

May 12, 2013

An introduction for my friend and colleague, Joshua York

I first met Joshua York at Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm in Dayton Ohio in 1997. I was a naturalist on staff with the National Audubon Society and Joshua was engaged in an internship. I was struck with his passion for natural history and detailed interest in identification of insects and small river fish. Over the years, I have found that his career and life has comingled with and enriched my own journey. Even before I met Joshua, he had apprenticed with my wife, Ann, who was the naturalist at Five Rivers MetroParks, Germantown MetroPark Nature Center. Years later, Joshua and I both took positions with Five Rives MetroParks (FRM) where we are still colleagues today. I am honored to assist with his introduction to you as I believe you will find in him, an honest, caring, intelligent soul passionate to help our community connect and harmonize with nature.

One of Joshua's special traits and work interests has been the development of naturalist interpreter skills in others. I have observed Joshua take joy in creating opportunities for apprentices, volunteer staff, part-time staff and even colleagues (including myself) to share in his own intense exploration of natural history and then to practice these skills. Joshua has patiently coached numerous people to make their presentations more enthusiastic and develop their natural history knowledge and skills to be able to add a "Wow" moment into the presentation. He has spent many hours beyond his work day in these efforts.

I have also enjoyed the camaraderie of team-teaching with Joshua at workshops and the occasional conference presentation. Over the years, we have enjoyed positive comments from these presentations that were stronger for the skills and teaching styles we both brought to our audience. Joshua was a key influence introducing me to the Miami University Global Fields Program through Project Dragonfly. We joined the 2009 cohort and earned our Masters Degree in Zoology in 2011. I truly enjoyed the few classes we attended together, but even more, the shared experience of working through the program.

I was impressed with how Joshua used these experiences from Miami University directly within the FRM program to create the Inquiry Adventures Program. Although he was open to assistance and is very generous in sharing the credit, this program came primarily from his efforts. Its roots come from his efforts to create Nature Play areas within the parks promoting open fun exploration of our natural world to parents and children. Inquiry Adventures also grew from efforts to create access to natural areas for children enrolled under professional child care providers through a program called Natural Adventures Boxes providing routine access to natural areas, teacher trainings and nature exploration tools. Inquiry Adventures was a natural grown from those program initiatives tempered with the experiences gained from the Global Field Program through Project Dragonfly's Quest open inquiry instruction. Inquiry Adventures: Inquiry Adventure kits, teacher trainings, and the administrative and facility access and support provided by FRM is a direct result of his tireless work to build this new program. His efforts resulted in a better trained FRM staff with an advanced understanding of how to facilitate Open Inquiry as well as a growing network of teachers using these tools at their own school grounds and at specific FRM locations. Joshua's work to share this concept with other park districts has resulted in a number of

professional presentations and in a recent article in the National Association for Interpretations LEGACY publication which has brought increased recognition to FRM. As someone who quietly goes about creating consistent excellent work, it is sometimes difficult for outsiders to truly appreciate what Joshua accomplishes but if you are lucky to have him on your team you will find out.

I have held many a conversation with Joshua, some late into the night, about how to stay motivated myself and how to inspire our community to strengthen its relationship with nature. I have found in Joshua a person whose life mission aligns very well with his work. Joshua lives his life and the work he does is part of that whole. Joshua has a strong sense of tactics and of the most efficient ways and partnerships to work towards specific engagement goals. And when sometimes we disagreed, as brothers do, I have found upon reflection that his ideas were thoughtful and persuasive and if still I didn't agree with specific order of tactics, I always was certain we were both working towards the same goal of preserving that sense of wonder and care for the world around us. I will always want, and count myself lucky to get, Joshua as part of any team I serve upon to work out ideas and methods to obtain this goal. Especially knowing the dedication and work hours he will commit to make the plan work. He has an ability to create, test and implement programming concepts that can have a large impact.

Joshua and I have are also both raising families whose ages overlap. I know him as a caring person towards his family and a friendly "uncle" to my own children. He is active in his community as scout leader and over the years he has engaged the community with many public programs and special group tours in the parks and as outreach programs through his agency work. These presentations often have a "Wow" moments when some great natural history encounter with the public either through live captive wildlife presentations, dramatic use of pelts and study skins or in a natural habitats with wildlife such as owls or beavers. Joshua has quite the reputation as an excellent presenter.

Joshua has a fun sense of humor and is fond of pranks, Star Trek references and family adventures. He loves to share his passions such as having technology serve natural history interests, seeing living birds, spiders, and stream fish, having scuba adventures and tasting unbelievably spicy hot international foods (OK, the spicy food comment is an exaggeration but the rest is true). He is my very good friend and I hope our journey continues together for a long time.

I hope your own journey includes people like him to walk with you and I thank you for this opportunity to share with you some of what I know about my friend Joshua.

Respectfully

Douglas Horvath 9/2

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