



ljams
NATURE CENTER

Volunteer

Manual

Updated January 2025

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Ijams Nature Center Volunteer Manual

Welcome

On behalf of Ijams Nature Center, welcome! As an Ijams volunteer, you are joining a group of dedicated people without whom Ijams could not keep its doors open. Ijams volunteers serve in many ways, and whether you are helping setup for special events, answering questions at a pop-up booth, or clearing invasive plants to make room for native plants, your efforts are crucial and deeply appreciated!

At Ijams Nature Center, staff and volunteers work together to achieve the organization's mission. Just as you support the staff in our work, it is also our responsibility to support you. So, please do not hesitate to come to us with problems, concerns, ideas, or suggestions.

This volunteer manual provides important and helpful information about your role as a volunteer at Ijams. At any time, changes may be made to this document, and updated copies will be made available accordingly. We are excited to have you as part of our team!

Ijams Nature Center History

Most information taken from Paul James' book, Ijams Nature Center, 2010. Find this book in the Ijams gift shop for additional reading.

1881: Ross Marble Co paid \$100 for a plot of land to open a TN marble quarry.

1892: Ross Marble Co merged with Republic Marble Co; it became known locally as Mead's Quarry (in honor of company's first president). Mead's Quarry employed over 100 workers, many of whom lived onsite, and was a separate operation from the adjacent John M. Ross Quarry. Both companies would later be hit hard by the Great Depression.

Early 1900s: Harry Ijams, widely known as HP, was a young commercial artist when he married Alice. They met and married in Knoxville, then lived in Florida briefly after their wedding.

1910: After the birth of their first daughter, Elizabeth, HP and Alice purchased a 20-acre piece of riverfront property on the outskirts of town, and they moved their one-story house from Sevierville Pike to their new property on Island Home Avenue.

Fun Fact: When the Ijams family purchased the farm, there was a strange stipulation regarding an elderly pair of ladies living on the property in a rustic cabin. The contract stipulated that they should be allowed to live there the rest of their lives, then ownership of the cabin would revert to the Ijams family.

1910s: Three more daughters, Josephine, Mary, and Martha came along, and HP expanded the house to accommodate the growing family. Over the next 50 years, they added ponds, lily pools, greenhouses, bird sanctuary, gardens, trails, and transformed Ijams into an outdoor showplace that they shared with hundreds of visitors.

1920s: They bought a greenhouse and Alice, an avid horticulturist, began a nursery business specializing in flowers. HP was a resident illustrator for the Knoxville News Sentinel and also worked as a freelance artist.

1924: Under HP's leadership, the East Tennessee Ornithological Society was founded. HP served as the first president and meetings frequently took place at the Ijams house. HP later became the statewide president.

Life at the farm: The Ijams family had a pretty typical farm life, complete with a milk cow, donkey, barn with a hayloft, and other outbuildings. The homestead was fairly self-sustaining; they grew corn and other crops to feed the family, and whatever wasn't for family use went to enhancing wildlife habitat. HP paid special attention to using native plants and landscaping in such a way to attract wildlife, especially birds. They were one of the first families in Knoxville to use living Christmas trees, which they planted in the front yard after the holidays. ("All have thrived and developed except the ones that HP accidentally killed with a blow-torch in one of our periodic onslaughts against poison ivy and honeysuckle." -Alice) Fearful of the current, HP preferred that his daughters not swim in the Tennessee River, so he constructed a spring-fed pond (originally called Lake Avis). After the girls had grown, Alice planted Egyptian lotus (water lily) which covered the entire surface, attracting visitors from all over town. Ijams visitors today can still enjoy this site, now referred to as The Lotus Pond.

1930s and 1940s: All of the girls were raised to have an appreciation for the natural world and conservation. Elizabeth attended UT, and was hired as director of Knoxville Girl Scouts. She spent her career in upper and senior level positions across the nation with Girl Scouts. Jo attended UT, worked a couple odd jobs before marrying Albert George Kern Jr., and went on to serve as conservation chairman for the Knoxville Garden Club, advocate for state parks, and serve as a board member for Ijams Nature Center. Mary, like all the girls, was very active with Girl Scouts growing up, until her untimely death at 16. Martha graduated from UT with a bachelor's degree in Home Economics and a masters in early child development; she taught for more than 20 years at Maryville High School. She was also one of the first to have a wedding at Ijams.

During this time, Alice served as president of the Knoxville Botanical Garden and the Knox County Council of Garden Clubs. She was active in 3 local clubs.

1954: HP passed away.

1950s: Jo Ijams Kern moved with her family back to the farm to help care for it. She became an active member of Knoxville Garden Club, which conceived the idea of preserving Ijams as a public nature park.

1964: Alice passed away, and efforts began to turn Ijams into a public nature park.

1965: The city took ownership of the original 16 acres. Restoration efforts began on the house and facilities, including outdoor restrooms and a new parking lot.

1968: Ijams Nature Park was dedicated on April 18, and the family legacy of environmental appreciation continued as **volunteers** led nature and wildlife education programs for the public.

1976: The first Board of Directors was formed and the center gained formal nonprofit status with the ability to raise revenue in order to expand programs and improve facilities. The original homestead was the headquarters for operations.

1978: The first executive director was hired and formal educational programs began.

Late 1970s: By this time, operations at the neighboring quarries had ceased, and the properties were essentially abandoned and became illegal dumping grounds and a hotspot for criminal activity.

1990: An additional 63 acres, adjacent to the Ijams Homesite was purchased.

1995: Construction began on the new Visitor Center. This building was completed in 1997.

1998: The River Boardwalk was completed and opened to the public.

2001: The Mead's Quarry property (roughly 55 acres) was acquired, and clean-up efforts began in January, 2002. This property was purchased by Knox County, to be managed by Ijams.

2005: Ijams opened Mead's Quarry to the public.

2007: The John M. Ross Quarry was donated to Ijams.

2010: That quarry was opened to the public as Ijams celebrated its 100th anniversary.

2017: An additional 13.4 acres adjacent to the Ijams Quarries was purchased, bringing the total acreage to about 315.

Ijams has been summed up as a botanical garden, nature park, arboretum, and bird sanctuary all in one. We continue the Ijams family's vision and legacy by offering environmental educational programming and maintaining Ijams Nature Center as a space for all people to interact with the natural world.

Ijams Mission & Vision

Mission: To encourage stewardship of the natural world by providing an urban greenspace for people to learn about and enjoy the outdoors through engaging experiences.

Vision: Through direct experience with the outdoors all people will appreciate and care for the natural world.

Nonprofit Status

Ijams Nature Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a Board of Directors composed of volunteers from the community. We rely on donations, memberships, and grants to maintain the trails, care for our Education Animals, and offer outstanding educational programs that inspire visitors to become better stewards of the natural world. In fact, nearly half of Ijams' annual operating budget comes from members, donors, corporations, foundations, and special fundraising events.

Goals of the Volunteer Program

1. To further the Ijams mission of encouraging stewardship of the natural world.
2. To expand Ijams' capacity beyond the work of paid staff.
3. To equip volunteers with the training and tools they need to perform their volunteer duties with ease and confidence.
4. To provide volunteers with opportunities for personal and professional development, wherein they gain new skills and have valuable experiences.
5. To have fun!

Core Values of Ijams

Ijams Nature Center achieves its mission through a deep commitment to:

- Perpetuating the Ijams spirit and family legacy
- Practicing what we preach and leading by example
- Intellectual and spiritual discovery. Truthful and valuable education philosophy
- Innovation and quality
- Sustainable land ethic, earth friendliness, and promoting respect for nature in all practices
- Accessibility, welcoming all people

Policies & Expectations

Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

Ijams Nature Center is committed to providing a working environment free from discrimination and harassment of its volunteers and employees based on race, color, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin including physical, cultural, or linguistic characteristics, ancestry, disability (physical, mental, or sensory), medical condition, veteran status, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by applicable state and federal law. The Organization will not tolerate any type of discrimination or harassment of Ijams volunteers or employees by anyone, including any owner, officer, supervisor, coordinator, co-worker, contractor, vendor, customer, client, volunteer, or visitor of the Organization.

Accessibility

It is Ijams Nature Center's policy to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable laws that prohibit discrimination against qualified volunteers and applicants with respect to any terms, privileges, or conditions of volunteer service because of a disability. This policy applies to all personnel, employment, and volunteer management practices. Ijams Nature Center endorses the mandate of the ADA and other applicable laws to remove barriers which prevent qualified individuals with disabilities from enjoying the same volunteer opportunities that are available to persons without disabilities.

In accordance with the ADA, reasonable accommodations will be provided to qualified disabled applicants and volunteers with known limitations and who require an accommodation for their disability in order to perform their essential job functions, unless such accommodation would cause an undue hardship.

Disabled volunteers and applicants are invited to identify any reasonable accommodation that would enable them to safely perform the essential functions of the position. Information regarding any disability and other medical information will be kept confidential in accordance with the ADA and retained in separate medical files.

Volunteer Onboarding Fee

Volunteers who would like to serve in an ongoing commitment must pay a \$15 onboarding fee. This fee helps to cover the cost of background checks, volunteer t-shirts, and the volunteer management software.

Background Checks

Ijams will perform background checks on all new volunteer applicants who serve in ongoing commitments where applicable. Acceptance of new volunteers is conditional on acceptable background check reports. Background checks are performed to promote a safe working environment and maintain a high-quality workforce. A satisfactory background check is defined as the absence of a criminal history record that bears a significant relationship to the applicant's or volunteer's suitability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position while not increasing Ijams' liability. Volunteers who refuse to submit to such public records checks will be refused assignment.

Age Requirements

Regular, ongoing volunteer positions have a minimum age limit of 16 years old (volunteers who are 16 to 17 years old need signed permission from their parent or guardian). Please see the volunteer position descriptions for specific age minimums.

Volunteers under 16 years of age have the opportunity to volunteer for specific one-time events (some special events, garden and grounds workdays). Ijams requires that volunteers younger than 16 years remain under the supervision of their parent/guardian or other responsible adult such as a teacher, or scout master.

Fitness for Duty

Any potential volunteer who indicates that they are under the care of a physician for either physical or psychological treatment may be asked to present a Fitness for Duty Medical Certification completed by their physician as to their ability to satisfactorily and safely perform their volunteer duties. Volunteers under a course of treatment which might affect their volunteer work will not be accepted without a written Fitness for Duty Medical Certification of suitability completed by their physician. A Fitness for Duty Medical Certification form may be obtained from the Volunteer Manager.

Any volunteer who, after acceptance and assignment by Ijams Nature Center, enters a course of treatment which might adversely impact the performance of the volunteer should immediately consult with the Volunteer Manager.

Ijams Nature Center does not discriminate against any qualified applicant or volunteer with a known physical, mental, or sensory disability in any Volunteer Program practice including, but not limited to, work assignment, training, and termination. Ability, not disability, is the basis of all Volunteer Program decisions. Any volunteer with disability-related questions or discrimination complaints, is encouraged to contact the Volunteer Manager or the coordinator of their team.

Dress Code

The dress code for Ijams Nature Center is very relaxed due to the nature of our operations and programs. Volunteers are expected to dress consistent with good hygiene, safety and appropriate attire whenever volunteering. Volunteers are also reminded that some visitors, participants, fellow volunteers, and staff have chemical/odor sensitivities to tobacco smoke, perfumes, colognes, and candles. It is important that volunteers be considerate of these sensitivities and limit or omit the use of potentially offensive products.

Specific dress codes vary between volunteer positions (example - long pants and long sleeves are preferable for trail work to prevent contact with poison ivy). Volunteers serving on an ongoing basis (those who have paid the onboarding fee) will receive an Ijams Volunteer t-shirt; they are strongly encouraged to wear their volunteer t-shirts anytime they are actively volunteering at Ijams. Volunteer shirts should only be worn when acting in a volunteer capacity for Ijams, as volunteers represent Ijams while wearing this shirt. Volunteers should also be prepared for forecasted weather conditions by dressing appropriately and are encouraged to contact their staff supervisor with any specific questions.

If volunteers report for work improperly dressed or groomed, their supervisor may instruct them to change clothes or to take other appropriate action.

Family/Friends at Volunteer Events

We understand that volunteers may want to have family and friends attend programs with which they are helping. It is our expectation that volunteers should not be distracted from their volunteer duties by the presence of family and/or friends. The following guidelines have been established for having guests participate in programs:

1. All guests must pre-register and pay following the age requirements and fees set up in Wix through the Ijams Calendar of Events.
2. If an event is full, then guests are not permitted to attend.
3. No guests under the age of 18 can attend with a staff member or volunteer unless they are accompanied by an additional (paying) adult.

Social Media Policy

This policy provides guidance for volunteer use of social media, which should be broadly understood for purposes of this policy to include social networking sites, blogs, message boards, chat rooms, online forums, and other sites and services that permit users to share information. Volunteers should avoid excessive use of personal social media sites during service hours. Volunteers are prohibited from using social media to violate any applicable state, federal, or local laws, policies, or regulations.

Personal use of social media should not be attributable to Ijams or a volunteer's job function at Ijams. Use of social media must be conducted in such a manner that a reader would not think that a volunteer is speaking for or on behalf of Ijams. If Ijams is listed as a volunteer's place of service on personal social media profiles, any information posted will be held to a higher level of scrutiny.

Personal use of social media must be in conformance with relevant portions of this handbook, laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, harassment and discrimination policies, confidentiality policies, ethics rules, standards of conduct, workplace violence, etc. Any information that is considered confidential shall not be released on any social media account.

Volunteers shall not use Ijams' logo on, or create any links to the Ijams website or social media pages from personal postings without the express consent of the Executive Director. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer position.

Standards of Conduct

The following conduct is prohibited and may lead to immediate and/or permanent dismissal.

- Drinking, taking, or possessing alcohol or illegal drugs during the course of volunteer duties or coming to any scheduled service under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Illegal activity including but not limited to underage drinking, underage smoking, illegal drug use, or contributing to underage drinking, smoking, or drug use
- Cursing, threatening, intimidating or gossiping about a visitor, Ijams staff member, or fellow volunteer
- Behaving in a reckless manner

- Falsification of personal records, volunteer application, or background check forms
- Unsatisfactory job performance or poor attitude
- Removing or borrowing Ijams property without prior permission
- Abuse of Ijams property
- Engaging in criminal conduct whether or not related to job performance
- Insubordination, including but not limited to failure or refusal to carry out the instructions of a supervisor
- Posting inappropriate personal information, blogs, messages, photos, or videos in public places including online areas such as Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking sites
- Other types of conduct injurious to security, personal safety, employee and volunteer welfare, and general operation

Other Responsibilities as an Ijams Volunteer

There are responsibilities that come with being an Ijams Volunteer. All of those involved in the relationship must have respect for one another and a desire to cooperate in meeting designated needs. Your responsibilities include:

- If you have feedback regarding another person, convey it to the Volunteer Manager or to your staff supervisor.
- Be prompt and reliable in reporting for scheduled work. Keep accurate records of your hours worked by logging them in GivePulse.
- Notify the Volunteer Manager or your staff supervisor as early as possible if you are unable to work as scheduled.
- Attend orientation and training sessions scheduled.
- Be considerate, respect the ability of the staff, and work as a member of the team.
- Carry out assignments in good spirit, and seek assistance if necessary.
- Accept Ijams' right to dismiss any volunteer for poor performance, including poor attendance.
- Communicate personal limitations- transportation needs, time constraints, etc.
- Provide feedback, suggestions, and recommendations to the Volunteer Manager and staff if these might increase the effectiveness of the program.
- Give written notice if you cannot continue in your volunteer position or if you are requesting a leave of absence from the program.
- Have the ability to work with a culturally diverse population of clients.
- Respect Ijams policies (e.g. Drugs and Alcohol, Sexual Harassment, etc.)

Your Rights as a Volunteer

The assets you bring to Ijams Nature Center are considerable. As a volunteer you have the right to:

- Receive accurate information about the agency
- Receive a clear, comprehensive job description
- Receive training and be appropriately assigned
- Do meaningful and satisfying work
- Be seen as belonging, through inclusion at meetings, social functions, etc.
- Be seen as a person and to be supported in your role
- Be safe on the job
- Have choices and feel comfortable about saying "no"
- Not be exploited

- Be consulted on matters that directly or indirectly affect you and your work
- Receive feedback on your work
- Be appreciated for your contribution
- Have your personal information be kept confidential
- Be trusted with confidential information if it is necessary in order to do your job

Scheduling, Attendance, Recording Hours

- Methods for scheduling volunteers will vary based on the volunteer opportunity. Please see the individual volunteer position descriptions for more details.
- Volunteers who need to be absent from a scheduled service time should inform their supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. Continual absenteeism may result in dismissal from volunteer service.
- All volunteers are expected to log their hours using the volunteer software, GivePulse.

Using GivePulse

GivePulse is the Ijams Volunteer Management platform which allows volunteers to view and manage their schedule, sign up for openings, update personal information, post and track their hours, and much more. Please visit the link below for an in depth tutorial for using GivePulse.

<https://support.givepulse.com/hc/en-us/articles/360025228094-Quick-Guide-for-Users-and-Volunteers>

Termination of Volunteer

In the event that an Ijams Nature Center Volunteer feels the need to terminate his/her assignment, the volunteer is expected to inform his/her volunteer manager a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to their next volunteer commitment.

Ijams reserves the right to limit the use of volunteers, adjust the hours of any volunteer, or to reject services as Ijams staff see fit, in order to best achieve the Ijams mission and policies. Grounds for termination may include, but are not limited to: unsatisfactory background check, failing to adhere to the policies and standards of conduct outlined in this handbook, and/or failure to perform the essential functions of the volunteer position.

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Safety

Our priority is to protect volunteers against job-site injury and illness, as well as minimize the potential interruption of operations. Each volunteer is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all volunteer activities. Volunteers must immediately report any unsafe condition to the Volunteer Manager or to their staff supervisor. Volunteers who violate safety standards, cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or fail to report or (where appropriate) remedy such situations, may be subject to termination from the volunteer program.

The following are some general safety rules to be followed for the protection of all volunteers:

- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many appliances or machines.
- Ask for assistance when lifting heavy objects or moving heavy furniture.
- Sit firmly and squarely in chairs that roll or tilt.
- Keep your work area clean and orderly, and the aisles clear.
- Watch out for the safety of fellow volunteers.
- Promptly report all unsafe or potentially hazardous conditions to the Volunteer Manager or to your staff supervisor.
- Carry a basic first aid kit, and/or know where you can locate first aid supplies. First aid kits are available at the Ijams Information Desk, the staff restroom, and the staff hallway (hung on the wall near the staff bathroom). We offer simplified first aid packs for all volunteers leading field trips. If you have first aid training, please carry one of these packs with you during field trips.
- Keep your cell phone on your person at all times, and make sure that your contact number listed on GivePulse is up to date.

If you have not been trained in first aid, please find a volunteer or staff member to assist with administering first aid. If first aid needs are beyond Ijams Nature Center staff abilities, they will contact 911 depending on the severity of the injury.

On-Site Emergency or Injury

In the case of accidents that result in injury of a visitor or program participant regardless of how insignificant the injury may appear, volunteers should immediately notify the Volunteer Manager and their Ijams Supervisor.

Fire Alarm

If the Nature Center fire alarm is sounding, please evacuate to the pavilion in front of the building. Remain on the plaza or lawn away from the building until an Ijams Nature Center staff member or the fire chief advises you that it is okay to return to the building.

Inclement Weather

Be aware of current weather conditions during volunteer opportunities, and be in contact with your staff coordinator regarding inclement weather plans. If you are away from the building and inclement weather occurs, report to your staff coordinator (at the Visitor Center or other meeting place as appropriate) as quickly and safely as possible.

Snow Emergency

In the event of a snow emergency, your supervisor or the Volunteer Manager will notify you by phone/email with details regarding cancelation or postponement of your shift.

Automobile Use

Employees and approved volunteers who have a current, valid driver's license and are approved by and covered under Ijams' insurance policy are permitted to operate Ijams vehicles and motorized equipment. For vehicle usage, a check out/in form can be found outside the Office and Finance Manager's office. This form must be completed for each instance that a company vehicle is used. Employees and approved volunteers are responsible for reporting immediately to a supervisor any damages incurred to any Ijams vehicle or equipment while under that employee's charge.

Generally, if an employee or volunteer receives a citation for any violation while operating an Ijams vehicle, that employee/volunteer will be responsible for paying any fine or penalty and may be subject to disciplinary action. Any employee/volunteer who receives a DUI, DWI, or other citation deemed inappropriate by the insurance company will be removed temporarily from the list of those authorized to operate an Ijams vehicle. The list of approved drivers will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with Ijams' automobile insurance policy renewal.

Visitor Accessibility

Ijams Nature Center welcomes all visitors to its facilities and field trips. We are committed to making all accommodations necessary to promote a welcome atmosphere at Ijams.

Below are some points to remember when communicating with people who have disabilities.

1. Speak directly to the person with a disability rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.
2. Offer to shake hands when introduced. People with limited hand use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands. Offering the left hand is an acceptable greeting.
3. When meeting someone with a visual disability, identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, identify the person to whom you are speaking.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions.
5. Treat adults as adults. Never patronize people in wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder. Address people with disabilities by their first names only if you are extending that same familiarity to all others.
6. Do not lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair. People in wheelchairs may treat their chairs as extensions of their bodies. This is same for people with service dogs. Never distract a work animal from their job without the owner's permission. You could put their person and/or the dog at risk.
7. Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or nod of the head. Never pretend to understand; instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.
8. Place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair or on crutches.
9. Tap a person with a hearing disability on the shoulder or wave your hand to get their attention. Look directly at the person and speak clearly slowly and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips. If so, face the light sources and keep your mouth visible. Never shout at a person. Speak in a normal tone of voice.
10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions that relate to a person's disability.

Important Phone Numbers

Brandy Cox – Volunteer Manager
bcox@ijams.org
(865) 577-4717 ext. 1013

Phone Etiquette

In some cases, Ijams staff may share their personal cell phone number with volunteers, and Ijams staff members have access to volunteer contact information listed on GivePulse. Cell phone numbers should be kept confidential and only used as needed. It is expected that both parties will be conscientious and respectful in deciding when a phone call on a personal cell phone is appropriate.

ACCEPTANCE OF ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

I FULLY UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE POLICIES OF THE IJAMS NATURE CENTER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AS OUTLINED IN THE ORIENTATION AND TRAINING SESSION AND POLICIES AND STATEMENTS PROVIDED IN THE IJAMS NATURE CENTER VOLUNTEER MANUAL.

I FURTHER AGREE TO REPRESENT IJAMS NATURE CENTER IN A PROFESSIONAL AND COURTEOUS MANNER WHICH REFLECTS THE ORGANIZATION'S KEY MESSAGES AND CORE VALUES.

I AGREE TO CONSULT WITH AN IJAMS NATURE CENTER STAFF PERSON SHOULD ANY SITUATION ARISE DURING MY SHIFT WHICH REQUIRES CLARIFICATION OR APPROPRIATE INPUT BEFORE MAKING A DECISION.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Volunteer Printed Name

Email Address

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE TO THE VOLUNTEER MANAGER.