



FALL 2025

THE VOLUNTEER ISSUE

SANCTUARY

A NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGES



Preservation | Education | Research

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VOLUNTEER

(noun) vol-un-ter – *The Heart and Soul of The Ridges Sanctuary*

Others may define volunteers as “a person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it” (Cambridge Dictionary), but quite honestly, here at The Ridges, volunteers are so much more than that. Our volunteers truly are the heart and soul of this special place.

When I began working at The Ridges Sanctuary more than a decade ago, I was immediately immersed in our visitor experience — leading hikes, teaching summer camps, and answering questions at the front desk. Every new task felt daunting. I worried constantly: Will I say the right thing? Do I know the story well enough? What if I get it wrong? During those early days, Steve, our former executive director, encouraged me to learn from those who knew The Ridges best. He sent me on guided hikes with Jane, connected me with Bruce to talk about the history of the Baileys Harbor Range Lights, and suggested I join Jim and the Wednesday Crew as they built a new boardwalk. I never hesitated to follow his advice, and with every conversation, I grew more confident. Each interaction deepened my love for The Ridges and sparked the passion that I lead with today.

These interactions continue to shape who I am today. Not a week goes by without me pausing to appreciate the incredible breadth of knowledge, experience, and passion within our volunteer community. Doctors, librarians, analysts, students, scientists, engineers, grandparents, business owners — and so many others — all come together with a shared purpose: to carry forward the mission of The Ridges Sanctuary. And they do so in countless ways. From the Wednesday Crew and garden team to front desk greeters, guided hike leaders, Range Light docents, citizen scientists, board members, and committee volunteers — every role matters. The time you give is invaluable, and The Ridges simply could not thrive without you.



Range Light Docents Ellen Sandberg-Shook & John Shook



Deneen Wiske & Family, Storm Cleanup

Throughout this publication you will not only see the impact of Ridges Sanctuary volunteers, but you'll also feel the value they bring. You'll witness the magic when this community filled with people of all ages, backgrounds and experiences comes together. The beauty of this story is that it isn't ours to tell – it belongs to the volunteers themselves. Here, you'll hear their voices, their passions, and the heart that they bring to The Ridges.

In this next chapter of The Ridges' story, our volunteer community will remain at the heart of all we do. The friendships, learning, and shared purpose continue to drive our efforts and ensure The Ridges will be cherished for generations to come. To those who serve as Ridges volunteers, we offer our deepest thanks. We hope you'll keep lending your energy, invite others to join you, and perhaps explore new opportunities along the way. And to those who support us from afar, thank you for celebrating the accomplishments of this extraordinary community with us.

In an abundance of gratitude,



Katie Krouse, Executive Director



"It's important to support people's nature-learning. The Ridges provides fantastic opportunities for folks of all ages, to experience and celebrate the fact that they value the outdoor living space we all share." – Susan Crawford

A YEAR OF ACTION

200+ Volunteers in preservation, research, citizen science and education

90+ Volunteers contributed over **2,500** hours to preservation



2,300+ Trees planted in the spring, **400+** additional trees to be planted in the fall

Nearly **2** acres of invasive species removed through hand pulling, digging, and cutting

734 feet of boardwalk restored on rustic trails and at Logan Creek



Forest School Student, Assisting With Hands-On Dwarf Lake Iris Research

Volunteers in Preservation: Caring for the Land

Preservation of all 1,700 acres that fall under ownership of The Ridges Sanctuary takes several different management strategies. Much of this land is high-quality and intact forest and wetland, meaning that much of the Sanctuary is hands-off from a management sense, allowing nature to do what nature does best with minimal human interference. For stewardship to be effective humans must not only protect but intervene. To also instill a sense of stewardship in others, people need to be allowed to experience this protected natural treasure while maintaining the integrity of the preserve, a large part of the reasoning behind our constant push to increase accessibility to our trail systems.

Nothing is more integral to meeting our mission than the role that volunteers play in every aspect of the organization's operation, especially in preservation. From invasive species management, to providing ecologically beneficial pollinator habitat, to maintaining trails and boardwalks, volunteers are at the heart of Ridges' land stewardship. Their efforts allow us to provide visitors of all ages and abilities with the opportunity to experience and learn about the diverse natural habitats of the coastal boreal forest and wetlands that The Ridges protect. To celebrate their accomplishments, I will highlight some of the major volunteer groups and the contributions they've made to preservation over the past year.

Comprehensive invasive species management is a critical part of stewarding the land and preserving the spectacular biological diversity found in the many different habitats of the Sanctuary. Our Barberry Pirates volunteer group meets once per month to tackle the mechanical control of various problematic species, including Dame's rocket, woodland forget-me-not, Japanese barberry, European marsh thistle, and narrow-leaf cattail. The hard work of these volunteers expands the capacity of Ridges staff to conduct targeted management with a soft touch, utilizing their help to minimize the use of chemical herbicide application as much as possible. The long-term impact of this group's effort will lead to healthier, more diverse ecosystems that are required to support the many threatened and endangered species we support.

Our Wednesday Crew is one of our longest serving and largest volunteer groups at The Ridges. They assist in groundskeeping, upkeep of buildings and facilities, and trail maintenance, including boardwalk improvements. Trail and boardwalk maintenance is a big part of what they do, and they are proud of their work – as they absolutely should be! This



Rustic Trail Boardwalk Work



Gardening Crew



Invasive Species Work

year the group replaced an observation deck on Solitude Swale, two boardwalks on Cedar Trail, and several more on Fir Trail. The results often lead to the perfect blend of modernism and rusticness.

Our volunteers don't only show up when a workday is scheduled. They also respond to emergency situations, such as the intense storm in August that caused many trees to come down in the area. Several volunteers showed up on the Sunday after the storm event to help clear priority trails. That next Monday morning at 8:00 am, over a dozen people showed up to help clear all the trails at our different properties making a few hours' work out of what would've taken staff days to do without them.

Lastly, let's not forget about our wonderful Garden Crew. This group has maintained the beautiful front gardens as pollinator habitat for several years. In summer, it is truly a stunning visual display of prairie and woodland wildflowers, each surrounded by the constant buzzing of bees, butterflies, and ants, all interacting with plants in their own way. Not only is it an aesthetically pleasing space that catches the eye and draws you in, but it is also an extremely simple way of experiencing the interconnectedness of species in nature up close and personal. It's a perfect introduction to someone who is new to The Ridges and encapsulates what this community is all about. To me, it's symbolic for how humans use landscapes. Do we want this space to be sterile and devoid of life, or do we want a space that has greater ecological connectivity and impact where organisms can thrive? To me the choice is clear every day I walk by those gardens.

No matter what your interests are, I urge you to explore volunteerism at The Ridges and join a passionate community dedicated to preserving nature and people's ability to experience and learn from it. There is a role for everyone to play at The Ridges Sanctuary.

Sam Hoffman, Land Manager



Logan Creek Stewardship Crew

SMALL CREW WITH A BIG IMPACT!

The Logan Creek Stewardship Crew is a new volunteer group that started this year to address projects specific to the 170 acre Logan Creek Preserve. As the only satellite site of The Ridges and 15 miles south of Baileys Harbor on Clark Lake, it has been challenging to utilize volunteer involvement. The boardwalks in particular were in such disrepair, they were no longer safe to traverse. Twelve volunteers gave 530 hours of their collective time to make sure that this work would get done. Starting in early April of 2025, this small but passionate group committed to meeting weekly, eventually replacing 365 feet of boardwalk, including a pole bridge spanning a small, spring-fed creek that passes through the site. The support of this group has been vital to The Ridges and to keeping a favorite spot in Door County traversable to visitors.

Volunteers in Research: Citizen Scientists at Work

“Citizen science is the collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the general public, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists.”

This definition of citizen science only begins to describe the amazing work that The Ridges citizen science cohort performs, providing critical information for scientific endeavors around the world, including The Ridges research for restoration. The volunteers in the citizen science program come from diverse backgrounds, yet when coalesced, focus on learning as much about the environment as they possibly can, while providing the personnel resources that are truly critical. These scientists, ranging in age from nine to ninety, are all helping The Ridges in accomplishing the mission of promoting environmental behaviors through impactful educational experiences, land protection and management, and ecological research.

Citizen science volunteering at The Ridges is a year-round opportunity, often in challenging situations and environments. Volunteer scientists will crawl around in tick haven for the perfect sphinx ladies' tress orchid photo documentation for phenology records, fight through snow and ice to watch eagle nests in February, hoping for a milestone sighting to report, and orchid trek in below zero temperatures, marking GPS waypoints of seed capsules, thankful that at least the mosquitoes and deerflies aren't around yet.

Planting trees in the pouring rain requires a truly unique attitude as does standing next to an almost frozen stream patiently waiting for the first suckers to show up for their spring migration. Many of the Midwest Crane Count volunteers are admittedly “not morning people” yet somehow manage to be at their counting stations before 5:30 am to provide critical information on the crane population. Not only do our stream monitors have to deal with flow rates measured in hours rather than seconds, but it is also a common phenomenon that the hip waders that were perfectly fine when put away in October, developed numerous leaks over the winter, first discovered in



Bald Eagle Nest Watchers



Water Action Volunteers, George Cobb & Andy Wagoner



David Barnes & Julie Knox, Getting a Close Up Look, Jane Whitney

the cold waters of May. The dwarf lake iris and orchid monitoring teams spend hours on hands and knees, trying to count and measure plants while carefully contorting their bodies to not damage these threatened species. At the same time, they're answering the proverbial "What are you doing?" questions from curious guests. Some folks prepare for Christmas by baking, shopping, and decorating. The Christmas Bird Count citizen scientists spend their time providing data on all the birds that they encounter in the middle of December. To most folks, liverworts may seem like innocent little plants, but to the shade house scientists, these liverworts must be dealt with in a surgically precise fashion before these ancient plants destroy the restoration orchids.

The plant inventory volunteers are embracing the challenges of identifying every plant at The Ridges, including at the newly established tree project plots. Sedge identification alone has been enough to boost adult beverage consumption, let alone the asters and goldenrods. The inventory team has accepted the challenge of establishing groups within groups to help even more with plant identification. All of this citizen science data goes somewhere, and another cohort is conducting research on the best place and format to store this information and statistically analyzing gigabytes of numbers, always challenged with budgetary constraints, a technologically inept Director of Research, and interesting political times.

After examining just a few of the many challenges faced by the Citizen Science volunteers, the fact that they continue to face and overcome these challenges is a testament to the dedication and commitment that each and every one of them has made to the scientific enterprise. These mentally tough folks are invaluable for providing the information necessary to help all community members become more scientifically literate and make informed decisions in daily life. All of us are beneficiaries of the work that volunteer scientists are performing at The Ridges Sanctuary.

Tony Kiszonas, Director of Research

60 STUDENTS, 500+ TREES, 1 BIG IMPACT!

Volunteers at The Ridges are the backbone of this organization. This is exemplified by an incredible group that showed up on April 22, 2025, at the Family Discovery Trail. In partnership with the Climate Change Coalition of Door County, The Ridges Sanctuary has embarked on a significant research project focused on boreal climate survivability. The Boreal and Temperate Mesic Forest Climate Survivability Project started out with the planting of trees. A lot of trees. Earth Day was set as the kickoff planting of over 500 of these trees. This daunting endeavor seemed overwhelming until volunteers started showing up. When the Gibraltar Area School District bus showed up and students started disembarking, it seemed like a clown car. The kids just kept coming and coming until 60 energetic volunteers were assembled. Along with numerous adult volunteers, all these incredible folks had the trees in the ground, well before the pizza arrived. They not only planted these trees but planted them well, as this plot has a high survivorship rate.



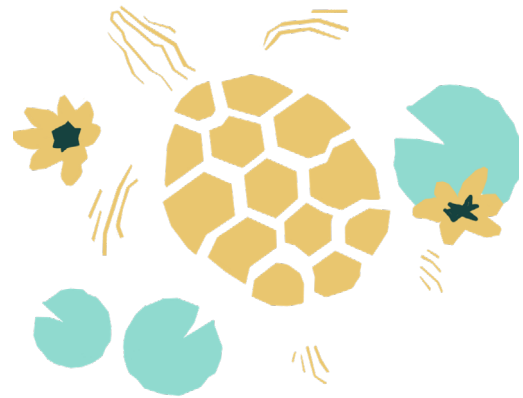
Gibraltar School Students, Tree Planting

Volunteers in Education: Learning by Giving



Pam Zeller & Donna Danielson

Ridges volunteers are educators, guides, greeters, and storytellers. Whether welcoming visitors at the front desk, leading guided hikes, serving at Range Light Docents, or supporting Forest School programs, they make learning at The Ridges an unforgettable experience.



WELCOMING FACES AT THE RIDGES: MEET DONNA & PAM

When visitors walk into the Nature Center on a Tuesday, they're greeted by two familiar and friendly faces—Donna Danielson and Pam Zeller, longtime volunteers who bring warmth, knowledge, and a deep love for The Ridges. For both Donna and Pam, volunteering at The Ridges isn't just about giving time, it's about giving back to a place they believe in.

Donna, retired arborist and educator, shares that she volunteers for a few reasons. "I believe in the mission of The Ridges—preserving the rare ecosystem of the area, educating the public about it, and research. It's also a lot of fun and always a learning opportunity."

Pam's connection to The Ridges started even before she moved to Door County. "Before we moved here in 2005, we discovered The Ridges. It was our go-to place every time we visited Door," she says. "We loved everything it stood for and became members. When we moved here, The Ridges was the first place we volunteered. I worked as the bookkeeper for three years, and my husband and I managed the Nature Store for six years when it was in the cabin."

Both Donna and Pam find joy in welcoming visitors and sharing the story of The Ridges. Donna lights up when talking to guests: "I love talking to people. And I love to tell people about this wonderful place. It's fun to watch people when they see the aerial photo of The Ridges and see how it got its name."

Pam enjoys learning from the people she meets. "It's interesting to learn where they come from. I've learned about a lot of other nature centers from visitors," she says.

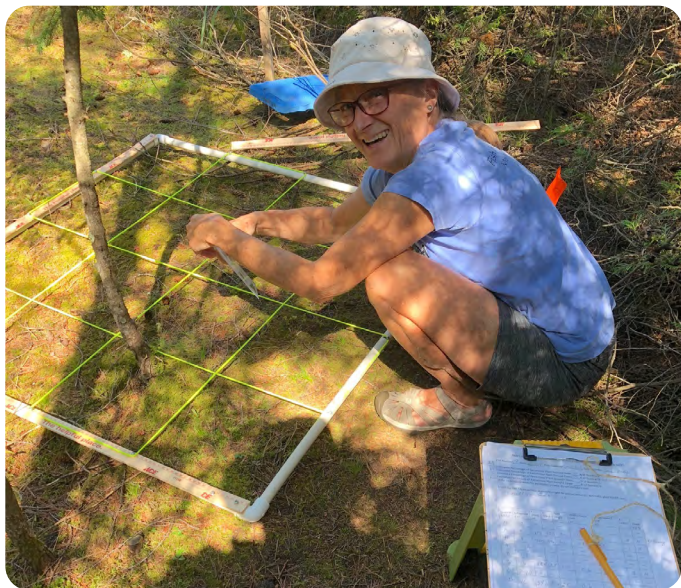
When asked what they love most about The Ridges, Donna is quick to mention that aerial photo again. Pam, on the other hand, loves sharing the story of how The Ridges were formed and the plans for the future.

Their roles as volunteers go far beyond answering questions. As Donna explains, "If people just walked in without talking to someone, they might not learn the details about The Ridges." Pam adds, "Having been a volunteer for 19 years, I've seen the changes that have taken place. We help the front desk staff and allow them to do other things. We show how much as volunteers we truly care about this place."

While neither can pinpoint one specific memorable moment with a visitor, they both agree that every interaction matters. Each conversation helps build a stronger connection with nature.

So, what advice would they give someone thinking about volunteering? "Do it!" says Donna. "It's a lot of fun and definitely worthwhile." Pam wholeheartedly agrees: "You'll never regret it. You'll meet lots of interesting people—and the volunteers are great people."





Andy Wagoner, Plot Monitoring



Kathy Riederer, with Forest School Student (Carly, age 8)

FINDING PURPOSE ON THE TRAIL—AND BEYOND: MEET ANDY

When Andy Wagoner first signed up to volunteer at The Ridges, her intentions were simple: to learn something new and to be helpful. But what began as a learning opportunity quickly blossomed into something far more meaningful. “Volunteering at The Ridges has become a far richer experience than I ever imagined,” Andy reflects.

As a volunteer hike leader, she guides visitors through the Sanctuary’s unique habitats, helping them connect not just with nature, but with the deeper mission of preservation, education and research that drives The Ridges. “It’s absolutely energizing,” she says, “to engage in activities with both staff and volunteers that move our mission forward.”

Andy’s contributions go well beyond the trails. Each year, she also plays key roles in Citizen Science activities as well as Natural Christmas, one of The Ridges’ most enduring holiday events. From helping with monitoring orchids and stream health, to creating a warm, welcoming atmosphere in the Kaye Cabin, Andy brings the same attention and enthusiasm to each activity she takes on.

After a rewarding career, Andy once wondered whether retirement would offer the same sense of purpose. Volunteering with The Ridges has given her a clear answer.

“I used to worry about finding fulfillment in retirement,” she shares. “But volunteering at The Ridges is not only fulfilling—it keeps me grounded in this crazy, complex world.”

NURTURING FUTURE STEWARDS: MEET KATHY

For Kathy Riederer, volunteering at The Ridges Sanctuary is a meaningful way to share her love of nature with young learners and help them discover their role in protecting its beauty.

“It gives me a great opportunity to work with students and help them discover the wonder of nature,” says Kathy. “It also gives me the chance to enjoy The Ridges each week through the school year and every season. It is beautiful!”

With 22 years of experience as an elementary school teacher, Kathy brings a deep appreciation for hands-on learning. “I loved our field trips to the woods, where we had the ability to put our classroom learning to use in nature,” she explains. “Working with the Forest School students allows me to continue helping children connect their knowledge to the natural world around them.”

Kathy hopes her presence as a volunteer sends a meaningful message. “I hope students see me as a community member who supports them in their learning, who watches over nature because it is so valued, and who is learning things as an adult.”

Some of her favorite moments come from seeing students light up with discovery. “During the very first session this year, several students found a large American toad nestled in a tree stump! We’ll be discussing that discovery for weeks to come!”

Kathy enthusiastically recommends volunteering with young children, especially in nature-based programs. “It’s a wonderful way to help the next generation of forest stewards learn the importance of the world around them.”

Business Member Support

Our business members have also found opportunities to give back to our organization in ways that go beyond simply paying their membership dues. Take **Chives Restaurant**, located less than half a mile down the street, for example. They provided 200 coupons to distribute for a \$10 “lunch at the trucks” for any Ridges volunteer this summer season. We also have **Sway Brewing + Blending**, members since 2021, who partner with our programming team on Swales & Ales as well as Boos & Brews. These fall programs explore the plants used to create different flavor profiles when brewing beer, followed by a tour of the beer-making process in Sway’s building. Laura Landergott with **Whole Growth Partners** takes time out of her busy week as partner and marketing strategy consultant to volunteer not only as a board member, but also as the chair of the development committee.

A huge thank you to all our business members for the many ways in which they contribute! Help us say thank you by supporting them!

A2Z The Agency	Details Hair Innovations	The Orchards at Egg Harbor
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Anschutz Plumbing & Heating	Door County Ice Cream Factory	Peninsula State Park Golf Course
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Baileys Harbor Fish Company	Grasse’s Grill	Quantum Technologies
Baileys Harbor Yacht Club Resort	Harbor Fish Market & Grille	Rotary Club of Door County North
Baileys on the Rocks Cottages	Hill Street	Shoreline Boat Tours
Bay Point Inn	Healthy Way Market	Sister Bay Bowl
Beachfront Inn	Innovative Printing LLC	Sway Brewing + Blending
Blacksmith Inn on the Shore	Kindgoods	The Rushes
The Boldt Company	Lake Fire Winery	The Thirsty Cow Taphouse
Bridenhagen Tree & Landscape	Main Street Market	Thyme Restaurant & Catering
Capital Valuation Group	Malone’s Plumbing & Heating	Wessels & Liebau LLC
Cappaert Contemporary Gallery	Maxwell’s House	White Gull Inn
Cedar Beach House	Maxwelton Braes Golf Course	Whole Growth Partners
Chives Restaurant	Maxwelton Braes Lodge	
Cultured	Meissner Landscape, Inc.	
Dentistry By Design	Nicolet National Bank	

WHY VOLUNTEER

BUILD COMMUNITY	BOOST WELLBEING	RECONNECT WITH NATURE AND THE LAND	MAKE AN IMPACT THAT BENEFITS ALL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect with like-minded people who share your passion and values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve your mental, emotional, and physical health through meaningful activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spend time outdoors and deepen your relationship with the land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support conservation efforts that protect ecosystems and benefit everyone.
PROTECT PRECIOUS NATURAL RESOURCES	PROVIDE OUTDOOR ACCESS	GROW YOUR SKILLS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help safeguard rare plants, wildlife, and open spaces for future generations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure everyone—regardless of age or ability—can enjoy the outdoors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply your talents, gain experience, and learn new skills.	



"Volunteering at The Ridges connects you with interesting and caring people in an important effort to protect and preserve the environment at a critical time in our history." – Volunteer



"Inspiring the conservation of Nature. That is the vision of The Ridges and why I volunteer here. Being part of a community of like-minded individuals who do what they do for the pure joy of nature and then sharing that joy with others makes me so happy! I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to these efforts and to build friendships with so many truly wonderful people." – JoAnn Wielosinski



"It gives me the chance to donate time to an organization I enjoy. I enjoy working with the Wednesday Crew. They're a great group of people." – Jim Brooks



"I volunteer to in some small way, repay those who have made my life in Door County such a wonder. Most importantly, to give thanks for the wonderful people that have become such a joy in my life." – Bill Wolff



"I volunteer at The Ridges to do something meaningful – and I know it means something to people when they are given a friendly and helpful introduction or re-introduction to the Sanctuary. Volunteering means I can talk about the things I love most in nature and hiking. – Lynn Pierce



"From being a lighthouse staffer to being lighthouse docent – new friends, adventures, educating and being educated. Loved the people! Great way of giving back to the community." – Sherill Eichler

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Interested in sharing your time and talents, meeting new people, and fulfilling The Ridges' mission? We offer a wide variety of ways for you to be involved. Volunteers are the backbone of The Ridges and the core of many of our important programs. Over 200 dedicated individuals assist our staff in a number of different areas, and no prior experience is needed in any of the categories. Discover how you can get involved and help support our mission.



THE RIDGES

The Ridges Sanctuary

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"To experience all the magic and beauty of The Ridges. Also, for all the wonderful people I meet (staff and volunteers)." – Volunteer

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.ridgessanctuary.org
or call: (920) 839-2802

Support The Ridges Sanctuary

DONATE

The Ridges Sanctuary relies on the generosity of our supporters to protect our lands, advance research initiatives, expand adult and youth education, and build capacity to support the growth of the organization. There are various ways to donate, including undesignated contributions to offset operational expenses, designated contributions for specific initiatives, and endowment funds to ensure contributions are available in perpetuity. Additionally, planned giving can be one of the best ways for an individual or family to leave their legacy. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift today.

VOLUNTEER

Every year, more than 200 dedicated individuals volunteer to create a meaningful experience for everyone who visits the Sanctuary. They volunteer for roles such as the front desk team, Wednesday crew, guided hike leader, lighthouse docent, citizen science programs, and gardening projects. No prior experience is needed for any of these roles. Visit our website or call to find out how you can be part of the team!

JOIN

Whether you become a member to hike the trails, volunteer, or serve in a leadership role, you play an important part in ensuring that the future of The Ridges is bright, protected, and preserved for future generations. Membership includes free year-round admission to all Ridges trails, program guides and newsletters, discounts on Nature Store items, and member rates for our programs and events.

Preservation | Education | Research