For A Better Me
Kirk Carter Mona

When I wake up in the morning I take a deep breath and air from the room flows into my lungs. Twenty percent of the air is oxygen and some of it flows from my lungs to my blood. Encased in red blood cells, it spreads to my brain where I need it to get my thoughts going for the day.

Carbon dioxide, a byproduct of my body’s systems, enters the blood from hard working cells and is sped off to the lungs where it is expelled after an early morning yawn.

For breakfast, I have an apple. This chewed apple takes a journey similar to the oxygen, entering my body, being converted into energy, skin and hair. Each of these things also leaves my body at some point either as heat, or dust or hair in my sink as I shave.

As the apple shrinks, bite by bite, I ponder its life. It is much like my own. It starts out small, growing from few cells into many. It is soft and delicate inside with an incredible skin that protects it from disease and weather. It takes in nutrients from the tree like I take in nutrients from the world.

Eventually, the apple falls from the tree and returns to the earth that created it. It slowly breaks down into the soil and feeds the tree that continues a cycle begun millions of years ago. Luckily, I’ve managed to avoid that last part so far.

This apple, whose core I am now nibbling at, is considered nature. By this I mean there is no separation between the tree, the apple, and the soil that supports growth and reclams all in the end. These things are all nature.

Whether the apple is on the tree or on the ground below, it is still an inseparable part of a whole. It is part of the cycle of growth, death and re-birth of the tree and it is part of a greater cycle of nature.

When the apple ends up as my breakfast instead of on the ground am I any less a part of that natural cycle of growth, death and re-birth?

I’ve surely been led to think I am somehow separate. I was taught that the oxygen in the air is part of nature while the oxygen in my cells is part of me. Nature was defined as those things around me so I was taught to define my self largely in terms of where nature ends.

Clearly this is far from the truth. I can no more grow myself without nature than grow an apple without a tree.

The separation between human and nature is one of theoretical convenience born of a burning desire to define self. How liberating it is, though, to realize self can be so much larger and grand than the bonds of your skin.

When people ask why I do the work I do work for a better, healthier environment I have to admit a partially selfish motive. I’m doing it for a better, healthier me.
Thank you to our Day Camp Volunteers!

Thank you so much to the 22 volunteers who helped with summer camps at Lowry this summer! They are: Charlotte and Sylvia Becker, Tom LeMay, Rebecca Campbell, Logan and Austin Anderson, Grace and Mason Butzow, Lilia Johnson, Ella Paulsen, Grant Geske, Jacob Schramm, Carter Stenzel, Summer Donabauer, Sophia Delgado, Jacob Bridge, Alaina Fisher, Lukas Charbonnet, Wayne Olson and Carson Roehl. They dressed up as pirates and other characters. They helped kids in so many ways while hiking, paddling, biking, etc. We couldn’t do it without them. Here are some highlights.
Volunteer Opportunities

To sign up for volunteer opportunities, call 763-694-7650 or email us at LowryNC@threeriversparks.org

HOPKINS SCHOOLS FAMILY OPEN HOUSE
Sunday, September 15, 12-4pm
• Set up & clean up
• Greet participants
• Help with activity stations
• We need about 4-5 volunteers
Email Elise at elise.bushard@threeriversparks.org

WALK WHEN THE MOON IS FULL: Snake Moon
Sunday, October 13, 7:30 – 9pm
• Assist instructor Kirk in greeting guests and helping participants on the hike.

LOWRY’S ENCHANTED FOREST HALLOWEEN
Saturday, October 26, 4:30 pm-9:30 pm
(event time 5:00-9:00pm)
We need help with the following:
• Set up & clean up
• Crafts & games
• Greeters
• Live Raptors
• Costumed Characters
• Cookie decorating
We need help with all of the things listed above, but with the Costumed Characters in particular. The Trick or Treat trail with the costumed characters is a highlight of the event that we hope to make even better this year.

PAINT AND GRAZE
Saturday, November 23, 1:30-4:30pm
• Assist instructor Laurel in set up painting stations, refilling paint supplies during class, helping participants with other needs

SCHOOL GROUP PROGRAM ASSISTANT
Weekdays during school year
Primarily between 9:00am -3:00pm
Work with naturalist staff to lead specific activities for school children.
Training will be provided for interested volunteers.

REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN CARE ASST
Weekly on Thursdays between 9:00am and 4:00pm
• Provide food and water
• Help keep tanks clean for resident toads, turtles, salamanders and snakes.
Training will be provided for interested volunteers.

COMING IN WINTER
NATURE CENTER HOSTS NEEDED!
Saturdays and Sundays in Winter
9-12:30 Saturdays
12:30-4 Saturdays and Sundays.
Call or email to inquire or see at:
https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090e4aa9ac2aaafa7-winter1
• Help distribute rental snowshoes, give brief instruction to snowshoers, unlock and manage kicksled fleet and tend lobby fires.

POLAR BEAR PICNIC EVENT
Saturday, Feb 2, 11:30—4:30pm
Don’t let winter get you down, come outside and play!
• Check In and Greeters
• Raptors
• Snowshoes, Kicksleds, Snowsnakes, and Ice Golf
• Quinzhee and Sledding Hill Monitors
• Hot Chocolate, Bonfire, and Preschool activity stations and Craft attendants

VALENTINE’S DAY DINNER AND CANDLELIT WALK
Saturday, February 11
4:30—9:30pm, lasagna dinner included
• Greeter/Host (1) - Greet and seat guests
• Servers (2-3 people) - fill water glasses, open wine bottles, and help clean up the nature center when dinner is complete - no food serving this year!
• Outdoor fire and candle tender (1-2 people) - Start and maintain fire outdoors, put out & light votives along a short trail, & pick up at the end of the event.

SCHOOL GROUP KICKSLED PROGRAM ASSISTANT
Weekdays during school year
Primarily between 9:00am -3:00pm
Unlock kicksleds and move them out onto the lake. Greet classes. Move kicksleds back onto rack at the end of school group. Typically a 2 hour time block. Training will be provided for interested volunteers.
Fall Phenology

SEPTEMBER
White-throated sparrows can be seen migrating through the Twin Cities during the second week of September. Listen for their distinct call that sounds like “O Canada, Canada, Canada!” First frosts can occur as early as the first part of September.

OCTOBER
Although most monarch butterflies can be seen migrating south in September, some may still migrate in October with the 15th being the latest date on record. Trees in the Twin Cities hit peak color that first or second week of October; average peak date is Oct.9 for the past decade.

NOVEMBER
The month typically begins as if it were part of autumn, but by the end looks and feels like winter. Late migrants such as gulls, coots and red-winged black birds may be seen. Lakes start to freeze over in November.

Check out this interesting website:
http://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/page(flowers-by-name)