

# Comments and Suggestions for *Our Shared Forests Science Night*

## Science Night Committee

- If your PTA has opted to do the coffee fundraiser as part of the Science Night event, a separate committee and chair should be recruited to handle this facet.
- As with other committees, it is always easier when co-chairs share the responsibility for an event. *Recruiting volunteers and publicizing the event are crucial to your Science Night's success.*
- Involve your school faculty and staff early in the process. After you have the consent of your school administrator, consider visiting a faculty meeting to talk about the *Our Shared Forests Science Night* concept. You will need teacher support to promote the event to students and tie in the educational concepts in the classroom. With the support of your school's custodial staff, event logistics will be easier to handle.
- Any event will cost some amount of money. Read over the sections in this document about "Other preparations and considerations," "Passports," and "Live Animals" to prepare an estimate of your cost. Be sure that you have a line item in your PTA approved budget to cover these costs.
- Choose a date for your event with enough lead time for preparation. Avoid conflicts with school/ religious holidays and testing schedules. Monday, Tuesday or Thursday evenings usually work best. We recommend scheduling your Science Night either 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. or 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. so that families with young children are home by bedtime. Coordinating this event with one of your regularly scheduled PTA meeting nights might be beneficial.
- Contact the GA PTA Environmental Education Specialist to reserve the *Our Shared Forests Science Night* kit. Their contact information will be on the GA PTA website. We suggest that you reserve the kit as soon as you set your date and at least 3 months in advance. Several Science Night kits are available but are being used statewide.

## Publicity

- Advertise the event within the school and in the community. Make announcements; send home flyers, put up posters, include the event on your school/ PTA calendar and website. Send out invitations to your local School Board members! Your school system may also be willing to send out a press release. Solicit media coverage from neighborhood newspapers.

## Volunteer recruitment

- How many volunteers will you need to work the event? At least 50!
- You will need volunteers to set-up before the event, clean-up after the event and to help with the check-in of volunteers and event participants, crowd control and facilitating each of the activity stations.

- Plan to offer all of the OSF Science Night activity stations and divide the evening into two shifts so that parents can explore the Science Night activities with their children when they are not volunteering at a station.
- You could also recruit teenage volunteers from Girl Scout Troops to help with the face-painting station or high school Science or Beta Club members to help with facilitating activity stations. Many high schools require their students to perform community service hours.
- Train your volunteers! All of the explanations of the activity stations are available electronically. E-mail or send home a hard copy of the activity ahead of time so that the volunteer has a chance to read over and ask questions about their station. Offer a training before the event (or at a minimum before their shift begins) to all volunteers so that they feel comfortable with their assignment.
- **Every volunteer** should understand not only their station assignment but also a general overview of the event, how the passport works, and the schedule and location for special performances (puppet show or live animals).

### Other preparations and considerations

- The beauty of this Science Night is that most of the work has already been done for you! The background research, the display posters, the detailed instructions and reusable materials are all in the boxes that you will receive.
- You will need to make some copies and buy some consumables before the event. Read over the directions carefully. E-mail or call the PTA Environmental Education Specialist if you have any questions. Their contact information will be on the GA PTA website and on a card included in the Science Night kit.
- The activity stations have been planned carefully to use inexpensive and easily obtainable supplies. **We estimate the cost of black & white copies and consumable items that you need to purchase to be no more than \$100.00.**

### Passports

- Having the event Passport photocopied in color is a must! If your school does not have a color copy machine that you can use, find a sponsor to make the copies for you. Your school's business partner or the company of one of your PTA parents may be willing to make these color copies on cardstock paper for the event. (The Passport is printed four on a page.) Science Nights attract a large audience! If you have 300 people attending you should plan to have about 200 Passports (one per child; parents don't need them) or 50 colored printed sheets.
- Punching holes and stringing yarn in the Passport so that students can wear them around their neck will help each student keep track of their Passport during the event. You may want to consider punching the holes at the bottom of the Passport so that they are worn upside down. This will make it easier for the wearer to read their Passport as they visit the 9 main stations that contain Passport questions/clues.

## Microscopes

- If your school does not own dissecting microscopes, you can probably borrow them from the high school in your area. The high school's science club may also be willing to provide volunteers to set up the microscopes and supervise their use at this station. (You will need 6 microscopes for viewing all of the specimens.) This station is optional.

## Decorations

- Create the atmosphere of a forest in the entryway to your Science Night. Paper vines and leaves and perhaps the sounds of the rainforest birds playing in the background will set the mood for the fun (and learning) that awaits your students!
- Decorations could also be made by students as part of their rainforest studies, OSF curriculum activities or as an art project and displayed in the hallways in advance of the Science Night...setting the scene for the entire student body prior to the event.
- Tables for Science Night activities could be covered with brown paper for consistency (and ease of clean up).

## Live Animals

- Although live birds are NOT included as a station in the *Our Shared Forests* Science Night kit, having live animals is certainly a draw for students and adults to attend your event. Schools that have piloted the OSF Science Night highly recommend including live birds as part of the program but this will require funding.
- We cannot endorse any of the following organizations and certainly this is not an extensive list. You may be able to find a local bird rehabilitator, falconer or local nature center that could provide a live bird presentation for your event.

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Chattahoochee Nature Center | <a href="http://www.chattnaturecenter.com/">www.chattnaturecenter.com/</a> |
| Hawk Talk                   | <a href="http://www.hawktalk.org/">www.hawktalk.org/</a>                   |
| Rock Eagle 4-H Center       | <a href="http://www.rockeagle4h.org/">www.rockeagle4h.org/</a>             |
| Zoo Atlanta                 | <a href="http://www.zooatlanta.org/">www.zooatlanta.org/</a>               |

- Scheduling three 20-minute live bird presentations during your 90-minute Science Night should accommodate all of your participants for a reasonable amount of money. Estimate at least \$250 for the cost of this service but be sure to call well in advance of the event to confirm availability and actual costs.
- The live bird presentation will need to be in a separate room/ building from the rest of the Science Night activities. Consult your presenter for suggestions of where to locate this. Space and noise level are considerations.
- Consider also having other live animals – insects, arachnids, reptiles and amphibians – on display at your Science night.

## **Puppet Show**

- There are two versions of the puppet show. The long version could be used as an assembly program prior to the Science Night to introduce the *Our Shared Forests* concept to students and get excitement brewing for the event itself.
- The short version of the puppet show can be used as a station at the Science Night. All of the puppets are provided with the script. The puppet stage is NOT provided but can be easily made using poles and fabric. A simple diagram for its construction is included with the script.
- Scheduling three 20-minute puppet show presentations during your 90-minute Science Night should accommodate all of your participants.
- The puppet show should be in a separate room from the rest of the Science Night activities.

## **Setting up for the Science Night**

- An example diagram of tables is included in the *OSF Science Night Manual* to help you with the number and location needed for activity stations to optimize the flow of your event.
- The majority of the Science Night activities can be set up in a school cafeteria or gymnasium OR if this is not possible, activity stations can be set up in individual classrooms.
- Be sure to provide trash cans for waste collection!
- Photos and explanations for the set-up of each station are included in the Science Night kit.
- We recommend that if using the puppet show or live animal performance at your Science Night, you locate these activities in a separate room/ building from the other activity stations. Schedule and publish the performance times so that event participants can plan their time between these special performances and the other Science Night activities.
- Placing the Migratory Bird Hats activity close to the entry of your Science Night event will allow students to enjoy wearing their hat during the event.
- The Migration Game activity is best played in a separate room or down a hallway. This activity requires more space than most activities.
- The Bird Habitat Mural activity can be done down a hallway.
- Directional signs and a schedule showing participants where to go for the activities and special performances would be helpful. An example is attached.

## **At the end of the event**

- Collect evaluations from the participants and volunteers as they leave.
- Clean up, returning borrowed school equipment and tables to their proper places.
- Thank the volunteers, faculty and staff for their support.
- Return the *Our Shared Forests* Science Night kit to the GA PTA Environmental Education Specialist with your feedback. We want to know how your Science Night went. Please send us your suggestions and comments.