

Assistant Summer Playworker

Accepting applications March 1st - March 31st, 2023
For 2023 Summer Program, July 10, 2023 - Aug. 18, 2023
Summer Beach Party: Date TBA

Location: NW Chicago (Labagh Woods, Forest Glen Woods, Bunker Hill Woods)

Pay:

Hiring for 3-6 Summer Positions:

- \$18.00-\$20/hr, between 25-32 hr/week
- \$18.00-\$20/hr, between 14-28 hr/week

Position Summary: Playworkers are responsible for facilitating play in natural spaces for children ages 0-12. This work includes creating playscapes with simple loose parts (such as sticks, fabrics, and mud kitchen items), fostering child-led pretend-play, bringing children to interesting sites in nature to stimulate further play, and gathering groups for circle time, meal time, and nature walks. Playworkers must be comfortable assessing potential risk in the woods, and facilitating play without interfering in it. Playworkers do not *lead* play or *participate* in it– they *facilitate* it. Candidates for this job must be willing to work in a mixed age environment, with children who are diverse racially, developmentally, and temperamentally. This job requires responding to children respectfully, kindly, and holistically. It also includes integrating principles of justice, respect, and liberation into the school environment. We favor self-directed learning and emergent curriculum, and experience with these learning methods is preferred. Candidates for this job are encouraged to learn more about the practice of Playworking before interviewing with us. Expertise or experience with Playworking is not required, but an openness to embrace the practice of Playworking is necessary.

Who We Are: Wonder Woods is a 501c3 non-profit program akin to many of the forest schools currently flourishing across Western Europe and the U.S. that follow in the tradition of indigenous land-based models of learning. We meet in all seasons and (almost) all weather and operate in various locations within the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

A forest school, also known as forest kindergarten, or nature preschool, is a type of early childhood education that takes place in forests or woodlands. We help children form a kinship with nature and each other. We believe they learn best when they are exploring topics they want to learn about while doing so in natural spaces. We support self directed learning and help children discover their own interests by inviting them to explore different topics through various games, activities, materials, skills, and child-led free play. We are a queer-affirming and future-oriented organization. We embrace change and commit to learning, unlearning and adapting in order to live our values and prepare young people to remain in relationship with the natural world on a rapidly changing planet.

Essential Duties:

- Reliability (it is important you come to all work days you are scheduled). Please note that, while all locations are accessible via public transit, some locations are more difficult to reach.
- Share our commitment to the practice of Playworking.
- Foster an environment for social, emotional, and cognitive growth.
- Design and lead Circle time programming, including but not limited to songs, poems, and games.
- Provide responsive care to all children by adapting daily caregiving routines and plans to the interests and needs of the individual child and the group.
- Facilitate student conflict resolution using non violent practices.
- Communicate children's progress and challenges with coworkers and executive director.
- Demonstrate cultural competency and respect for the child's background by incorporating the cultural, linguistic and familial values and beliefs into the engagement with children.
- Set up and break down daily
- Playworkers should be improvisational, flexible, and hardy. Working with small children in all weather conditions requires an ability to problem-solve quickly and adapt to changing environments while remaining responsive to the children and our natural surroundings.. In accordance with our community philosophy, the person filling this position may occasionally be required to carry out or assist with other tasks in addition to the duties listed on this job description.

Qualifications:

- Experience working with children ages 3-12, either in a formal or non-traditional educational setting.
- Must be able to maintain personal comfort while assisting children for 5.5 hours each day in all weather
- First Aid/CPR certification
- Must be able to pass a background check

Preferred Experience and Skills:

- Experience in fields such as playwork, nature art, wilderness preparedness, tracking, natural science, etc.
- Experience with social emotional learning frameworks or knowledge of human development.
- Experience collaborating with neurodivergent and disabled community members, especially children.

Physical Requirements:*

- Able to work in all weather for 5.5-6 hours/day
- Able to stand, sit, and kneel on terrain in all weather conditions
- Able to lift and carry up to 40 pounds; pull 90 pounds in a wagon
- Able to walk on varied terrain while assisting children
- Able to perform first aid; maintain a calm demeanor while in the presence of blood/injury

*When possible, some accommodations may be made for qualified disabled and neurodivergent individuals.

How to Apply:

For consideration, please email hello@wonderwoodschicago.org with subject ATTN: SPRING JOB POSTING. Include your answers to the questions on the following page, resume, and 3 references.

Some questions are inspired by Abundant Beginnings in Oakland, CA.

BIPOC, LGBTQ+, TGNC strongly encouraged to apply!

Application Questions

Please respond to the following questions in 1-5 sentences.

1. What is something you have a passion, skill, or experience with that you would look forward to sharing with our community?
2. A 3 and 6-year-old have been arguing, and one has shoved the other. How would you respond to this?
3. What is your view on risk taking in childhood? Use examples from your own childhood and examples from working with children. How would you go about assessing hazards in a natural area?
4. What is your experience being in difficult weather (thunderstorms, heat, etc.) and around insects (ticks, mosquitoes, bees, etc.)?