



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



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FCPA Employee Wins National Interpretive Award

Kylie A. Starck of Arlington, Virginia, has been named the recipient of the prestigious 2016 Outstanding New Interpreter award from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). Starck is the senior interpreter at Huntley Meadows Park in Alexandria, Virginia.

The NAI Outstanding New Interpreter Award is presented annually to one person who demonstrates a recognized potential in interpretation, assumption of leadership roles, creativity in programming or facility development, and a commitment to the profession of interpretation.

Starck, 29, graduated from George Mason University in January 2011 with a Bachelor of Science and joined the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) in 2012 as a roving interpreter. She became one of the agency's few roving interpreters to double in both cultural and natural resources, working both at Colvin Run Mill Historic Site and for the Meaningful Watershed Environmental Education program, which gives seventh graders field experience while teaching the importance of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Starck has earned certification as a merit badge counselor and as a Certified Interpretive Guide. She joined Huntley Meadows in June 2012 as a part-time naturalist/interpreter, and within three years was named the site's full-time senior interpreter. She oversees interpretation at Huntley Meadows and Historic Huntley, a 19th-century house of historic significance that sits just outside the park's main entrance.

Starck has pioneered, created and led nature birthday parties, tot programs, and week-long nature camps at Huntley Meadows, and has raised the park's involvement in designated national day events, such as Kids to Parks Day and the inaugural National Salamander Day. "Her creativity and excellence in interpretation expanded program visitation and eventually led to a diversification of interpretative program offerings," said Site Manager Karen Sheffield.

The number of schoolchildren attending programs at the park has increased by 50% over the past year. In 2015, Starck ran eight half-day camps with 100 children.

Starck is a key staffer in Teachers in Parks, a training program designed to give teachers tools they need to safely and actively engage students in nature through parks that border their respective schools. She has worked with the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park to create a financial assistance program that has aided more than 300 students in Title 1 schools, and in creating a 'Kids to Camp' program that provides financial assistance for children of in-need families to attend camps. After one of her camps, a parent wrote to the park that "the camp instills great environmental stewardship & builds character & curiosity & respect for our natural environment –Bravo!" She added, "What a great experience! Thank you for making a difference."

The award will be presented on November 11, 2016, during the NAI National Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas.

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