Ventana Wilderness Alliance

Youth in Wilderness Field Assistant
Organization/Agency: Ventana Wilderness Alliance
Supervisor/Sponsor: Bryce Winter
Sponsor Title: Youth in Wilderness Program Manager
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Who we are:
We’re a grass-roots organization whose mission is to preserve, protect, and restore the wilderness qualities and biodiversity of the public lands within California’s northern Santa Lucia Mountains and Big Sur coast. Our organization is composed of people from all walks of life with at least one thing in common: a love of the wilderness and a desire to help see to it that what little is left in our area remains as such in perpetuity.

Our Youth in Wilderness (YiW) Program inspires local youth to understand, protect and restore the wilderness areas of the Big Sur backcountry and coast. We offer Environmental Education and Service-Learning trips. These trips are generally a 2-3 day backpacking excursion over weekends, occasionally day hikes, in the Ventana and Silver Peak Wilderness areas.

For our Environmental Education trips, we partner primarily with high schools and alternative education programs in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties. For many of these students it is their first wilderness experience and our aim is to have a safe and enjoyable outing where they can discover the wonders of nature with their classmates and teacher and gain practical outdoor skills and knowledge.

YiW also collaborates with university groups from UC Santa Cruz, CSU Monterey Bay, Cal Poly and other universities to conduct service-learning stewardship activities such as trail maintenance and campsite clean-up in conjunction with VWA veteran volunteers. These trips teach students the value of volunteerism and inspire future wildlands stewardship.

Internship Description:
Youth in Wilderness seeks experienced backpackers and enthusiastic naturalists to assist in the leading of Environmental Education and Service-Learning field outings- Our primary field season is January thru June. We also run a limited number of trips September to November. A positive attitude and a commitment to safety are required. Field Assistants would work closely with YiW Program Manager and YiW Leaders to coordinate and lead backpacking excursions in the Big Sur backcountry. A 2 unit internship--60 field hours-- entails joining 3 wilderness excursions in a quarter. Please inquire about trip schedule.

Primary Field Assistant Responsibility:
- Logistical Support (help coordinate gear--before/after trips, food shopping and educational materials for outings.)
- Be a positive environmental and cultural role model.
- Assist with camp set up, food prep and cooking.
- Help teach Leave No Trace principles and ethics.
- Assist in team-building exercises.
- Assist in leading hikes, natural history interpretation and stewardship activities.
- Help enrich evening camp fire circle.
- Occasional office time (Downtown Santa Cruz location).

Hours and Duration: Attend ~3 trips in a quarter and occasional YiW staff meetings, pre-trip meetings, and classroom visits. (Weekend trips generally total 20- 30 hours.)
**Desired Qualifications:**
- Experience leading and/or teaching teens.
- Energetic, helpful and positive attitude.
- Ability to communicate professionally.
- California natural history knowledge.
- Experience backpacking, reasonable fitness, ability to hike up to 7 miles with full pack in rugged terrain.
- Wilderness First Aid certified.
- Personal vehicle for transportation (not required).

**Compensation:**  Academic Credit

(Rancho Cielo of Salinas circles up before hiking along the Little Sur River.)

Thank you for your interest in joining the Youth in Wilderness team! We look forward to hearing from you. For more information, please email:

-Bryce Winter
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