Exhibits Technician II – Senior Mammal Trainer/Keeper  #02050
City of Virginia Beach – Job Description
Date of Last Revision: 05-03-2019

FLSA Status: Non-Exempt  Pay Plan: General  Grade: 17

City of Virginia Beach Organizational Mission & Values
The City of Virginia Beach exists to enhance the economic, educational, social and physical quality of the community and provide sustainable municipal services which are valued by its citizens. The City of Virginia Beach organization is based upon a belief in the democratic process of government. This belief provides meaningful ways for citizens, reflecting the diversity of our City, to contribute to the development of public policy. This process is enhanced by organizational values which guide member performance within the Virginia Beach Quality Service System. These Values define our desired organizational culture. We value quality customer service; teamwork; leadership and learning; integrity; commitment; and inclusion and diversity.

Class Summary
Reporting to senior curatorial staff, assist in the husbandry and health maintenance of live animal collections, functioning as a working mammal trainer/keeper. Responsible for advanced husbandry, behavioral management, including, but not limited to, the assessment of needs, determining best course of action, and following through to perform necessary tasks in accordance with industry best practices, safety protocols, standards and guidelines established by the Virginia Aquarium, governing agencies and regulatory/accrediting bodies. Advanced husbandry duties are described in more detail below. Assist in the implementation of exhibit and strategic plans. Manage, maintain, and repair mammal exhibits. Assist in coordinating the activities of husbandry section staff, volunteers, and interns to meet the mission and objectives of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center. Ensure compliance with all applicable safety and security procedures and protocols. Dive in enclosed exhibit systems with animals present.

Representative Work Functions and Responsibilities
Demonstrate commitment to Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center guest experience, mission, vision, and values.

Support the guest experience by participating in visitor enhancement development; may lead public programs and tours; serve as a spokesperson on behalf of the Aquarium; and actively seek out guest engagement opportunities.

Report to the Exhibits Technician III and Senior Curator, and serve as working lead for a team of husbandry section staff, divers, volunteers, and interns to ensure the welfare of live animal collections and management in assigned areas. Areas of responsibility include daily operations, care and maintenance of live exhibits, record keeping, behavioral management and training, disease recognition and treatment, diving in enclosed exhibit systems, and quarantine.

Facilitate and maintain comprehensive environmental enrichment program. Mentor junior staff on the development of novel environmental enrichment devices and activities.

Responsible for the overall health and well-being of assigned animal collections and their environments. Assist in administering medical treatments, such as topical and clinical treatments, as directed by veterinary and curatorial staff and in accordance with governing agencies’ and regulatory/accrediting bodies’ standards and guidelines. Governing agencies and regulatory bodies may include, but are not limited to, Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums.
Perform advanced husbandry responsibilities such as, but not limited to, behavioral training of mammals including aquatic and terrestrial, and birds of prey, assists with conducting animal physicals, leading dive operations, animal transports and acclimation; assessing animal health; assessing water quality and nutritional needs with senior curatorial and veterinary staff; and developing, implementing and maintaining procedures within the husbandry division.

Assist curatorial staff with the development and implementation of dynamic animal training programs that serve to enhance animal care, animal management, guest experience, and Aquarium public relations.

Ensure optimum animal health, care and welfare through maintaining currency of knowledge and skills. Utilize a variety of resources to research animal welfare topics and product information. Prepare and assist with narrative reports and label information in support of exhibit enhancements for the guest experience.

Maintain exhibits by conducting routine and emergency maintenance and repair of exhibit components including but not limited to concrete décor; waterproofing materials and treatments. Regularly examines infrastructure and operations for improvements. Collaborate with Facilities and Life Support staff to address exhibit needs outside trainer/keeper span of control as described in established division protocols. Dive in enclosed exhibit systems to perform cleaning and maintenance activities. Ensure adherence to safety protocols when using/applying hazardous materials and construction tools/equipment.

Assist curatorial staff with the implementation of collection plans for existing and new exhibits, strategic planning; designing and creating the enclosures, educational information, labels, and other exhibit displays.

May occasionally assist with transport of animals, including extended overnight travel.

Assist curatorial staff with completing husbandry section staff performance evaluations, providing input for Exhibits Technician I evaluations.

Ensure compliance of all applicable Virginia Aquarium protocols, procedures, and accreditation standards including but not limited to, behavioral training, animal welfare and care, quarantine, nutrition and diet preparations, animal restraint and translocation, and animal systems support technologies such as life support and water quality. Perform and assist with trouble shooting and regularly review current protocols for improvements. Help develop, edit, and implement assigned division’s standard operating procedures. Maintain currency of knowledge regarding governing agencies and regulatory/accrediting bodies’ standards and guidelines.

Support the Dive Safety Officer’s efforts to ensure compliance of the Virginia Aquarium’s dive program protocols and operations with all applicable regulations and accreditation standards. Assist the Dive Safety Officer in training volunteer divers and new staff members in exhibits. Dive in enclosed exhibit systems with animals present.

Cross-train with other animal care staff.

Perform other job duties requiring skills, knowledge and physical requirements as demanded by those
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duties described or less. Individual assignments will be determined by the supervisor based on then current workloads and department needs.

Performance Standards
Implement animal training programs that serve to enhance animal care, animal welfare, guest experience, and Aquarium public relations, as well as perform detailed exhibit development, management, and maintenance work while mentoring staff performing similar tasks. Compile timely reports and narratives with high degree of accuracy; and thoroughly communicate the mission and objectives of the Virginia Aquarium to the public.

Minimum Qualifications
Requires a minimum of one (1) year full-time equivalent experience in a similar facility or program, plus any combination of additional education and experience (above the high school level) for a total of four (4) full-time equivalent years. Related positions that meet experience would include those such as animal trainer, biologist, or animal keeper in a similar facility that utilizes the required knowledge, skills and abilities. Individual positions will have specific requirements regarding subject expertise, skills and training; these will be noted on job requisition at time opening is advertised.

Must possess and maintain at all times current SCUBA certification of Open Water Diver or higher from a nationally recognized certifying agency.

Must have, or obtain, a current and valid Virginia or North Carolina driver's license in accordance with Virginia or North Carolina DMV driver’s license eligibility requirements.

Preferred Qualifications
Bachelor’s degree or higher in biology, marine biology, marine science, zoology or related field. Two (2) years of full-time equivalent husbandry experience with position specific taxa in a public aquarium, zoo, or similar facility; details regarding specific taxa will be provided on job requisition at time opening is advertised. Two (2) years of full-time experience (may be concurrent) in the behavioral training of animals for husbandry and guest interaction purposes. Experience working with marine mammals and/or terrestrial mammals such as pinnipeds and North American river otters. Experience supervising staff and volunteers in an aquarium, zoo or similar facility. Exhibit maintenance and husbandry diving experience performed in a public aquarium or similar facility. Experience with animal acquisitions, translocation, and dispositions including planning animal transports, and quarantine. Experience communicating to the public in an aquarium, zoo or similar facility.

Operating/working knowledge of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA), and/or International Marine Animal Trainers Association (IMATA), current standards, guidelines, and programs.

Operating/working knowledge of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services’ (APHIS) current guidelines and standards.

Special Requirements
Must be available to work evenings, weekends, holidays, and overtime when required to meet operational needs.

This position may require an incumbent to wear and maintain appropriate personal protective equipment such as, but not limited to, steel toed shoes, hard hats, safety glasses, gloves, or other safety attire and
equipment in designated areas of risk. Specific requirements will be determined and communicated by the employee’s supervisor based on position assigned.

Positions within this class have been designated as Alpha I positions requiring employees to work during inclement weather, regardless of the City’s operational status.

This is a safety sensitive position and is subject to mandatory drug testing and annual exams. Positive drug test results may result in counseling and/or discipline, up to and including, termination.

Successful completion of a pre-employment physical.

Upon hire, the selected candidate will be required to receive rabies pre-exposure vaccination provided by the City of Virginia Beach Occupational Safety and Health Services.

Knowledge-Skills-Abilities Required to Perform Satisfactorily

A. Knowledge

1. Knowledge of behavioral management through positive reinforcement and animal husbandry of aquatic mammals, terrestrial mammals, and birds.
2. Knowledge of daily husbandry of aquatic and terrestrial mammals.
4. Knowledge of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA), International Marine Animal Trainers Association (IMATA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), and other governing agencies’ and regulatory/accrediting bodies’ standards and guidelines.
5. Knowledge of quarantine and health management protocols, including the treatment of animal disease.
6. Knowledge of collection plan development and implementation elements and strategies.

B. Skills

1. Skill in animal training to facilitate husbandry, medical and other behaviors with marine mammals using dynamic training plans.
2. Skill in effectively managing animals during public interactive programs.
3. Skill in exhibit development and maintenance.
4. Skill in SCUBA diving in exhibits.
5. Skill in assessing animal health, nutrition and other husbandry issues/needs.
6. Skill in problem solving in assigned areas.
7. Skill in the use of small hand tools as well as basic shop tools.
8. Skill in recognizing and identifying common diseases and parasites in mammals and birds.
9. Skill in water quality maintenance, sampling, testing, interpreting water quality data and giving clear and concise direction regarding water treatments.
10. Skill in operating a computer and city standard software applications, as well as industry standard animal record keeping software.
11. Skill in supervising staff and volunteers.

C. Abilities

1. Ability to manage the day to day efforts of employees with different levels of experience and to address any issues that arise in order to maintain the highest standards of animal care.
2. Ability to make training and operational decisions in the supervisor’s place.
3. Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
4. Ability to instruct interns and employees with different levels of experience on training techniques.
5. Ability to maintain detailed records.

This description is intended to indicate the kinds of tasks and levels of work difficulty that will be required of positions that will be given this title and shall not be construed as declaring what the specific duties and responsibilities of any particular position shall be. It is not intended to limit or in any way modify the right of any supervisor to assign, direct, and control the work of employees under his or her supervision. The use of a particular expression or illustration describing duties shall not be held to exclude other duties not mentioned that are of similar kind or level of difficulty.
6. Ability to give and follow directions and maintain effective working relationships with Aquarium staff and other groups or organizations with which the Aquarium has contact.

7. Ability to effectively communicate to guests of the Aquarium in both formal and informal settings.

Working Conditions
The below stated working conditions are intended to provide a general overview of the environmental conditions inherent in the job setting, as well as the physical, mental, and sensory requirements necessary to perform the essential functions of positions in the noted job title. A more detailed description will be made available at the position (PCN) level.

NOTE: Per HR Policy 6.19, Americans with Disabilities, the City follows the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in all hiring and employment decisions. The City shall not discriminate on the basis of disability in its hiring and employment practices. The City shall make reasonable accommodations for the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified applicant or employee with a disability upon request unless the accommodation would cause an undue hardship on the operation of the City’s business.

Physical Requirements: Physical refers to the requirement for physical exertion and coordination of limb and body movement.

Medium to heavy work that involves walking, standing, bending, stooping, climbing, lifting, pushing and raising objects, and involves exerting up to 50 pounds of force on a regular and reoccurring basis and occasional use of standard office equipment; considerable skill and adeptness in the use of the fingers, hands or limbs in tasks involving close tolerance or limits of accuracy. This position works in or around water extensively and requires that the incumbent possess strong swimming abilities and be able to maintain fitness sufficient that they can swim unassisted and in emergent situations, as well as be able to respond to assist others in distress. Must maintain physical attributes to permit proper use and fit of dive breathing apparatus.

Mental Requirements: Mental refers to the degree that the job involves cognitive activities, and use of mental processes.

Performs specialized technical or professional work requiring general understanding of operating policies and procedures and their application to problems not previously encountered; applies specialized technical or professional principles and practices in the solution of problems; may require continuous, close attention for accurate results and frequent exposure to unusual pressure.

Environmental Conditions: Environmental refers to job conditions inherent to the job setting, including those that may lead to injury or health hazards even though precautions have been taken.

May risk exposure to animals/wildlife to include exposure to animal bites, scratches, and diseases; may be exposed to venomous and non-venomous animals, insects, fishes, amphibians, arthropods and other species of organisms; work may be performed outdoors, indoors, in or under water, under all types of weather conditions with exposure to bright/dim light, dusts and pollen, extreme heat and/or cold, wet or humid conditions, noise, vibration, fumes, odors, traffic, moving machinery, electrical shock, chemicals, and working at heights or in confining/congested spaces, including under water in large aquarium tanks.

Sensory Requirements: Sensory refers to hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell required by the job.

Normal visual acuity, depth perception, field of vision, color perception, hearing, speaking, sense of smell, and texture perception.

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