

## **Unitarian Universalist Ninth Grade Trip Responsible Adult (R.A.) Expectations**

The UU Ninth Grade Trip could not happen without the involvement of responsible adults who are willing to devote their time, energy and enthusiasm to the trip. An adult's participation in the Ninth Grade Trip because their child is a current Tripper is not encouraged. The expectations of Responsible Adults are many, as are the rewards. Those who participate in the 9th Grade Trip have the opportunity to learn about and visit the Navajo and Hopi cultures, develop potentially lasting relationships with Trippers and other like minded adults, and to put their Unitarian Universalist values into practice. For many who participate, the 9th Grade Trip is a life changing experience.

Involvement in the 9th Grade Trip requires a substantial investment of time. For the Trip to be a success the group must transform itself into a caring community of both adults and youth, and all involved must have an understanding of both the values and mores of the 9th Grade Trip and of the Native American cultures that we visit. For these and other reasons it is expected that every R.A. is present for all Trip related activities, including:

- Three weekend-long retreats
- Three Sunday morning classes, the first of which is preceded by an adult overnight
- Ten day trip to the Navajo and Hopi Reservations
- One overnight retreat following the Trip itself

We strive to have about one adult to every five ninth graders, and prefer that the adults participating represent a range Front Range Unitarian-Universalist Churches. On most Trips we have about 40 9<sup>th</sup> Graders and 10 or 11 adults. This ratio gives Trippers the opportunity to work with, interact with, and develop relationships with a number of adults during the course of the 9th Grade Trip.

Many of the adults who participate in the Ninth Grade Trip first became interested in the Trip when their children participated as Ninth Graders. Some involved adults actually participated in the Trip as Ninth Graders themselves. Some parents wish to go on their son or daughter's Ninth Grade Trip. Although this often works well, it is sometimes not in the best interests of the Ninth Grader. Please consider this factor, and discuss your interest in being an RA with your child before applying.

Adults working with youth are expected to maintain appropriate physical and behavioral boundaries with youth, and with other adults, at all times. In addition, a background check through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation may be required in order to participate. Our role with the youth on this trip is that of mentor, defined as "a wise or trusted counselor or teacher", rather than friend. Adults are also expected to participate as members of an interdependent team, working together for the benefit of the larger group. Frequent RA meetings help to make this team relationship work effectively. The Trip is a better experience for everyone when the adults work together as a cohesive team.

The duties of R.A.s include such things as:

- Serving as mentor to UU 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Trippers
- Participating in large group meetings and discussions.

- Facilitating groups that research Hopi and Navajo history and cultures and present this information to the larger group. Research materials are available at the retreats, and all research takes place during the course of the retreat.
- Supervising and assisting with rotating cook crews.
- Participating in all activities, including fundraising events, Trip classes, retreats and the Trip itself. The Trip events are not over for adults until the Trippers have been picked up by their families. Adults trade off responsibility for waiting with Trippers according to who is from that particular church and the scheduling needs of all RAs.
- Driving to and from field trip locations during classes and retreats as needed (such as the Denver Art Museum). All drivers must have valid driver's licenses and demonstrate that they have car insurance.
- Supervising the behavior, safety and well-being of 9th Grader Trippers
- Providing appropriate supervision of 9th Grade Trippers in single sex motel rooms
- Working with the Trip Coordinators and the team of RAs to identify and address inappropriate Tripper behaviors and issues.
- Complying with the rules and expectations of Trip as outlined in the UU 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Trip materials.
- Acting as an ambassador for the 9th Grade Trip to home churches, as well as the schools and communities that we visit.

Adults who have an interest in becoming a Responsible Adult on the 9th Grade Trip are required to:

- Complete the RA Agreement, available on the [uu9gt.org](http://uu9gt.org) website
- Request and ensure the submission of a Letter of Reference from the Director of Religious Education at their home church
- Submit a letter communicating:
  - why they wish to become an R.A., and
  - relevant interests, experiences and skills
  - Submit a letter of permission from his/her 9<sup>th</sup> Grader, if applicable. Please note that if, during the course of classes and retreats, it becomes apparent that the parents involvement is not in the best interests of the 9<sup>th</sup> Grader, the adult will be asked to participate another year.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Trip Steering Committee may request a background check through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

Application materials should be submitted by September 1<sup>st</sup> to:

Mitch Pingel  
UU 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Trip Coordinator  
Broomfield CO 80020

or to  
[RA@uu9gt.org](mailto:RA@uu9gt.org)

or, if by fax

303-469-2454