

## 2019 John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award

*As presented by Dawn Genes at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 21, 2019.*

The John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award has been presented annually since 1997. This award is dedicated to the first recipient, John Thalheimer, whose outstanding service to NH Audubon exemplified volunteer commitment, strengthened the organization, and provided an inspiring example for others.

The 2019 recipient of the John Thalheimer Award is Janice Hood from Litchfield, NH.

Janice Hood has been a volunteer since childhood. While her parents would volunteer with the Jaycees, Janice had a choice between helping with events or sitting in a childcare room. She quickly learned that it is more fun to get involved! Janice says “I realized that volunteering could have a real impact and I chose where to get involved with clear intention. My efforts have focused on what I consider most important – my children and environmental education.”

Janice Hood has been an active volunteer for NH Audubon since the spring of 2006. As an environmental education professional, Janice saw an opportunity to share her love of nature as a volunteer at the NH Audubon’s Massabesic Center in Auburn. Janice became one of the Naturalists presenting programs to school groups and scout troops. Janice served on the Program Committee and was also a central player in creating exciting family programs offered at the Massabesic Center. One of her creative ideas was the Enchanted Fall Festival (originally called Fall Frights). Appearing in costume, Janice was a key player in this all-volunteer fundraising event that shared the fun of the outdoors in the fall. Janice suggested this event based on her experience with an award-winning program she participated in as a volunteer with the Johnson County Parks and Recreation in Olathe, Kansas.

It was also Janice who pushed to create the annual Earth Day Festival that was open to the entire community as a major event. Prior to this, it was a volunteer work day at the Massabesic Center. It is now NH Audubon’s signature spring event and draws hundreds of people of all ages for a full day of learning about nature, crafts, activities, and food. A highlight is the release of a rehabilitated raptor or other animal at the end of the day. The Earth Day Festival and the Enchanted Forest have been running annually for years, to the delight of many.



*Janice Hood (right) receiving the 2019 John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award from Dawn Genes, Massabesic Audubon Center Director.*

*Photo by Dyanna Smith.*

In addition to her role as an educator, Janice assisted with fundraising efforts for the Massabesic Center and all of NH Audubon. For each spring and fall major event Janice obtained donations of items for the raffle table as fundraisers. Her extensive rolodex of contacts with businesses resulted in thousands of dollars of support for nature education. She helped secure donations for NH Audubon's Centennial Celebration in 2014, bird seed for the Massabesic Center feeders, and a new freezer for animal care.

For the past five years, Janice has been serving as the chair of the Advisory Committee for the Massabesic Center. Her leadership has resulted in a strategic plan to guide the Center and focus resources in areas of the greatest benefit, targeting the Center's efforts in connecting people with nature.

While volunteering at NH Audubon, she was also involved at the same time with the International Wolf Center, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts (in a lead role for both), the Litchfield School District (at all three schools in classrooms, libraries, Friends of Music and PTO President) and sports teams. Janice Hood graduated from Michigan State University with a dual major in Biological Sciences and Secondary Education. Her environmental education experience spans several organizations and states including:

- Fenner Arboretum, Lansing, MI
- Ernie Miller Nature Center, Olathe, KS
- Lakeside Nature Center and Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Kansas City, MO
- Environmental Learning Center, Vero Beach, FL
- International Wolf Center, Ely, MN (with global outreach efforts)
- Wild Canid Survival and Research Center (now the Endangered Wolf Center), Eureka, MO

Janice is always willing to pitch in and go the extra mile to make a program or an event a success. Her hard work is an inspiration to other volunteers. Her service has strengthened NH Audubon through broad outreach to people of all ages and a vibrant nature center.

NH Audubon is pleased to honor Janice Hood with the 2019 John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award.

