Nature Day Camp 2017 Summer Staff

Supervisory Staff:

Savannah Donovan – Environmental Public Program Coordinator

Hi, and thank you for joining us at Nature Day Camp! I am the camp coordinator, and I also oversee Wildlife Watchers Camp, Lunch Break Camp, and all environmental public programs at the Urbana Park District.

I am an Urbana native with a background in biology and field work. I have a passion for leading environmental programs and a MS in Environmental Education and Interpretation from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. I love working with children and recently became a new mother. I am very excited about campers (and my own daughter!) being able to play on the new nature playscape during camp!

Shalonda Pelmore – Nature Day Camp Site Supervisor

I am from the Champaign–Urbana area and have worked with youth in the community for over 20 years! This is my fifth year returning as the Nature Day Camp Supervisor. I have worked as a Para-Professional at Urbana Middle School for the past ten years, and as a Site Coordinator for the Before- and After-School Program for over 10 years. When I am not working with kids, I am burying my nose in a book, conquering crossword puzzles, or spending time with family.

Chelsea Prahl – Nature Day Camp Assistant Supervisor

I have a degree from Eastern Illinois University in Recreation Administration and am pursuing a MS in Parks and Resource Management. This is my third year at Nature Day Camp, and my second year as the Assistant Site Supervisor. I enjoy fishing and spending time outdoors, I am really looking forward to helping all of your children appreciate the beauty and magic of nature.

Catherine Stuber – Nature Extended Camp Supervisor

My name is Ms. Catherine, and I have the awesome pleasure of being with your children during early morning drop-off and afternoon Nature Extended Camp. I am the supervisor during these times, so if you or your child needs anything or has concerns, please let me know. I have taught Special Education in Champaign schools for over 18 years. I also work in the SPLASH program (Students Playing & Learning After School Hours) at Urbana Middle School. I have three grown children and eight grandchildren that range in age from 1-13 years old. I love seeing children having fun and discovering new things, and I look forward to being with your children this summer.

Camp Leaders:

Sara Abbott – Full-Day Nature Camp Leader

My name is Sara Abbott, and I am so excited to join camp this summer! I am a licensed teacher in Elementary Education and have spent the last year in the Life Skills program at the Urbana High School. I also have a background in art. My favorite things to do in the summer are hike (Turkey Run State Park is my current go-to hiking spot), engage in nature photography around the area, and relax on the beaches of Florida. I cannot wait to start this new adventure with my campers!

Denise "Chuck" Bear-Brister – Full-Day Nature Camp Leader

I am excited to be working with your children this summer. I have three daughters (one of whom is also a Full-Day Camp Leader this summer) and have been involved with all of their sports and activities, and now I get to do it again with my granddaughter! I have been the Site Director for the last two years for the Champaign Unit 4 Kid's Plus afterschool program. I also worked as a home day care provider for two years. Last summer I was a Preschool Nature Camp Leader, but I am really excited about working with the elementary-aged kids during Full Day Nature Camp this summer! I know we are going to have a great summer, and I look forward to meeting you all!

Reanna Bear-Brister – Full-Day Nature Camp Leader

This is my second summer returning as a Full-Day Nature Camp Leader. My background working with kids also includes coaching Urbana Park District youth soccer the past two years, working with the SPLASH afterschool programs at the Urbana Middle School and the Urbana Early Childhood School, and being an aunt to the sweetest niece in the world. Besides working with kids, I love to bake, craft, go camping and do just about any other outdoor activity there is. I'm thrilled to be working with your kids this summer, and I can't wait to meet you all!

Alex "Raine" Craig – Preschool Nature Camp Leader

Hello, my name is Raine, and I am very excited to be a Nature Day Camp Leader again this summer! This is my third year as a camp leader, but my first time working exclusively with the preschool-aged campers. In previous summers, I was a Full-Day Nature Camp Leader, Wildlife Watchers Camp Leader, Junior Counselor, Counselor-in-Training and even a Nature Day Camper! I can't wait to investigate and explore the wonders of nature this summer. I love working with children and hope to work towards a degree in counseling or teaching. I have a multitude of interests including nature, music, teaching and traveling. I'm looking forward to a fantastic summer working with your children!

Autumn Ellis – Junior Counselor

My name is Autumn, and I will be a senior at Urbana High School this year. I started as a camper at Nature Day Camp at age 6, and this is my third year returning as a JC. I love to draw, sing, and interact outside. I am excited for another summer!

Hannah Grant – Preschool Nature Camp Leader & Environmental Public Program Assistant

I have been working at the Anita Purves Nature Center as the Environmental Public Program Assistant since the fall of 2015. During my time here, I have designed and led programs for audiences from preschoolers to senior citizens. I studied wildlife management during my undergraduate studies and prairie restoration for my MS. I love learning new things to share in programs, and I am excited to bring my best activities to camp and come up with new ways to play on the nature playscape! When I am not learning or teaching about nature, I like to play board games, go running and play with my cats.

Sara Haney – Nature Extended Camp Leader & Nature Play Facilitator

Hi! My name is Sara, and I will be working with your kids during early morning drop-off and afternoon Nature Extended Camp. With the opening of the new Friendship Grove Nature Playscape, I am also the first Nature Play Facilitator at the Urbana Park District! In May, I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree from U of I in Environmental Science, and I will be pursuing my Master's Degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago in Urban Planning and Environmental Policy. I have played soccer for 16 years, and I enjoy trying unique foods and traveling with friends. I have had three years of experience of working with preschool children as a teacher and am really looking forward to the opportunity of working with your children. It's going to be a fantastic summer!

Emma Hoyer – Full-Day Nature Camp Leader

My name is Emma. I just recently graduated from Millikin University with two B.A. degrees in elementary education and English literature, and I will be a 5th grade teacher at Booker T. Washington Elementary School next year. Previously, I have worked as a Counselor-in-Training and Junior Counselor at Nature Day Camp, but this is my first year being a Full Day Camp Leader! I am very excited to be working with your child this summer as we learn, explore, and most of all, have fun!

Amy Lawrence – Preschool Nature Camp Leader

Even though this is my first year at Nature Day Camp, I have taught 6th grade at Urbana Middle School for 6 1/2 years. I am looking forward to working with the preschoolers this summer—it will be a nice change from middle school. I am an avid St. Louis Cardinals baseball fan. I also enjoy planting flowers and working in my yard.

Gabby Mancuso – Junior Counselor

Hi, I'm Gabby. I'm now a senior at Urbana High School, and this is my third year as a JC. I really love this camp because I've been coming here since I was seven years old, first as a camper and then as a Counselor-in-Training. I love seeing the creativity and positivity of the campers year after year and seeing how much they grow every summer.

Christina Meyers – Full-Day Nature Camp Leader

Hi, my name is Christina, and this is my first summer as a Full Day Camp Leader. I am a recent graduate from the University of Illinois. I majored in Interdisciplinary Health and minored in Spanish, and I plan to receive my Master's in Public Health at the Rollin's School of Public Health in Atlanta this fall. I have worked with kids as a Learn-to-Skate Instructor at the U of I Ice Arena and taught swimming lessons for children with disabilities. I love to ice skate, run and spend time outdoors. Although this is my first year, I am unbelievably excited to be a Full Day Camp Leader and to spend my summer here!

Vikram Perry – Junior Counselor

My name is Vikram, and I am returning for the second year as a JC at Nature Day Camp. I have also been a camper and a Counselor-in-Training. In all, I have been coming to Nature Day Camp for almost 11 years now! I love music and playing piano and French horn. Nature Day Camp is a great environment, and I am happy to represent the Urbana Parks District again. I am looking forward to a great summer!

Avery Wright – Junior Counselor

Hi! My name is Avery, and this is my first summer as a JC. I've lived in Champaign-Urbana my whole life. I started out at the Urbana Park District's Sports Camp in 2012 and switched to Nature Day Camp in 2015 as a Counselor-in-Training. I enjoy hanging out with my friends and playing video games. I also love drama theater, singing, and working with kids.

Camp Subs:

Emily Mamer – Nature Day Camp Substitute Leader

I grew up in the forests and farms of New Jersey but moved to New York City to earn my bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Coastal Area Management. I worked at an environmental center in Queens for two years, teaching children about wetlands and estuaries. When I moved to the Midwest four years ago, I began working as an Environmental Education Assistant at the Anita Purves Nature Center, as well as a leader of public programs, afterschool programs, Spring Break Day Camp, and as a sub for Nature Day Camp and Arts Camp.

Amalia Dolan – Nature Day Camp Substitute Leader

I am returning to Nature Day Camp for the third year. As a child I participated in Urbana Park District summer camps and summer swim league for twelve years. I graduated from University High School and spent one year studying in Lima, Peru, with Rotary Youth Exchange. I recently graduated from Beloit College in Wisconsin where I studied Environmental Geology and was a member of their swim team. My pastimes include reading, hiking, and traveling. I am excited to pass on my favorite camp experiences to a new generation of Nature Day Campers!