

## **General Information for Visiting School Staff**

The special experience that is created at Red Gate Farm relies upon a close collaboration between you, the visiting staff, and all those that comprise the Red Gate Farm community. Working with you is hugely rewarding for all of us here at the farm, and we feel a sense of true partnership with you right from the start. We look forward to working alongside you to provide a rich and full program for the children that you have brought here. We will therefore be gratefully asking you to help out with a few things...

### **Forms and Information**

We count on you to have a relationship with the children you are bringing, and to be largely responsible for their emotional and physical well-being while they are here. To this end, please be certain to bring up-to-date versions of the medical release forms that your school requires for field trips. Specific to this trip, please find out from parents the following:

1. if a child has any allergies (food or otherwise), physical limitations, or other differences that might prevent them from working on a farm or around large animals;
2. if a child has any medications that are necessary for the trip (and please designate a member of your staff that will be responsible for holding and administering these meds);
3. if a child has any sleep/nighttime issues such as sleepwalking or frequent trips out of bed.

### **Emergency Planning**

Our staff are certified in First Aid/CPR, but it is helpful to know if there are any similar certifications/skill-sets among the visiting staff group.

There will be an emergency point person from our staff available at all times. We also ask that the visiting staff group establish a point person of their own to clarify communication in the event of an emergency. The visiting point person may likely be the senior staff person, or the staff person with the greatest amount of emergency training.

Please review the enclosed "Visiting Staff Schedule" and anticipate filling it out at the start of your visit.

### **Role of Visiting Staff**

Your visit should be as rewarding for you as it is for your students. Visiting Staff come, not only to lead their students, but to participate in the farm visit experience. Wherever possible we ask that you actively engage in the program with your students.

In particular, we rely on visiting staff during scheduled free times and during evening routines/bedtimes. At these times, RGF staff will not necessarily be present, and we rely on visiting staff to help the students work within the community guidelines established in our Community Meeting. It is advised that a bedtime plan be pre-conceived, allowing the students a chance to transition from an evening activity into a quiet evening routine. Once the students are in bed, visiting staff members are responsible for them through the nighttime hours.

### **General Farm Rules**

Upon arrival, we will share the farm rules and expectations with the students and you. However, Visiting Staff should be aware of the following:

- 1.) tobacco and alcohol are not permitted
- 2.) food brought from home goes into storage after lunch, and is returned upon departure
- 3.) students are not permitted to use the farm phone or to call home
- 4.) additional outside guests or visitors are generally not permitted
- 5.) staff should not be alone with a student - we use the buddy-system

### **Other Bits and Pieces**

You should arrive prepared with a list organizing the students into three roughly equal groups for their work on the farm. Additionally you should prepare cabin-tent assignments for students and staff (there are four beds in each tent - twelve tents total).

Groups participating in activities at Red Gate Farm give their permission for photographs and/or video to be taken for use by Red Gate Farm and used for marketing purposes and presentations. If parents, teachers or students do not wish their images to be used, please inform us ahead of your visit so that we may respect these requests.

Here are some additional policies and recommendations we make based on our past experiences:

- 1.) Students are not allowed to call home and check-ins with parents are discouraged. This will make it easier for you to help students who are feeling homesick or challenged with spending the night at the farm. If a parent has an emergency message they can call the farm office (413) 625-9503 and we will relay it to school staff.
- 2.) Talk to your students ahead of time about their interests, anxieties and ideas about their farm visit. We are happy to answer any questions you cannot answer yourself!
- 3.) Visiting staff do best if they are qualified teachers or group leaders. Parent volunteers are wonderful, but face the challenge of being objective and allowing their own child to independently experience the farm.
- 4.) Ensure your students bring the things on their pack list (they are all important) and leave everything else at home (it only becomes a distraction). If you need assistance acquiring items, please contact us for help. **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE PERMITTED FOR STUDENT USE AND WILL BE COLLECTED.**

Lastly... YES we have delicious coffee and tea service available at all times for visiting staff!!!

We are so grateful to you for making this trip possible for your students and, indeed, for us. We look forward to having a tremendous time!!