Quasars to Sea Stars Teen Science Program

Program Overview

Quasars to Sea Stars is a science work-study program where students work closely with educators and scientists to learn about the natural world. Teens accepted into the program will attend on-going trainings, work shifts, and group activities, as well as participate in outreach events as representatives of the Museum. The responsibilities of the program also assist students in learning important life skills such as public speaking, computer competency, professional writing, and leadership. The program strives for an even mix of high school grades. This is accomplished by welcoming five new teens into the program each spring. We currently have 17 teens in the program. The teens are very diverse; they represent a variety of ages (13-18), ethnicities, family income, and family structure.

There are two major seasons for the Quasar program, summer and the school year. Summer is the most involved time for the teens. In the summer they take courses taught by Museum staff, go on field trips, and work at exhibits, camps, and events. The courses they take are designed to get more specific each year until the teens have enough information to choose their own mentors and design their own projects as seniors. Freshmen take Museum 101, sophomores take Understanding Science, and juniors take a field biology class. Past courses for the juniors have included Watersheds, Ornithology, Ethnobotany, and Archaeology. All of the teens take an additional course together; last year it was the Natural History of the Santa Barbara Channel. That course included building submersible remotely operated vehicles (ocean ROVs) and learning about the natural history of the Channel Islands. The course included a multi-day field trip to the Channel Islands. The summer is a busy time, but probably their favorite time if you ask a Quasar teen.

During the school year teens do not have classes, but they still have paid work shifts with supervisors from departments throughout the Museum and continue to volunteer at events and festivals. Work shifts cover a variety of departments and tasks, from indentifying shells in Invertebrate Zoology, to managing the Museum Membership database in Development, to painting in Exhibits, or creating a flyer in Marketing. As volunteers, the teens educate the public at a variety of events, including monthly Star Parties or annual events like Underwater Parks Day. Field trips, hands-on activities, and meetings also makeup the school year portion of the Quasar program.

Supplies and Costs

Quasars to Sea Stars is a completely donor-funded program and no cost to your child. However, there are some incidental costs that come with participating in the program. Each teen will need their own sleeping bag, back pack, sturdy walking/hiking shoes, water bottle, and weather-proof jacket. There may also be times when participants are asked to cover the costs of their own meals, transportation, or other minimal activity charges when fundraising cannot cover the complete costs. Funds may be available to those who are unable to meet these expenses on a case by case basis. All expenses will be included for mandatory activities.

Availability and Commitment

Quasars to Sea Stars is a year-round, 4-year program. This is a big commitment! Please consider the following: How will you get to and from the Museum? Do you have any responsibilities or current activities (e.g. school clubs, sports, family commitments) that may make it difficult for you to attend meetings, classes, and work shifts at regularly scheduled times? There are many activities that you will participate in, and it will be necessary for you to be able to communicate with the program leaders and your supervisors through phone and email on an ongoing basis. Are you able to check your email and respond to emails at least 3 times a week?
Important Dates
There are general time requirements and several dates for which attendance is mandatory. Please look over the following and check with your parent or guardian to make sure you can commit to them:

Summer Dates 2014: June 16 - August 10
- Minimum commitment is 25 hours each week
- We will NOT accept students who plan to miss more than 1 week during the summer (June 16 - August 10). Program manager must clear all absences. First and last week of summer program may not be missed.
- Sea Center Training: either May 7, 14, & 21 OR June 4, 11, & 18 from 4:45-7:30 PM each day
- Quasar Final Presentations: Sunday, August 10, 9 AM - 5 PM at the Museum

School Year: September- June
- Minimum commitment is 20 hours each month. These hours will be a combination of work shifts, meetings, training, volunteering, and lectures.
- Each teen must work 1.5-3 hours each week. For freshmen, this work shift must occur on a weekday before 5 PM. Weekend shifts are available on a limited basis after your freshman year.
- Monthly meetings: One Tuesday a month, 5–8:00 PM at the Museum

Employment at the Museum
After completing 60 hours of community service, students 14-years and older are eligible to become paid staff members, working with museum scientists and professionals in a variety of museum departments. Teens are paid $8/hr and may work up to 3 hours each week during the school year, and 8 hours each week during the summer. There are also some opportunities for additional hours based on events at the museum and in the community. To be employed by the museum, students must:
- Be eligible to work in the U.S.
- Obtain their own work permits from their schools
- Maintain a 2.0 GPA
- Fulfill all program participation requirements
- Remain in good standing and demonstrate appropriate and professional conduct

Please closely review all information in this packet. Make sure you are comfortable with everything the program entails. If you have any questions, please refer to our FAQs and don’t hesitate to contact us.

More information will also be available at the Free Teen Friday event at the Museum on March 14th from 4:30-7:30 PM. Admission is free.

Applications are available on our website (www.sbnature.org/quasars) and at the Museum. Your science teacher may also have printed applications available. When you are ready to fill out the application make sure you do so completely, and submit it by 5 PM on April 4th, 2014. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.