

# Spanning the Generations:

Lessons learned building a training program  
for teens to retirees that sets them up for  
success

Presented by:  
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The Wild Center

# The Wild Center



Our mission: To ignite an enduring passion for the Adirondacks where people and nature can thrive together and set an example for the world

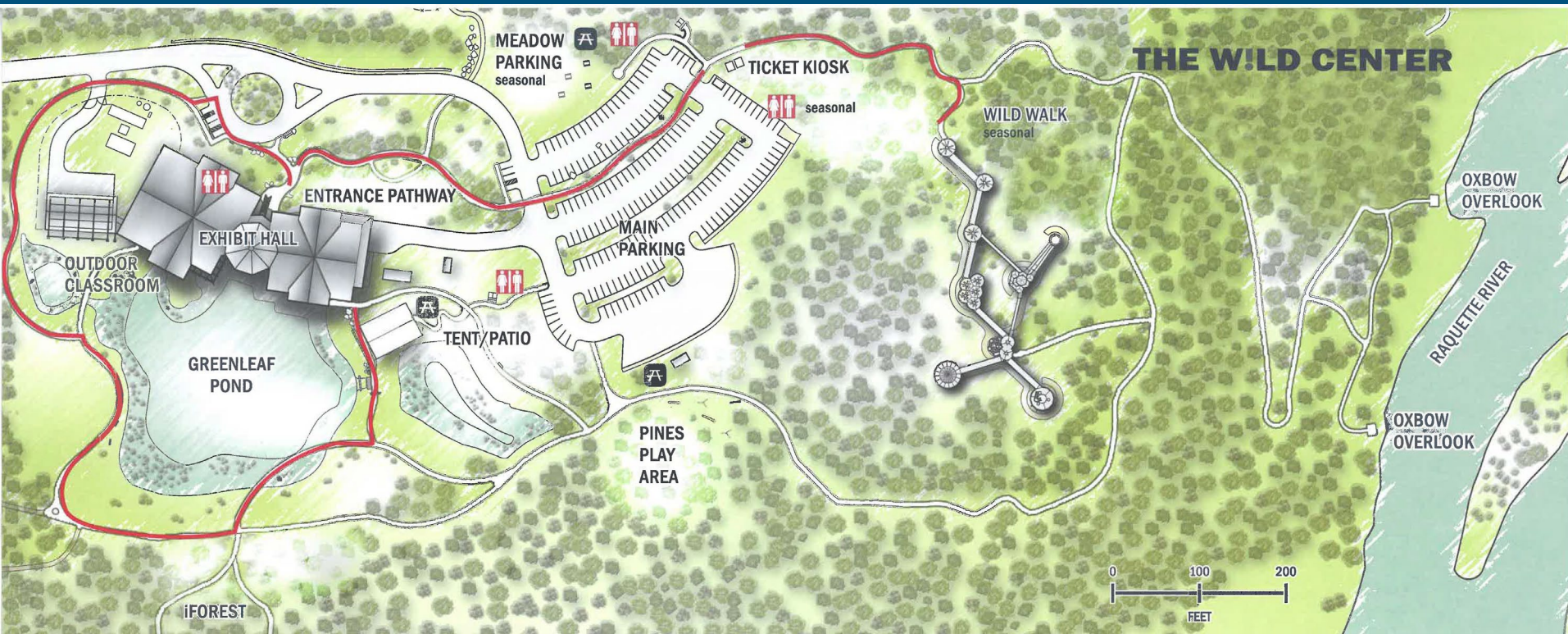
# The Wild Center

A regional natural history museum in the heart of the Adirondacks in upstate New York

Opened in 2006

Planet Adirondack (Science on a Sphere)  
installed May 2012





## Welcome!

The Wild Center is privately funded by members and other supporters. Members receive free admission and special pricing for guests. You can join today, or online at [wildcenter.org/belong](http://wildcenter.org/belong). We hope you enjoy your visit, and please check out our website, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter to learn more about our mission and stay in touch.

*Please see other side of this map for a detailed floorplan of our main interior space.*

### Trail System

*Extensive trails can all be accessed from the outdoor cafe area.*

 Accessible Outdoor Path

 Picnic Tables

### Wild Walk

*Our accessible trail across the treetops features engaging interactive experiences and begins on an outdoor path.*

### Tent/Patio

*The site of our Thursday Farmer's Markets during the summer, it also features additional shaded seating for lunchtime visitors.*

### iForest

*An immersive sound experience created by composer Pete M. Wyer, iForest features a walking trail that leads you directly through a choral composition - one created specifically for this forested area of The Wild Center.*

### Pines Play Area

*A forested play area filled with climbing logs, balance beams and other natural objects and activities to engage and amuse kids of all ages.*





# Planet Adirondack

Since Planet Adirondack opened we have had over 800,000 visitors through the center, many who have experienced SOS

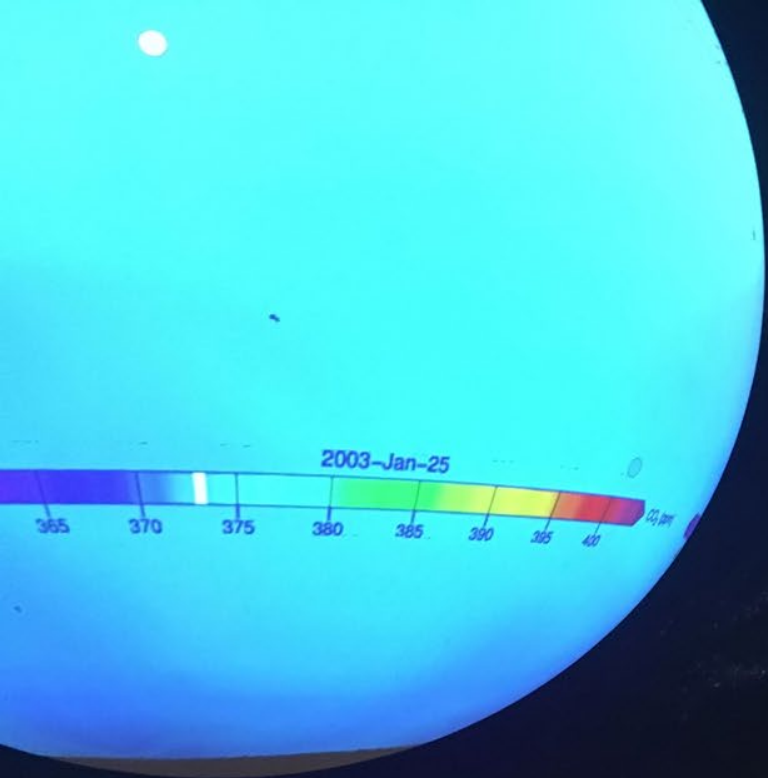
Face to face interactions with visitors is the number one way that we connect at The Wild Center

Using SOS we are able to make those connections by bringing global ideas to the local scale









Place the Administrator card  
near the card to read the  
code on the card.





# Who we train

We train up to 25 new staff and volunteers a year to use SOS for daily programs

The average demographic is 19 -23 year old college students working as interns

Volunteer demographics range from high school students to retired seniors and most of the volunteers do not have an education or science background

# Teen Program

2018 TWC hired 7 local teens (funding from a private donor) to specifically exhibit guide in Planet Adirondack

Ages ranged from 14 -17, many who grew up around TWC

Many had never had jobs or spoke in front of the public before

**New things present new challenges**

# Activity Time

Take the item in front of you and:

- Learn how to operate it

- 3 facts about the device

- How to deliver that information to the group

# New things present new challenges

Three main challenges new people face:

Content

Technology

Audience

Must be prepared to address each of these with every new trainee, but must get to know each individual's needs to make the training effective

# What we found

Even staff who have grown up around technology can find SOS intimidating

Most staff we train to use the sphere have never seen one

New interns and volunteers are already overwhelmed with a lot of new information – how to incorporate SOS without “breaking their brains”

Differences exist between training interns, teens, and volunteers



# Interns

What we've found works best:

Group training with time for individual follow up

In general have a basic knowledge of the technology involved and environmental issues

Will be using the sphere on a daily basis to give public programs (no choice, it is what they were hired for)

Use pre-made formal programs as well as leading informal informational sessions

Some receive additional tech trainings based on interest

After group training most just request "time to play" to prep for first program

# Teens

What we've found works best:

Group training with weekly follow ups and added resources

- In general have a basic knowledge of technology but, not environmental issues

Will be using the sphere on a daily basis to interact with programs (no choice, it is what they were hired for)

Use the sphere to make connections to personal stories (grew up in ADK)

Slowly added information weekly with lots of time for personal reflection

# Teens

What we've found works best:

Group training with weekly follow ups and added resources

- Taught inquiry strategies to put focus on visitor and sphere:

What's going on in this dataset?

What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can we find?

Wanted to be paired with other teen educators until they felt comfortable in the space





# *Flesh eaters*

**See our dermestid beetles in action.** The beetles and larvae get energy from the flesh, skin and internal organs of the carcasses they feast on. They will work until the bones are completely bare. These beetles are not native, but the Adirondacks have many insects like them. Without insect decomposers and other scavengers, the forest would be overrun with dead animal carcasses.

# Volunteers

What we've found works best:  
Individual training with time to shadow staff

May educate once a week, month, or only couple times per season (are choosing SOS)

Mainly using SOS for informal information settings (Chat with a naturalist) and are given options of how to present

Receive basic training on using iPad

Volunteers may not have any experience with technology or a science background

After initial one on one training like to set up additional time to practice with staff

# How We Train at The Wild Center

Initial 2 hour training – mandatory for interns, open to all staff and volunteers

Focus on only what they need to know to do basic programs

Volunteers train one on one (and later shadow/co-teach) with interns

Teens train as a group and then have weekly meetings to add content, discuss challenges, and build on skills

# What we do

## Overcoming Challenges

### Overcoming Content Challenges:

Allow for docents to tailor playlists and give programs that interest them

Provide pre-made program outlines for beginners and program templates for next level

Geography games and contests to make learning fun

Sphere scavenger hunt during training

Provide website info and encourage them to research on their own



# What we do

## Overcoming Challenges

### Overcoming tech challenges

- Sphere scavenger hunt during training

- Allowing lots of time for each person to practice individually

- Starting small with non -tech volunteers – basics and one playlist

- Making each person do each task (hands on vs. showing them or telling them)

- Provide step by step how to manual and contact list for when you need help

# What we do

## Overcoming Challenges

### Overcoming audience challenges

Interns take certified interpretive guide program, volunteers take a short training on interpretive methods

Start everyone with informal programs, move into scripted

Provide chances to shadow and co-teach if not yet comfortable

Teach them to make the sphere the focus

# Why Efficient Training is Important

An efficient, but comprehensive training program makes it easy for staff and volunteers to see how their time will be used to educate the public in Science on a Sphere.

This makes it easier to recruit people to become involved and, when training is easy and fun, retention is increased.

# Discussion

Does your facility use staff and volunteers to give programs?

What are things you would like to share about your training program?

Brainstorm ideas to make training programs more inviting and how to overcome challenges?

Questions?

# Contact Info

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