

National Hispanic Environmental Council



INVITATION LETTER TO NEW YORK CITY INSTITUTE ROLE MODELS

Dear _____ :

On behalf of the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC) **we would like to invite you to become a volunteer “Role Model” at NHEC’s upcoming 4th Annual “New York City Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute”**. Your experience as an environmental professional, as well as your strong commitment to diversity, makes you an ideal candidate. We hope you will join us at the Institute.

The Institute will be held July 6–July 12, 2009, at several parks in the New York City area run by the National Park Service, including Gateway National Park, Ellis Island National Park, and Fire Island National Seashore on Long Island. The Institute is an intensive, science-based, residential, highly educational 7 day program for talented teens (especially Latino/minority youth) aged 16–18.

The Institute is being funded by the Northeast Region of the National Park Service, and will be conducted by both NPS and NHEC. The Institute is designed to create the environmental leaders of tomorrow, especially in the National Park Service, by introducing youth to a variety of environmental, natural resource, historical, and cultural topics. It is also designed to provide information on the many college and career opportunities in the environment, and to urge students to pursue these careers in the future. **The Institute is open to all**, but Latino youth are especially urged to apply, given the severe under-representation of Latinos in environmental fields and in NPS. The NYC Institute is based on NHEC's national Institute we have held each summer for the last seven years in New Mexico.

For students selected, NHEC will provide a full scholarship that will pay all major costs to attend the 7 day program, including local transportation, meals, and other educational materials. There is no fee to apply, and only a \$15 registration fee for a student if selected. There is also a job component to the Institute. Post Institute, students can be hired by NPS to work at parks in NYC for the rest of the summer.

A major element of the Institute is the active participation of Latino and other minority “role models”. These role models are like you—working professionals from every environmental and natural resource field. Confirmed role models include park rangers, superintendents, wildlife biologists, hydrologists, environmental engineers, toxicologists, geologists, firefighters, law enforcement officers, historians, archeologists, lawyers, administrators, and more.

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Currently, most environmental education programs for minority youth do not feature minority role models. The Institute seeks to correct this omission by having role models participate whom Latino and other minority youth can relate to. Students will have their “own” to be inspired by, to learn from, and who have a success story to tell. In this way, the message to the students will not only be clear, but believable—“**I made it in this field, and so can you**”.

We are asking you to join us to share your environmental knowledge, career/life experiences, and your heritage with the students. Through the Institute, you can play a major role in helping change a young person’s life, and steering them to a rewarding career in an arena where—as you know—they are sorely needed.

As a role model volunteer, we ask that you spend at least half a day with the students. You can also spend more than 1 day (or more!), if your schedule will permit. Together with NHEC’s paid instructors, you will help the students learn the Institute’s curriculum—essentially, to complement and supplement the training students receive. However, please do not just “drop by” for an hour and then depart. Only by fully interacting with students for some time can role models truly have an impact.

Each day, a number of role models, all with different backgrounds, will be at the Institute. Because of this, we will review in advance your resume, time availability, the requirements of the curriculum, and how many role model volunteers we receive for each topic. Our staff will call to schedule your visit, coordinate your role, and integrate your knowledge into the curriculum. Of course, we will do our best to work within your schedule and time availability during July 6–July 12.

NHEC has funding to subsidize a limited number of role models; typically, these role models come from small non-profit organizations. However, the vast majority of role models obtain support from their employers to cover their costs to the Institute. If you can do the same, it would help NHEC and the students a great deal. If you are from out of town, costs at the Institute will not exceed federal (or other) per diem rates for the New York City area.

We hope you will join us for the Institute. **To volunteer, complete the attached “Role Model Form” and mail or fax it to us.** Please be sure to read the attached Fact Sheet, etc. for more information.

Please share this material with other colleagues who may also want to volunteer. In addition, feel free to tell interested students about the Institute. They (or you) can obtain complete application information by calling NHEC at 703-683-3956, or by going to our web page at www.nheec.org. See you in New York!

Sincerely,

Roger Rivera
President, NHEC

Manuel Hernandez
Chairman, NHEC