



Board Brief

Hello Chesapeake!

I wanted to take a minute to introduce myself in my new role as your Board Director. I am a Park Naturalist and Interpreter for a regional park system in Maryland right outside of Washington DC. Interpretation is my second career, my career of passion, that felt immediately like finding my purpose and place in the world. For the last year, I have been on the Chesapeake board as a Maryland Representative, which gave me the incredible opportunity to meet some of you in person and others virtually. What drove me to run for position of Board Director was my positive experiences seeing all of you in action as a frequent visitor of the parks, historic sites, museums and cultural centers, I frequent with my family. I have never met a group of people who show up every day with more creativity and intentionality to change the world! In whatever way I can, I want to support you in your ongoing journey as the interpreters you are, working to shift people's perspectives, behaviors, and their world views. You are all incredible change makers!

The rest of the Chesapeake Board Members are also here to help you. We want to provide the professional resources, trainings and the networking opportunities you need to take your next step. Please connect with us this year and let's take this journey together:

1. Like us on Facebook! All of our upcoming events and regional updates can be found on our Facebook Page.
2. Look for our newly revised-user friendly newsletter which will be coming to your emails via MailChimp quarterly, and be sure to contribute your stories and lessons from the field by submitting articles to: nairegion2website@gmail.com.

3. Register NOW for the spring workshop held this year in **Wallops Island, MD on March 8th – March 10th**. Learn with other interpreters face-to-face during this three day intensive. [REGISTRATION link](#)

4. Save the date-On Thursday April 20, 2023 Dr. Danielle Whittaker will be presenting a *free* virtual webinar on the myths and science behind avian olfactory systems as she presents the research found in her newly published book, *The Secret Perfume of Birds: Uncovering the Science of Avian Scent*. Registration coming soon!

We hope your work this year brings you joy and moments of hope, awe, and wonder. As a Board we hope to get to know each of you better as we continue to build our interpretive community. We look forward to hearing from you soon. Drop us an email, and find your state representative here: <http://www.nairegion2.org/board-members.html>

Wishing you the best,

Tiffany Jenkins

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Board Director



By Catherine A Eubank

Building your own escape adventures can be a lot of fun but it does take some well thought out strategies to make them successful. Anyone with an active imagination, good organizational skills, and is detail oriented can create a very rewarding experience for any aged group visiting your site.

The very first thing you need to think about is the site you're using. Are you inviting guests to come to your site, physically or virtually, or are you going to a different site to raise awareness about what you're doing at your actual site (schools, libraries, parks)? If you're organizing an adventure on your own site things can be much easier. If you're doing them elsewhere, a well written plan needs doing along with some well-placed initial phone calls or emails to get the necessary permission to proceed. If you think in terms of liability, things will be much easier to plan.

The next step is the adventure. This is where the fun starts. Ask yourself what you're trying to achieve by offering an escape adventure. If you work at a museum and would like to showcase a new exhibit, this would be a great way to bring folks in. For example: You have a new bat exhibit highlighting the changing times and the challenging issues they're facing. You could write an escape adventure about being lost in a cave and they need to follow the clues to find their way out. The cave is imaginary, of course.



Now comes the real work! Writing the backstory and creating the clues. The backstory could be as simple as 'you and your team got separated from the tour and are now lost...'. I always write my backstories using historical fiction. This is my opportunity to engage people of all different backgrounds and ages in some cool facts. The fiction parts are the easy parts and where the adventure begins.

Creating the clues. This is where your imagination and your organizational skills must come together. Visualize the start and finish of the game. Where do you want them to start? Are they working together as a team, against other teams, or are they working singly, racing against other people?



Our Escape the Forest Adventures always begin at Base Camp. Participants have previously chosen which adventure game they want to play (we have 11 games to choose from) and what skill level they want to try (beginner, intermediate, advanced). The backstory for each game remains the same but, because of the skill level and ages of the participants, the clues need to be written specifically for each group. We always take the average intellect of the average age range of each group into prospective, when writing the clues. When booking an adventure, we require 48-hours' notice to give us time to write clues and set-up the forest.

Depending on your budget, not all of your clues need to be riddles. We've slowly been accumulating puzzles, dummies, wardrobe (for the dummies), locks and lock boxes, and all sorts of other 'set' decorations to help aid in the illusion of the games we play. This is where your imagination can have a lot of fun!

We start off our games with a lockbox for each person or team. On the lid of each box is a copy of the backstory along with their first directions. They need to solve

the math to find the lock combination. The first team into their box gets a head start on their game. Each box contains a site map, a compass, and the next clue. And, the game is afoot! Participants race around the forest, solving riddles and puzzles, hoping to be the first to reach the end. The winning team is greeted with a final lockbox that contains a congratulatory letter with directions to head back to Base Camp, waters, and snacks. At Base Camp we present them with Certificates of Accomplishment or Achievement, as a small token of their 'survival'.



Each game lasts roughly 90 minutes. One staff member per team accompanies them through their adventure so they don't actually get too lost or too stuck, or too off-track. Teams are also offered two 'cheats' where they can ask the staff member for the answer. If they get stuck and need help a third time, they're disqualified.

Offering any type of adventure game for your site will really help further engage your visitors to whatever you're doing or promoting. An added bonus is that you, your staff, and your visitors, will get to play and have fun!

In our hectic lives, many of us focus so heavily on work and family commitments that we never seem to have time for real fun. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, we stopped playing. When we carve out some leisure time, we're more likely to zone out in front of the TV or computer than engage in fun,

rejuvenating play like we did as children. But play is not just essential for kids; it can be an important source of relaxation and stimulation for adults as well.

Playing is a sure way to fuel your imagination, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional well-being. Adult play is a time to forget about work and commitments, and to be social in an unstructured, creative way. Play could be simple; there doesn't need to be any point to the activity beyond having fun and enjoying yourself. By giving yourself permission to play with the joyful abandon of childhood, you can reap oodles of health benefits throughout life.

While play is crucial for a child's development, it is also beneficial for people of all ages. Play can add joy to life, relieve stress, supercharge learning, and connect you to others and the world around you. Play can also make work more productive and pleasurable.

Play helps:

- Relieve stress.

Play is fun and can trigger the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

- Improve brain function.

Playing forest games, completing different tasks, or pursuing other fun activities that challenge the brain can help prevent memory problems and improve brain function. The social interaction of playing can also help ward off stress and depression.

- Stimulate the mind and boost creativity.

Young children often learn best when they are playing—a principle that applies to adults, as well. You'll learn a new task better when it's fun and you're in a relaxed and playful mood. Play can also stimulate your imagination, helping you adapt and solve problems.

- Improve relationships and your connection to others.

Sharing laughter and fun can foster empathy, compassion, trust, and intimacy with others. Play doesn't have to include a specific activity; it can also be a state of

mind. Developing a playful nature can help you loosen up in stressful situations, break the ice with strangers, make new friends, and form new business relationships.

- Keep you feeling young and energetic.

In the words of George Bernard Shaw, “We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.” Play can boost your energy and vitality and even improve your resistance to disease, helping you function at your best.

Play performs an essential role in building strong, healthy relationships by bringing people closer together, creating a positive bond, and resolving conflicts and disagreements.

Just remember to be safe, have fun, and enjoy your adventures!



Winter Wonderland: Nature Preschool
By Christina Johnson

As the days grow shorter and colder here in Maryland it can be very tempting to climb into hibernation and not be present again until Spring. However, as an Interpretive Host at Locust Grove Nature Center I know that the winter months must not be wasted. This is a magical time of the year full of opportunities to teach our preschoolers about the wonders of Winter. The forest is still alive with animals prepping their winter homes and foraging the last of food supplies to store for winter. Our winter birds have made the migration here to their warmer climate and for those who don't migrate, amazing animal adaptations are taking place to get them through these cold months.

We want our nature explorers to experience all of these wonders and do so safely. Caregivers often ask what the best clothing is for our programs. I always reference the Norwegian saying "There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes." When we are dressed properly for the cold weather it can be enjoyed safely. We recommend dressing in layers and wool socks are best. Wool makes a great winter fiber because it wicks away any moisture and traps air pockets in the fibers to insulate you from the cold. Waterproof gloves and boots keep snow and ice off hands and feet and warm hats protect their ears from the cold. I also recommend snow pants even when it is not snowing. They add an extra layer and will keep them dry if they are down on the ground. And of course, a warm winter coat. We always tell our caregivers to bring an extra set of clothes in case the children need to change into a dry set.

Now that we are bundled up and ready for the cold we can get outside and enjoy this season. Before every program we are using weather monitoring equipment to check the combined temperature and wind speed to determine if the wind chill is safe. We can offer the Nature Center in the event of extreme cold but otherwise we will be outside for the duration of our program. In the cold it is best to have activities planned that keep us moving. We always have a hike planned and will keep stationary activities like story time or a craft to under 20 minutes. Hiking in the winter is a good time for scavenger hunts. We will be out looking for signs of animals through their tracks and scat, signs of nest making and finding trees and shrubs that will keep their berries over winter. We will make bird feeders by rolling pinecones in sunflower butter, then bird seed and hang them from branches. The children love to watch the birds enjoy their gifts. If you are lucky enough to get a snow day during one of your programs, then is a great day to build a snow-person and decorate them with natural materials. Our favorite day last winter was our

snow day. We had spray bottles filled with dyed water and after the children built their snow-people they were able to color them with the dyed water. This was a great fine motor activity that could be done with gloves on. I have also included a list below of more glove-friendly activities.

So, while I hope that we can all use these winter months to slow down, reflect, and drink more hot chocolate than we should I also hope we can use them to interpret the Winter into the magical time it is, and show our preschoolers that there is fun to be had all year long.

- Blowing bubbles
- Shoveling snow
- Using sand toys in the snow or mud
- Making snow candles
- Filling bird feeders
- Making snowballs to throw at a target
- Making frozen suncatchers
- Pinecone owl craft
- Making & threading nature looms with pine branches



By Susan Matthews
2022 NAI National Conference
Scholarship Award Winner

I'd first like to thank the scholarship award committee and all the hard-working NAI volunteers who helped make this award possible. I'd also like to thank the NAI staff members for their help with the conference registration process. My goals in attending this year's NAI national conference were to participate in inspirational talks, connect with amazing new contacts, who would inspire me as I write my very first book. When I walked out into the hotel lobby wondering if I'd see anyone I knew, I looked over and saw a friendly face. Yvonne Johnson gave me a warm smile and welcomed me to join her and her friends for dinner that night. I have volunteered with Yvonne on our Region 2's board for over a year and never had the opportunity to meet her in person. Yvonne has done an incredible job serving as our NAI Region 2 Director. It's truly been a pleasure volunteering with her and all our Region 2 board. Unfortunately due to the pandemic and financial reasons I have not had the chance to attend an in-person conference in several years. I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to attend this national conference in person and meet so many passionate & enthusiastic interpreters.

I attended a pre-conference session called "Inspire with PIE and TALK" presented by Jacquie Gilson. We learned about the PIE model- Participation. Information. Engagement. The PIE model helps interpreters plan and deliver engaging interpretation programs. I loved the concept of starting your program with a hands-on-engaging activity. Then once your audience is hooked on your topic you can share some interesting information with them about that topic. Finally, you wrap up your program by allowing your audience to reflect on ways they too can help the natural resource they learned about during your program. I am inspired to think how I can make my book more participatory and interactive.

It's hard to choose from so many incredible talks! Lucas Hernandez led a captivating talk called "Pop Culture: An Interpreters Best Friend in a Connected World." It was wonderful to see an interpreter so passionate about a topic! His enthusiasm was contagious. It wasn't long before the audience was connecting with him and his topic. It was truly a fabulous presentation. I also really enjoyed attending an interactive session which discussed tips for getting youth interested in pursuing the interpretation field. This conference fulfilled all my expectations and more! Thank you so much for making it possible for me to attend this phenomenal conference.