



Job Title: Program Director/Lead Teacher for Notchcliff Nature Programs

Employment type: Full-time

Reports to: Executive Director

Regular hours: 30 hours/week (scheduled teaching days and flexible admin hours)

Location: Glen Meadows Retirement Community, Glen Arm, MD (fully outdoors)

Overview

Our playful, immersive outdoor program is a wonderful way for children to make lasting connections with the natural world as part of their home school study. Essential social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills grow as does a genuine love for nature. We cultivate gratitude, empathy, and appreciation of our diverse community and we honor our elders through an intergenerational approach with residents at Glen Meadows Retirement Community. Position works with children from birth to age ten depending on the class, as well as elders at Glen Meadows. This is a project of the Eastern Region Association of Forest and Nature Schools (ERAFANS.org). Learn more at naturalcommunity.org.

The goals of Notchcliff Nature Programs are:

- To honor young children as independent, capable thinkers through child-directed, experiential, place-based approaches to learning;
- To engage in a rhythm of reflection, inquiry, observation, trial-and-error, risk-taking, perseverance, discussion, problem-solving, expression, and teamwork through a balance of emergent curriculum, intentional activities, and unstructured nature play;
- To offer opportunities for children to explore identity in the context of nature and the larger community, while cultivating kindness, empathy, compassion, and gratitude; and
- To model best practices and approaches to nature-based early childhood education, including equitable and inclusive access to Notchcliff Nature Programs

Job description

Program Director/Lead teacher oversees the implementation of Notchcliff Nature Programs at Glen Meadows Retirement Community. This involves supervision of staff, building relationships with families, establishing rapport with children, and professional, timely communication about the program.



Program Director/Lead teacher will closely collaborate with teachers and children as lead forest preschool teacher for three mornings/week. This is a vital way to mentor teaching staff and build relationships with families. Other essential tasks include thoughtful curriculum design based on children's emergent interests, on-going reflection about and assessment of children and the forest school program, and collaboration with staff and/or volunteers. The Program Director will also interface with the Executive Director and Board regarding various aspects of Notchcliff such as: policies, advocacy, growth initiatives, strategic planning, marketing, development, and budget.

Program Director will create a supportive work culture and establish systems that empower teachers to grow professionally as nature-based educators. Program Director will engage in reflective evaluation of teachers to identify needs of teaching staff and plan PD activities to that end. The Program Director sets the tone for learning as an engaged, enthusiastic role model of nature-based education while maintaining a safe, positive atmosphere for outdoor learning.

This position requires a blend of qualifications that span having sound knowledge about early childhood education as well as nature-based pedagogy. Candidates should possess curiosity, if not deep understanding, of the local ecosystem with a commitment to helping young children develop their ecological identities through inquiry and play.

Position requires personal and programmatic reflection, collaboration with teachers and parents, open dialogue about children's progress, and interfacing with Glen Meadows Retirement Community partners and residents. Position also includes drafting a program budget, tracking expenses, writing content for grants, providing program data/reports, and other related duties as required.

The ideal candidate will:

- Be passionate about educating children in nature.
- Be self-motivated and self-directed with the flexibility to work independently and collaboratively as part of a team.
- Have strong leadership abilities and excellent interpersonal skills, organizational, and time-management skills.
- Be a skilled communicator, guided by a desire to listen to and speak compassionately with both children and adults.
- Feel comfortable and confident about meeting the needs of children outdoors in all seasons.



Primary Job Responsibilities:

- Responsible for planning and facilitating immersive outdoor experiences for young children. This includes maintaining a safe, loving environment with safety routines that protect yet empower children and staff, including policies to safeguard against the spread of COVID-19.
- Nurture individualized needs of children while managing whole group experiences and unstructured play in the forest.
- Daily set-up/break-down of forest classroom (hands-washing station, fire ring, toilet tent, etc.).
- Utilize an emergent curriculum plan, daily 'sketch of the day' based on children's and seasonal interests, and loosely refer to other curriculum and standards such as the Nature-Based Preschool Professional Practices Guidebook and Excellence in ECE by NAAEE.
- Develop and implement various community-building initiatives with staff and local partners.
- Manage materials and equipment; request/order new materials as needed.
- Model and participate in authentic child assessment, self-evaluation, and program evaluation.
- Maintain student:staff ratios for classes, coordinate teacher coverage, and substitute as needed.
- Other duties that support families, children, and staff will also be assigned as needed.

Collaborative duties with fellow staff:

- Document learning processes in many formats for children's portfolios (written documentation, photos, content for blog/FB posts, Instagram, ERAFANS website, etc.).
- Provide positive guidance to children in navigating their social interactions with peers and adults.
- Maintain friendly yet professional interpersonal communication skills with children, families, staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors
- Participate in staff meetings and on-going professional development.
- Implement community events (IE. Open Houses) for prospective families and stakeholders.

Essential Experience & Education

- Possess or in pursuit of bachelor's degree in nature-based early childhood education, environmental studies, outdoor education, natural history, biology, elementary education, or closely related field (Master's preferred)
- Minimum of three years of experience leading outdoor education or forest school programs, with emphasis on experiential outdoor learning, coyote mentoring/8 shields model, flow learning, and emergent curriculum approaches



- Hold valid credentials to work in an MSDE-licensed preschool program (90-hour certificate)*
- Hold valid credentials to direct a licensed preschool or early learning program in Maryland*
- Possess the following credentials, certifications, or licenses: Current first aid and CPR credentials (Wilderness First Responder preferred)
- Must pass background check, child abuse clearances, and drug test before starting employment
- Significant experience working with young children
- Physically able to hike, carry gear, and carry a small child if needed (up to 50 lbs)
- Naturalist background with knowledge of local ecology, flora, and fauna; Master Gardener or Master Naturalist certification (not required but preferred)

*The 90-hour certificate is made up of two 45-hour courses: one called Human Growth/Child Development and one called Curriculum Development/Materials and Methods (offered in person and online). Please indicate if you have or are pursuing this qualification. Many outdoor educators do not have this credential, but we can work with you if it is in progress. The Director's Course is also available to take online prior to starting this position.

Classes are entirely outdoors, so you must be experienced and eager to facilitate outdoor learning in all seasons.

Additional Skills & Training

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Proficient in Microsoft Office programs including Outlook, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Proficient use of social media platforms including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook
- Excited to lead outdoor programs in all kinds of weather
- Flexible mindset and positive attitude
- Ability to work collaboratively as part of a team
- Ability to manage staff and willingness to seek resources

Most Desirable Qualities

- Love of children
- Love of nature
- A strong work ethic with a track record of being reliable, honest, and kind
- Ability to laugh, remain calm, and persevere when faced with challenges
- Patient, positive disposition
- Eager to grow and learn with others



Salary

Starting rate is \$20/hour.

How to Apply

This job description offers guidelines for the position, not hard and fast rules. If you have 75% of the qualifications listed, we encourage you to apply!

Send your resume and three references to Monica Wiedel-Lubinski, director@erafans.org. If hired, you will complete a background check, fingerprinting, and formal application of employment.

Equal Opportunity Statement

We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer. We recruit, employ, train, compensate, and promote regardless of race, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity (including gender nonconformity and status as a transgender or transsexual individual), age, physical or mental disability, citizenship, genetic information, past, current, or prospective service in the uniformed services, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state, or local law. Persons from Indigenous, Latinx, African-American and other diverse racial or cultural backgrounds are encouraged to apply. If you have a disability and require accommodation or assistance with our online application process, please contact us so we can help.