New Executive Director Leads Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center

Chris Smith, Friends of the Nature Center President

The Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center would like to welcome Haily Summerford as its new executive director.
Haily comes to us from the National Audubon Society and has more than 25 years of experience in environmental education, conservation, and leadership of nonprofit organizations. She holds an environmental studies degree from Cornell College and an MBA from the University of Dallas in nonprofit management.

Haily started her career conducting overnight camps part time at the Fort Worth Zoo. She later worked for Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, wearing many hats in education, volunteer management, and special events planning. After that, she spent 11 years working for the City of Fort Worth in its Environmental Management Department and then the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. Haily also served as the director of Public Engagement for Fort Worth ISD before joining Audubon.

Haily is active within her profession and serves on the Texas Children in Nature State Steering Committee in partnership with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and has served as president of the Texas Association for Environmental Education. She was a board member for the Informal Science Education Association and the Foundation for the Young Women's Leadership Academy of Fort Worth. Other volunteer service includes serving as a district manager and presenter for former Vice President Al Gore’s The Climate Reality Project organization.

Haily volunteered for six years during the summers for Cheetah Outreach in South Africa, writing and implementing wildlife conservation curriculum, including a children’s book impacting thousands of students.

She says that one of her most poignant career experiences was when she was walking out of the Dogwood Canyon forest with a student. He looked up at her wide-eyed, smiling, and said, “Ms. Haily, I’ve never been in a forest before. I have only seen one on TV.”

“It is special moments like these when you realize what you do truly matters,” Haily says. “The Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge is so important for connecting people of all ages to nature and conservation. We must protect and support one of the largest city-operated nature centers in the nation for future generations, and I look forward to doing just that.”
Haily was born in Fort Worth, raised in Arlington, and has lived in Fort Worth for 20 years. When she is not working, Haily loves to spend time with her six-year-old adopted son, Sammy, and her parents, who live just blocks from her home.

The next time you are at the Nature Center, please stop by to say welcome and hello!