

Visitor Information Services of Friends of the Forest
by Susan Vitek

Do you remember when you first saw The Village of Oak Creek and Sedona and thought—“Wow! What a Fabulous Place. How do I find out what I shouldn’t miss?” As more people “discover” us, Friends of the Forest (FOF) needs more volunteers for VIS—Visitor Information Services.

VIS volunteers are the faces of the Red Rock Ranger District. We help staff the front desks at the South Gateway Information Center behind Tequa Plaza in the Village of Oak Creek on Hwy. 179, and the Red Rock Ranger Station southeast of the Village on Forest Road 618.

We could call ourselves “Questions R Us!”

Those questions involve Red Rock Passes, hiking, camping, and our three Indian Heritage Sites—Palatki, Honanki and V-V. Anyone can learn to do this job, even if new to the area. Volunteers work a half day and there is always a Forest Service employee nearby for questions you can’t answer.

Training for the South Gateway is given by both the Forest Service and the Chamber of Commerce since many people want to know about hotels, restaurants and tours. Training at the ranger station is handled by another VIS volunteer.

In 2008, all VIS volunteers will be working at the new Red Rock Ranger Station under construction one mile south of the Village on Hwy. 179. During busy seasons, it’s estimated that 1,000 people a day will need information. Here is where you can make a difference.

Informed visitors have more respect for the land. As Wilderness Ranger Justin Loxley says, “The land has no voice, so we have to speak for it.” By reminding people to stay on the trails, not park hot cars over high weeds, and to enjoy their stay, you may be the voice of the land that says, “Don’t throw that trash on me, don’t step off the trail and destroy valuable microbiotic soil, don’t throw that cigarette butt on me, please.”

If you want to make a difference, visit our website at friendsoftheforestedona.org or stop by one of the visitor centers to pick up a Friends of the Forest brochure.

Please help us give a voice to our fabulous forest.