

Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence

Executive Summary

Juanita Souther, Ranger

W. Kerr Scott Reservoir

Ranger Juanita Souther came to W. Kerr Scott in 2004 as a volunteer, teaching bilingual swim lessons to children and adults at the swim beaches during the month of July. She quickly proved herself a valuable resource to both the project and the community and has since progressed from a volunteer to a permanent Park Ranger position at W. Kerr Scott. Ranger Souther has a unique ability to include adults, teens, and children in a single program without making it appear as though she were speaking to just one part of the group. She is also invaluable to the Visitor Assistance program with an approachable demeanor that helped to breach the communication barrier between the staff and the Hispanic community, the fastest growing segment of visitors at the project.

Since joining the W. Kerr Scott team as a Park Ranger, Ranger Souther has expanded the W. Kerr Scott interpretive program from one heavily focused on water safety to one that encompasses Corps missions, regionally significant history, and environmental education, all using North Carolina state-approved curriculum development methods. The new Environmental Education Center at W. Kerr Scott is the direct result of her vision to combine tactile, auditory, and visual exhibits, ensuring that the center would meet the needs of regional school districts. Her influence on exhibit design and content has positioned W. Kerr Scott as a preferred regional education destination. She has marketed and operated the new facility to serve over 7000 visitors in its first season of operation.

Ranger Souther is adept at using both tangible and intangible concepts to better enable the visiting public to make real connections to the natural world. She has a unique ability to help visitors, both urban and rural, relate natural resources to their own everyday lives which creates a better understanding and a deep caring for the natural environment. Ranger Souther is strategic in her approach, understanding requirements and needs of local school systems, to ensure the programs developed and delivered enhance the systems curriculum.

Due to her contagious enthusiasm, Juanita's impact in the field of interpretation has been felt at the Project, District, Division and National level. For all these achievements, contributions and more, we proudly nominate Juanita Souther for the Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence