

State of the Volunteer Navigating Committee September 7, 2018

This year has demonstrated why the VNC was created and how it works. We experienced a sudden change in park leadership of the volunteer program when our VIP coordinator (Debbie) lost her funding source and a new person (Amanda) was recruited to fill in. The VNC started by drafting, refining, and getting superintendent approval of the VIP Coordinator Position Description. This enabled Amanda to know just what was expected of 20% of her yearly work hours. We then offered to help her with whatever tasks she felt comfortable assigning to us.

The creation of a new volunteer opportunity, the Volunteer of the Day (VOD), has hopefully given Amanda an easy way to delegate some of her VIP Coordinator tasks to VIPs. Feedback indicates that this approach is working, but the VOD is still understaffed. Our goal is to have one volunteer at the park each day of the week. But so far we only have Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday covered.

The VNC encourages VIP involvement by sponsoring various volunteer lead committees. The rest of this report focuses on those committees and their accomplishments.

The Tidepool Protection, Education, and Restoration Program (TPERP) is the oldest of our committees and is sponsored and lead by Ranger Bonnie and assistant employee Pauline. They lead an active committee of VIPs who have greatly increased the number of interpretive visitor contacts by consistently recruiting and training new tidepool volunteers. This is due mainly to the expanded role of the TPERP VIPs. Besides having people in the tidepools during low tides, they now have people manning the information table and roving all year round. Through June, 2018 they have reported 19,889 interpretive contacts.

Their training program is one of our best and includes the preseason Tidepool Training Conference as well as a smaller training session each quarter.

Keeping volunteers informed and providing them with the resources they need is the job of three interrelated committees: the CNM Website, the VIP Voice, and the E-binder. They share this responsibility and are tightly integrated because of the three dedicated VIPs who do this work; Becky, Dan, and Beth. Dan has given our website a new look and feel and continuously keeps it up-to-date. He has also added new features to the VIP Voice; Cabrillo Field Notes, Trails and Rails program notes, and a "Did You Know" feature that highlights interesting facts from the E-binder.

The E-binder is our encyclopedia of all things about Cabrillo National Monument. Most of you access it on-line, but there is a need for hard copies. The committee recently had 3 copies printed. Because of an innovative new strategy, this will be the last time the entire document will need to be printed. It has been printed and assembled so that corrections and additions to individual pages can be done without having to reprint the whole document. Copies will be placed in the Visitor Center, the tidepool trailer, and the VIP office and the different topics will be in separate binders for easier reference.

Our hard working group of Military History interpreters as been growing over many years. This year they formed their own committee and selected Steve Sheldon to be the chair. There are now two platoons of military VIPs and that enables them to open the bunker every first thru fourth Saturday. They keep campaigning for upgrades and repairs and this year successfully arranged to have the view portals refurbished. Hooray for a 180 degree view. The bunker consistently gets 1000+ visitors a month.

Another group of VIPs also formed their own committee this year – the Lighthouse VIPs. They are defining their functions and training needs. They have successfully created and administered training to those VIPs who help with Open Tower Days. They are also doing a photo inventory of the lighthouse contents. Some of their members also open the kitchen/dining area periodically to visitors.

A committee of one, Mark McFann, has recruited, trained, and lead a group of 14+ VIPs on the inaugural summer of the Trails and Rails program that is run in conjunction with AMTRAK. His team had people riding the train from San Diego to LA and back on 13 Saturdays this summer. The made approximately 900 contacts on board plus many more while waiting in the station to board. This summer was a big success and his goal is to continue it during both Winter and Spring breaks.

Weed Warriors is a dedicated group of volunteers who are helping to remove invasive non-native plants from native habitat. The effort is lead by Lonie Brown. The removal of invasive plants is critical for native habitat restoration. The group is also involved in collecting data about non-native species. The park has a goal to be weed free so this is a great opportunity to assist park staff with restoration efforts. Lonie is also soon piloting a new program called Early Detection Rapid Response, which will aid the park in its efforts to locate invasive plant species.

The garden is looking beautiful. Thanks to Pam Zuckerman and those who have been long time volunteers and new folks who have been sprinkling the garden to keep her strong in this hot weather. Also the lighthouse humidifier dumper has been adding the water to the tomato bucket outside the lighthouse. The garden is in full summer bloom. Visitors have enjoyed picking the last of the carrots and may of the onions. Thanks to a large yearly donation from the Point Loma gardening club we have lots of wonderful soil and things are happy. There are critters eating some of the produce but, hey everything needs to eat and it's a talking point with kids.

Pam thanks Amanda for her on going help and fantastic support. She is a joy. Also she wants everyone to know that Rudy has been a source of on going support. If it's helping me haul stuff or just very clever ideas. Wonderful man.

Lastly, Pam is keeping her fingers crossed that the garden will have pumpkins covering it in the fall. She and Greg started some pumpkins from seed. The ones that weren't eaten by the rabbits seem to be going strong. I see some tiny pumpkins starting.

Bob Sharp has been helping the natural science department with surveys and monitoring . They will see an increase in activity during the winter months when there are more bird surveys and tidepool monitoring. Protocol may change slightly as the former Chief of Natural Resources, Keith, has moved on to a regional position, leaving his position to be filled.

The greenhouse is managed by Patricia Simpson. A group of dedicated volunteers helps to water and propagate native plants. They have greatly expanded the nursery in the past year; moving their venture beyond the walls of the greenhouse and onto the surrounding property. There is even a small native plant garden surrounding the greenhouse. The growing efforts will be utilized during an increase in planting over the next year.