

# **OSCAR SCHERER STATE PARK & NOKOMIS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT HAUNTED TRAILS 2013 VOLUNTEER GUIDE**

Thank you for joining Oscar Scherer State Park and Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department for our 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Haunted Trails 2013 Scream Team! This guide will outline important information regarding this frightfully fun and spooky event, and your role as a Scream Team Volunteer.

## **GENERAL VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS:**

Volunteering with Oscar Scherer State Park should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. As a volunteer, you will be filling an important niche at Oscar Scherer State Park. Not only are you a team-member and a representative of the Florida Park Service, your much appreciated efforts play a significant role in maintaining the beauty, safety, and overall function of our park.

While a volunteer is not considered to be an employee of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) or the Florida Park Service (FPS), a volunteer is considered to be a staff member, albeit non-paid. Consequently, volunteers are subject to the policies and minimum standards established for park personnel; each volunteer is held accountable for his/her actions and will be treated as any other park employee --- this encompasses all types of employee disciplinary actions, including termination. The impression that a park staff member makes is a lasting one and may be the only opportunity you will have at making it a positive one, so it is important for any volunteer to keep in mind and understand the expectations and policies of the Florida Park Service, as well as any additional policies and standards that a specific park has established.

In order to participate in the Florida Park Service's Volunteer Program (including one-time occasions), any individual that has not completed a Volunteer Application & Agreement Form within the last calendar year must complete and submit the required documents prior to beginning service. If you are a new Volunteer or are part of an organization that is volunteering as a group, the Volunteer Coordinator will provide you with the necessary documents. It is at the Volunteer Coordinator's and Park Management's discretion to accept or deny any volunteer application. In addition, each volunteer will be covered under Worker's Compensation, in the case that an injury on-site and on-duty occurs.

**NOTE:** If a near-injury or injury (regardless of how minor) does occur, it is imperative that the injured party notifies the Volunteer Coordinator or other park employee immediately. All incident reports must be filed within 24 hours of a sustained injury.

### **\*\*\*In case of an emergency, please follow the following procedures\*\*\***

- **In case of a life-threatening emergency, call 911. Follow-up by notifying park management (or any park employee) immediately.**
- **In case of a non-life-threatening emergency, notify a park employee immediately.**
- **The Ranger Station is open daily from 8:00am – Sunset: 941-483-5956.**

## HAUNTED TRAILS VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS:

Oscar Scherer State Park's Haunted Trails event aims at providing a safe and fun resource-based program that the whole community can enjoy, as well as providing volunteer opportunities to anyone interested in contributing their time and talents to scare and thrill willing park guests.

All Haunted Trails Scream Team members, regardless of assigned task(s) will be required to attend at least one scheduled volunteer briefing/orientation session. The times and dates for these orientations will be determined as the event dates grow nearer and each volunteer will be notified of these times and dates by the park's Volunteer Coordinator. In addition, all required documentation (Volunteer Application & Agreement) forms must be submitted prior to beginning service as a volunteer.

The safety of our visitors, volunteers and staff is of the utmost importance. Please refer to the following tips in order to ensure that you are providing the highest-quality level of entertainment in a safe and enjoyable manner:

- Please arrive to your assigned post(s) well-prepared and on-time. A designated volunteer parking area will be established, to which you will be directed upon arrival.
- Each volunteer must wear a volunteer name badge at all times while on-duty. Name badges will be distributed to each volunteer during the briefing/orientation sessions.
- Volunteers are permitted to wear all-black clothing and weather-appropriate clothing is recommended. Costumes, makeup, etc. will not be provided by the park. However, volunteers are encouraged to wear family-friendly (non-sexually suggestive) costumes.
- For safety, carry a flashlight to light your way. However, please avoid accidentally blinding visitors or other Scream Team members by always pointing the beam towards the ground. No open flames (torches, lighters, candles, etc.) are permitted.
- We are open rain or shine; however, the trails will be closed until further notice if lightning is present.
- Volunteers receive community service hours for the number of hours that they contribute. Volunteer Timesheets will be provided during the briefing/orientation sessions and must be submitted in order to have the hours officially recognized by the park.
- Acting in a haunted scene should be an enjoyable experience for all. People may scream, run, or become genuinely frightened. Enjoy your time with us during the Haunted Trails event, while remembering your safety as well as our visitors' safety, respectively.
- No smoking, consumption of drugs, or drinking alcohol is permitted at any time. Violators will be escorted off park property immediately and volunteer status will be terminated indefinitely.
- No foul or inappropriate language is permitted prior or during the operation of the event. Remember, you are representing the Florida Park Service and its family-friendly values.
- Please listen to all instructions provided by park personnel and Scream Team Coordinators; they are here to provide support and guidance, as well as ensure the overall safety and success of the event.
- Restrict your scary movements to the scary Haunted Trail. Some of the younger audience members may not be old enough to appreciate your scariness.
- Be careful when moving about trail areas, over railings, or hiding in dark areas. Plan your scary locations in daylight hours. Report any trail safety concerns (tripping hazards, low branches, pot-holes, etc.) to park personnel immediately.
- Beware the trail during night hours! By participating in the required briefing/orientation sessions, you will become familiar with the trail layout, which will reduce safety and logistical issues later.

- Be cognizant of visitors and your surroundings. Report and misconduct to park personnel, including your Scream Team Coordinator.
- Calmly but immediately notify park personnel and/or your Scream Team Coordinator of any injury or incident (to yourself or others). An incident report must be filed within 24 hours of an incident.
- Remain, at minimum, an arm's-length away from patrons at all times. As a Volunteer at the Haunted Trails event, you are not permitted to touch or come into any physical contact with any visitor at any time. If you should accidentally make contact with a visitor, apologize and step back. Should a visitor attempt to touch or accost you in an aggressive manner, please get a good description of that individual and immediately report the incident to a park employee.
- Do not follow or chase park visitors, as it may be interpreted as harassment.
- Do not carry sharp sticks or objects that could cause injury to your self or others.
- Do not stop visitors on the trail. Never step in front of a group or slow their progression through the Haunted Trail. Impeding the flow of the guided trail tours will increase the waiting time for those in line and may have a negative impact on the visitor's overall experience.
- Remain in character. All eyes are on you by your audience, even if they can't actually see you. Make sure that you perform for each and every group, no matter how small or large the group may be. Be sure that you remain in character and target your scariness towards the center of the group for maximum scare efficacy. Project yourself, including your movements and your voice. If you see one of your friends walking through the attraction, this is not the opportunity say hello or make small-talk. Scare the yell out of them all!
- You may not be able to scare every visitor walking through the Haunted Trail but do not get discouraged; you are, at the very least, entertaining them and providing them with a positive and unique experience.
- We have a zero tolerance policy in effect for any violation for the aforementioned rules. These rules have been developed to protect our volunteers, visitors and park personnel.

#### **AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EVENING:**

- When you arrive and after you park, you should head directly to your assigned area to set-up. Be sure to arrive on-time and check-in with your area's Scream Team Coordinator. If any changes or alterations to the night's events have been made, your area's Scream Team Coordinator will inform you when you check-in.
- Remember to bring drinking water and a snack, if necessary, for breaks between groups (there should be no more than 5 minutes between each Haunted Trail group).
- Have fun but remember that safety comes first!

#### **AT THE END OF THE EVENING:**

- After the trails close at 10:00pm, please remain in your assigned area in order to conduct a brief group meeting with your area's Scream Team Coordinator. This debriefing will provide immediate feedback that can be applied to the following evening's operations and will help identify if there were any safety or security issues, injuries, etc. Additionally, your area's Scream Team Coordinator will collect name badges of volunteers who have completed their service commitment for the event. For those who will be assisting with the Sunday break-down and clean-up, you can return your name badge then.

- Please remember to take any personal items with you when you leave. Even though the trails and event areas will be secured at the end of the night, the park is not responsible for any items that are lost, stolen, or damaged.
- Please dispose of any water bottles and/or snack wrappers that you might have brought with you to your area; help us reduce the amount of cleaning-up that may need to be done after the trails close. We also have recycling receptacles!
- Drive safely and thank you for your participation! We hope to see you next year!

## **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

### **Q – What time does the event begin and end?**

A – The Haunted Trail and Trick-or-Treat Trail will be open from 8:00pm to 10:00pm. At 10:00pm, no additional visitors will be permitted to enter the park. The park will close at 11:00pm to the public, at which point the event equipment and sets will be secured for the night. Volunteers will know ahead of time what hours they will be working; not all volunteers will need to remain until 11:00pm or later (this is determined on what a volunteer signs up to do).

### **Q – Can I take breaks or take a time-out from my duties?**

A – Our recommendation is that you bring a snack and drinking water with you to your assigned area(s). Should you have any issues through-out the evening, let us know and we will assist you to the best of our ability. However, remember that extra manpower during the event will be limited, as everyone will already be assigned to a specific area or task. Try to time breaks between trail tours (if you're part of the Haunted Trail Scream Team), with each interval lasting approximately 5 minutes. For roving or activity booth volunteers, it is recommended that breaks be taken only if there is coverage for your area or booth. No activity booth should be left unattended at any time.

### **Q – Is your Haunted Trail family-friendly?**

A – The Haunted Trail is not designed to be appropriate for children under the age of 13, although the discretion will be left up to the parent (any child under the age of 13 must be accompanied by a legal parent or guardian in order to enter the Haunted Trail). The effects and content of the trail are disturbing in nature and there is not fast way to exit the trail (although fire and emergency exits will be established for visitors and volunteers). Our volunteers are not prepared to structure their performances for younger and vulnerable audiences if they become genuinely frightened. For children under the age of 13 and for parents who do not wish for their children to participate in the Haunted Trail, there will be a non-scary Trick-or-Treat Trail featuring hands-on activities, including games and candy.

### **Q – Is the Haunted Trail ADA-accessible?**

A – Although we do our best to be ADA-accessible for all park areas, the Haunted Trail may not be entirely accessible. However, we will do our best to accommodate your needs. In addition, Oscar Scherer State Park does have one beach-accessible wheelchair available upon request (is on a first-come, first-served basis). Reservations for the wheelchair can be made by calling the park's main line at 941-483-5956. Additionally, the Trick-or-Treat Trail will be made ADA-accessible for the event.

### **Q – Can I bring my pet on the Haunted Trails?**

A – During normal business hours and operations, leashed and well-behaved pets are welcome to accompany our park guests in designated public use areas allowing pets. The entire pet policy standards for the FPS can be viewed by visiting: <http://www.floridastateparks.org/thingstoknow/petpolicy.cfm>