

The Citizen Stewardship Initiative by Caroline VanIngen-Dunn, CVID Consulting Services, LLC

With the goal to foster increased awareness of and kindness to animals and their environment, and with the intent of providing their donors with a tangible opportunity to achieve this goal, the Arizona Community Foundation (ACF) has funded a 3-year grant to establish a Citizen Stewardship initiative.

This statewide initiative is comprised of seven organizations that are diverse geographically, by subject matter and by their target audiences, yet all have one common goal: to promote Citizen Stewardship.

Promoting Citizen Stewardship, as defined by these seven organizations, is to foster increased awareness of and kindness to animals and their environment. The participating organizations in this Coalition are:

Arizona Animal Welfare League www.aawl.org
Audubon Arizona <http://az.audubon.org/>
Grand Canyon Trust www.grandcanyontrust.org
Liberty Wildlife www.libertywildlife.org
The Phoenix Zoo www.phoenixzoo.org
Second Chance Center for Animals www.secondchancecenter.org
Tucson Audubon Society www.tucsonaudubon.org

Under the guidance of a facilitator, Caroline VanIngen-Dunn, these organizations have collaborated to develop a mission, objective and approach (an infrastructure), for promoting Citizen Stewardship.

Our Mission is to improve people's relationships with and understanding of our natural heritage, in particular animals and their habitat, so that everyone may lead more sustainable lifestyles. In particular, the Mission is to foster an atmosphere for citizens to:

- Be more empathetic and nurturing
- Recognize their impact on the environment, and
- Become committed to making a difference through willing and enthusiastic action to protect the environment.

The Objectives are to:

- Serve as a statewide study group that produces portable programs that promote Citizen Stewardship, and
- Develop a process that meets each individual's personal comfort level to becoming more Citizen Stewardship-minded.

The Approach that has been established to accomplish the mission and objectives is to:

- Develop unique programming
- Establish an internal network among the participating organizations, and
- Extend the activity to an external network.

In our approach to developing unique programming, we defined the requirements that best define a program that “effectively promotes citizen stewardship.” We then developed a program template that is used by each organization to describe their programs and determine their program’s “citizen stewardship-ness.” This same template will also be used by potential donors at the ACF to determine where their funds may best be utilized.

In our approach to establishing an internal network, we encouraged the seven participating organizations to partner with each other to jointly conduct programs. For the participating organizations, this approach encouraged collaboration, broadened program delivery, expanded audiences, and increased an awareness of synergy. In so doing, the audience of one organization becomes aware of its partnering organization and may expand its volunteering services.

Finally, in our approach to extending the activity to an external network, we plan to use the program template and internal network infrastructure with organizations beyond this initial statewide group of entities.

To demonstrate success, we have begun a rigorous evaluation process that will measure the number of:

- Participants who return to their original organization stating that they shared the information they learned from that organization.
- Participants receiving information from one organization about another organization and then participating in the other organization.
- Participants who participate in an urban program and then subsequently also participate in a wilderness program.
- Organizations that know what Citizen Stewardship is and then actually use the infrastructure established by this grant.
- Citizens who know there is a geographical map of Citizen Stewardship programs and organizations.

We are in the third year of the grant and hope to be able to demonstrate that the collaboration has fostered an increased awareness among its audiences to not only be kinder to animals and their environment, but to also encourage others to do the same.