contact with children. What do I do? Do I talk to them like they're adults? Do I bend down to their eye level? What do they study in school? All these questions in my head, and I didn't have much guidance in connecting my audience with the resource or in knowing my audience. I remember my first presentation was very rough and I read from my script, never deviating. By the end of the day I was more comfortable with the students and with the subject matter.

Less than a year and half later, after an Appalachian Trail hike, a graduate degree, and a move, I was an Americorps member serving in Virginia. My very first time leading a program, I was incredibly nervous. It was a fossil hike, with no pre-registration required so I ended up with more than thirty attendees for my first time! Even though I had received some training on how to lead programs, I was convinced I was going to throw up on the first row, pass out, or be fired. Spoiler alert - none of those happened. I got fantastic feedback from my supervisors and from the program attendees, and I was hooked. I learned about the NAI and resolved to become a Certified Interpretive Guide so that I could continue to connect the community with our resources. I achieved that goal in early 2020, after four years of consistent interpretation and program development.

Being selected to attend the 2020 NAI National Conference was truly an honor. I went in with my eyes wide open and my sleeves rolled up. To me, this opportunity was once in a lifetime, as I would not have been able to attend as early as 2020 if not for the fact that it had gone virtual.

My biggest takeaway from the conference? True, unrelenting passion. Interpretation is not easy, and burnout can occur. Struggling to lead socially distant programs in the fall, I could feel myself fast approaching burnout. However, watching the speakers' eyes light up as they spoke about connecting resources with the public, employing unique strategies to capture the audience, and navigating a pandemic while still delivering beautifully put together, cohesive, and thoughtful programs set my heart alight. I came away from each seminar and presentation feeling like I was walking on clouds. I had so many ideas, access to more tools than I had before, and - most important of all - inspiration.

I have taken the lessons from the conference to connect with my audience, even when we are separated by computer screens. I have stood outside during an ice storm to connect a group of young girls with a lake and its inhabitants, warmed by a winter coat and the fire of inspiration and passion. I have gone back over my existing programs with a critical eye in order to further improve them and bring them up to my new standards. My new programs are polished and on deck, combining not only natural interpretation but the cultural heritage and history of Northern Virginia, having learned from observing the polished programs during the conference.

I'm proud to announce that a few weeks ago I led a spring break camp for local children. It was full to bursting with interpretation, kid-friendly activities, and reasonably planned breaks. I was nervous, but not paralyzed with fear, and the nerves melted away as I stepped forward on that chilly Monday morning to greet my first camper. By the end of the week, I had interpreted twenty different programs for my campers, whether they knew it or not. And burnout? I don't feel that anymore. The only thing that's burning is the desire to continue what I am doing and continue to improve and learn as I go.

I am so thankful for this opportunity from NAI Region 2 to turn around my mindset. Interpretation truly is not rote memorization and regurgitation of facts. It's the ability to read people, connect with them regardless of their backgrounds via universal concepts, all the while still continuing to research, develop, and grow.

2020 Chesapeake Region Interpretive Awards

Congratulations to all the 2020 interpretive awards winners. The four award winners are as diverse as our places of work and represent the range of roles that support interpretation at our parks, nature centers, museums, zoos and historic sites. They include a long-time zoo volunteer, part-time staff member, an intern and a 20 plus year park manager.

The 2020 conference was cancelled due to Covid-19 so these dedicated interpreters were recognized at the 2021 virtual workshop in March. A big thank you goes out to all the nominators for taking the time share their inspirational work stories.

Get ready to recognize the resourceful, determined interpreters who found creative ways to carry on interpretive missions during the many months of the pandemic. The challenges were varied, often technical and frequently daunting. Hot off the press news: March 1, 2022 the Spring Chesapeake Interpretive Workshop will be held at Frying Pan Farm Park in Hendon VA. Planning is in the primary stages but more news, save the date and schedules for scholarship and awards application will be coming out soon.

2022 awards categories will be similar to the one listed below so look them over. They are great inspiration for recognizing that award worthy interpreter in your team.

John Shafer Outstanding Master Interpretive Manager Award 2020

For more than 25 years John Shafer has devoted himself to the interpretation of both nature and history as an employee of the Fairfax County Park Authority. In several positions he has supervised staff, volunteers, programs, facilities and written interpretive plans. Since 2012, as Park Manager at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park (ECLP), he has supervised all aspects of programming of a 650 plus acre park which contains a wide variety of natural areas; multiple historic structures; archaeological and agricultural field site; and a ball field complex. At both ECLP and additional parks in the Sully District John has overseen both interpretation and resource management.

While John has expertly managed Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, he is a true interpreter at heart on so many levels. He has been an NAI Certified Interpretive Manager since 2004 and attends regional and national conferences to improve his knowledge in interpretation and to make presentations. John has worked hard to develop and to promote the knowledge of his staff and other interpretive staff within Fairfax County and the region.

A specialty of John's has been the research and interpretation of raptors. Gaining knowledge from volunteering for the Cape May Raptor Banding Project, John has presented talks at a variety of workshops including for NAI Region 2 and Virginia Association of Museums and as a guest lecturer for Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services classes at George Mason University.

As a testament to his exemplary career as a natural and cultural interpreter and his success in managing both staff and resources at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park and beyond, John Shafer is awarded the Outstanding Master Interpretive Manager Award.



Carol Black Outstanding New Front-Line Interpreter Award 2020

As Huntley Meadows Park's Outdoor Education/Community Engagement Intern, Carol Black has contributed to the park and its community. As the new Intern in 2017, she created a completely new curriculum emphasizing movement in learning about the outdoors. The program's lesson plans combined outdoor movement-based objectives with the Virginia State Science Standards of Learning. She worked with classes at Hybla Valley Elementary School, emphasizing science vocabulary since all student participants were English Second Language learners. Students did activities such as wetland ecology, invertebrate identification, soil sampling and habitat stewardship. Carol received a Fairfax County Watershed Education Grant in 2019 to expand the internship to another school, Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School.

To enhance her knowledge Carol became a Virginia Master Naturalist, attended a "Spark" Movement Learning conference on scholarship and completed the NAI Intermediate Methods certification.

Carol has worked to improve the internship program at Huntley Meadows Park, and to expand her own interpretive skills and natural history education. She is a popular and loved teacher to her students at Hybla Valley and Mount Vernon Woods Elementary Schools and a valued member of the Huntley Meadows' staff. For these achievements, Carol Black is recognized the NAI Region 2 as the Outstanding New Front-Line Interpreter.



Sara Service Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer Award 2020

During her three years of volunteering at the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore Sara Service has demonstrated great dedication to the institution through quality interpretation, a devotion to personal growth and the growth of other volunteers. As an interpreter, Sara is an animal handler, outreach volunteer and penguin feed narrator. These positions are reserved for volunteers who demonstrate exceptional interpretation skills and reliability. She is also trained as an exhibit interpreter in nearly every area of the Zoo. The Zoo staff who have observed her interactions with visitors find her work outstanding.

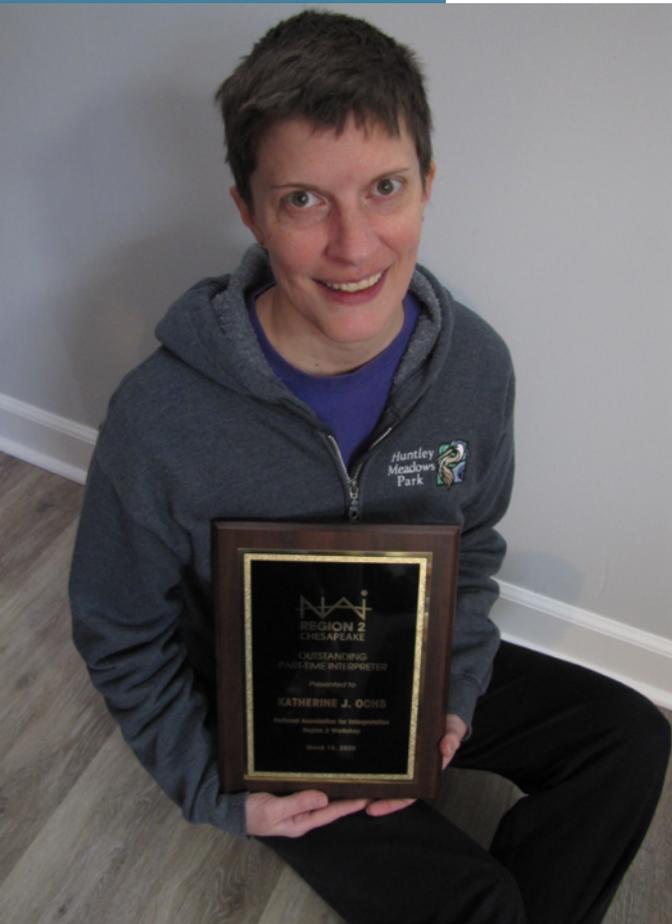
Sara has become both a Certified Interpretive Guide and a member of the Association of Zoo and Aquarium Docents and Volunteers, one only of two Zoo volunteers holding both distinctions.

Additionally, Sarah, as part of the Zoo's public programs team has been instrumental in mentoring new volunteers. She happily shares tips and ideas with both staff and volunteers.

Sara Service's significant contributions to the Maryland Zoo make her richly deserving to receive the NAI Region 2 Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer



Katherine Ochs Outstanding Part-Time Interpreter Award 2020



Katherine Ochs has been a part-time interpreter at Huntley Meadows Park of the Fairfax County Park Authority for over five years. She has gone above and beyond her regular job duties to ensure Huntley delivers the highest quality school program experience to elementary children and teachers in Northern Virginia.

Katherine is the key leader for field trips. She plans, organizes and leads programs. She coordinates with 12 volunteer field trip leaders and holds reviews and developmental training for them each spring and fall.

Always looking for ways to improve the programs, Katherine created Virginia Standards of Learning cards with key concepts and vocabulary for the volunteer leaders to use and touch bags containing theme related biological objects adding hands-on opportunities for the students.

Katherine's other duties include leading scout programs, birthday parties, outreach events, summer and winter camps, manager on duty responsibilities and more. She has expanded her knowledge as an interpreter by completing the NAI Intermediate Methods certification and attending Region 2 workshops.

For Katherine Ochs' dedication and hard work on the front lines and behind the scenes at Huntley Meadows Park, she richly deserves the NAI Region 2 Outstanding Part-Time Interpreter Award.

Submission Guidelines

Each edition will be theme-based so if you have something to contribute short or long refer to the table below for upcoming deadlines and themes. Submissions for other sections can be sent at any time but if it fits in with a particular theme send it by that edition's deadline otherwise it will be used for a future edition.

Recommended lengths for submissions: 500-600 words for articles
100 words for each tip or trick

Pictures should be submitted as an attachment to your email. Other materials may be sent in the body of your email or as an attachment.

If you have any suggestions for a theme for future newsletters, please send your suggestions or requests. Themes can be anything related to interpretation that would be of interest to the region.

Newsletter submissions including calendar items should be sent to:
ChesapeakeChat@gmail.com

	Deadline	Theme
Winter Newsletter	January 15	
Spring Newsletter	April 15	
Summer Newsletter	July 15	
Fall Newsletter	October 15	

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Chesapeake**