

SAMPLE LETTER

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August 26, 2014

Dear Supporter of the GeoCorps America Program:

My name is Neil Jackson and I have been fortunate enough to be a participant in this year's GeoCorps America Program, as a participant at Fossil Butte National Monument near Kemmerer, Wyoming. I would like to take a moment to express my sincere thanks for your support. Without your support I would not have a chance to pursue this unique opportunity.

Fossil Butte National Monument is a world-famous fossil locality, known for its exquisitely preserved and astonishingly abundant fish fossils. The monument was created in 1972 to preserve this valuable resource and allow visitors an up-close look at the fossils in their 'natural' environment. To this end I worked weekends in our research quarry allowing visitors the opportunity to observe and even participate in the systematic collection of scientific specimens. In addition to hundreds of fish, including some as large as ten inches, we also found two palm fronds and several other leaves and insects.

During the balance of my time at the monument I collected mammal fossils including teeth belonging to the famous primitive horse *Hyracotherium*, worked in our fossil prep lab demonstrating preparation techniques, contributed to an exhibit comparing the fossil species of Fossil Butte with their closest living relatives and worked in the museum collections cataloging and organizing specimens.

My summer at Fossil Butte National Monument has allowed me to hone my skills as a paleontologist as well as develop my abilities to communicate scientific concepts clearly and enthusiastically to non-scientists. I have had the opportunity to gain valuable experience in a number of areas including working with museum specimens and cataloging software, using handheld GPS units and associated software and learning proper fossil preparation skills. Finally, I've been extraordinarily fortunate to have all of these opportunities while getting to work in one of the most exceptional fossil vertebrate localities in the world. I have greatly benefited from the GeoCorps America program and would recommend it to any student of Earth Science eager to gain practical experience and have a tremendous summer.

Again, please accept my thanks for your generous support.

Sincerely,
Neil P. Jackson
GeoCorps Participant 2014
Fossil Butte National Monument

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August 28, 2014

Dear Supporter of the GeoCorps America Program,

My name is Stephanie Guzman, and I had the honor of serving as the GeoCorps America participant at Bryce Canyon National Park this summer. I want to sincerely thank you for supporting this excellent program, which provides great benefit to all involved - parks, park visitors, and participants alike. GeoCorps America brings expertise to park geology programs, geoscience education to the public, and a unique and enriching experience to the participants.

Bryce Canyon National Park ranks among America's greatest scenic geologic treasures. The park's orange-pink limestone Claron Formation crowns 'The Grand Staircase', a regional geologic feature rising in cliffs and slopes from the north rim of the Grand Canyon, and showcases the world's highest density of 'hoodoos' - intricately sculpted rock pinnacles which fill a series of amphitheaters along a plateau escarpment. Beneath this colorful rock unit are strata from Cretaceous time, which record the movements of the inland sea that cut North America in half late in the age of dinosaurs. Within these grey rocks, a plethora of vertebrate and invertebrate fossils have been recovered, including rare ammonites, microscopic mammal teeth, and dinosaur vertebrae.

Visitors flock to the park to witness the colorful hoodoos, and it's the job of interpretive staff to share the geologic story behind the sculptures. I supported the interpretive program in two ways – Park Service staff support and education, and direct interaction with the park visitors. For the park staff, many of whom have little or no background in geology, I developed a suite of reference material. This included a compilation of all pertinent geology research reports and journal articles, and a geology primer, featuring an annotated geologic timeline, answers to frequently asked questions, and layman-level publications on everything from radiometric and biostratigraphic dating methods to the history of the Colorado Plateau. For the Resource Management staff division, I surveyed past research conducted in the park, and made suggestions for future research needs. For the park visitors, I developed two geology programs - a half hour talk about the story revealed in the rocks, and an hour long guided hike illuminating the details of hoodoo formation.

My summer at Bryce Canyon has refined my ability to communicate scientific concepts to the public in an engaging manner, a facility that will undoubtedly assist in my TA duties this coming semester, and improved my skills as a research scientist. I was given the opportunity to independently coordinate education and research projects, to gain experience working with Park Service methods, and to engage in dialogue and work with local research geologists. Because my career goal is to work for the National Park Service upon completion of my M.S. degree, the contacts I made this summer will prove invaluable when the time comes to search for a full-time job. GeoCorps America has been the single most valuable extracurricular experience of my graduate studies. I wish to express my deepest thanks for providing such an engaging and rewarding program. I would recommend it to any geoscientist - from students to retirees - with a desire to contribute to the legacy of our public lands while having a dynamic and invigorating summer experience.

Thank you again for your generous support!

Sincerely,
Stephanie Guzman, GeoCorps Participant 2014
Bryce Canyon National Park