



1375 East Siebenthaler Ave.
Dayton, Ohio 45414

Phone (937) 275-7275
Fax (937) 278-8849
www.metro-parks.org

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am a naturalist for Five Rivers MetroParks, serving the greater Dayton area. After graduating in 2010 with a B.S., I began my career at Five Rivers MetroParks. While I never dreamed of leading owl prowls, birding field trips, or creek studies, I now find myself at the heart of environmental education. Without any formal interpretation background, my supervisor had his work cut out for him as he trained and mentored me. Honestly, I can't imagine having any other supervisor than Joshua York. From July of 2010 until now, I have had the honor and the pleasure of working as Joshua York's naturalist, connecting children and adults to nature in ways I could have never imagined.

From day one, Joshua had an incredible enthusiasm for teaching and mentoring, and it was clear that while he loved delivering programs, mentoring was his favorite aspect of being an Education Supervisor. He not only took me on hikes, helped me study, and gave me pop quizzes for fun, but he also made sure I had the resources necessary to do my job well. He never set me up to fail, but always set me up to shine. He would work with me after hours to improve my natural history skills, and would expose me to novel, rare experiences, like bird banding. Since Joshua has been in the environmental education world for over 10 years, he knows what it takes to be a great naturalist, and he passes the knowledge and skills to all those he mentors.

Joshua passed on much more than just natural history and cool experiences to me over the past 3 years. Having no formal background in interpretation, I was anything but comfortable leading a hike of any kind when I started. I was unsure how to keep a 4-year-old's attention during an hour long program, and I was so nervous that I wouldn't be able to answer questions from an adult audience. Joshua showed me that it is okay to not know something, and that it can even give a participant a better experience if I don't have all the answers. He also taught me so many "tricks of the trade" that I can confidently engage even the most challenging 4-year-old, and handle tough questions an audience. Joshua gave me the gift of confidence, through the experiences he gave me and the knowledge he passed on to me, which has made all the difference in my programs!

Joshua is also the most dependable and reliable person I have ever worked with. He is always willing to go the extra mile to make sure I'm ready to deliver a program, whether that means going out on the trails ahead of time with me, looking over a program outline with me, or grabbing reared monarchs and bringing them to a monarch tagging program because it is too cold for butterflies to be fluttering about. I know that he is only a call away if I have a question before a program. I know that if I need him at a program, all I have to do is let him know, and he will be there. He always has my back!

Joshua York is a true asset to Five Rivers MetroParks. He has the determination, knowledge, patience, enthusiasm, and skills required to execute any program, organize any group effort, create a new product, and train any new naturalist. It is my honor and privilege to recommend him for any education position he chooses to pursue.

Sincerely,

Lauren M Stayer, Naturalist
Five Rivers MetroParks
937-277-4178

