



# Volunteer Structure

Mesker Park Zoo and Botanic Garden is committed to conservation of our wildlife and the environment we share. We seek engaging educational interactions with guests with the goal of enhancing their experience at the Zoo, and increasing their empathy and awareness about the environmental issues we all face. Volunteers have a significant role in that success.

Many people volunteer with their church, school, scout, work, or civic group to help with a special event or grounds project for a day, and **no special training is required** to do that. Others want to volunteer at the Zoo on a more regular basis, and should complete the training they need to serve in the roles they seek. There are a few types of volunteers at the Zoo...

## Volunteers

There are many opportunities to volunteer at the Zoo, including special events, botanical projects, guest interaction, and educational programs for both the young and the young at heart. Our volunteer program is diverse and flexible to meet your needs. You can begin your volunteer path assisting with general projects and events on zoo grounds with minimal training, or advance to more skilled privileges like ambassador animal handling or educational programming with specialized training. The volunteer journey can begin for as little as 6 hours of training and 20 hours per year.

## Docents

Docents are adult volunteers that interact with guests to enhance their zoo experience. Docents have completed specialized training to provide educational interpretation of exhibits, bio facts, and animals throughout the zoo to teach about wildlife, environment, and conservation topics. Docents also conduct programs to schools, scout groups, summer campers, senior citizens, and civic organizations in our community. Docents must be at least 18 years of age, a member of the Zoo, and complete training requirements that correspond with the type of privileges desired.

## Zooteens

Young volunteers 13-18 years of age can become Zooteens, which help staff and adult volunteers with projects, educational activities, summer camps, and events. Our Zooteen program offers opportunities to interact with animals, meet like-minded teens, and gain beneficial experiences to help them find their paths as young adults. Zooteens can start the program early each fall to coincide with the school year, and they can volunteer through the end of the summer of their senior year. Zooteens can volunteer for as little as 6 hours of training and 20 hours per year.

## Zooteen today, your way!

See below for the new tiered Zooteen program structure, and on the reverse side for the Zooteen class schedule. To find out more information, visit our website at [www.meskerparkzoo.com](http://www.meskerparkzoo.com). Register to become a Zooteen by submitting an application, which can be found on our website under "Volunteers". Reservations are required to attend training classes, and classes must be completed in level order. Class size is limited, so early registration is advised. Questions? Contact the Education Department at [education@meskerparkzoo.com](mailto:education@meskerparkzoo.com) or (812) 435-0809.

Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden ZooTeen Program			Level 1 - Volunteer	Level 2 - Interpreter	Level 3 - Ambassador	Level 4 - Ambassador	Level 5 - Ambassador
Requirements	To Train	Class training & certification (hrs)	4	4	4	4	4
		Animal handling certification (hrs)			6+	6+	6+
		Complete pre-summer training each May (hrs)	2	2	2	2	2
	To Stay Active	Annual service requirement (hrs)	20	20	40	60	60
		Annual commitment to zoo camp (days)	4	6	8	10	10
		Annual minimum of interpretive activities**	4	4	6	8	8
	To Advance Levels	Annual animal handling recertification (2 required)			Yes	Yes	Yes
Complete volunteer hours at current level (hrs)		10	10	20	20	20	
Complete minimum time volunteered (months)		2	2	6	12	18	
		Complete cumulative hours at the zoo (hrs training & volunteering) *	20*	40	80	120	140
Privileges	Level 1 - Assist on zoo grounds with general projects, events, and Camp ZOOfare		•	•	•	•	•
	Level 2 - Interpret exhibits, biofacts, animal contact yard, & educational activities			•	•	•	•
	Level 3 - Interpret/ handle beginner level ambassador animals				•	•	•
	Level 4 - Interpret/ handle intermediate level ambassador animals					•	•
	Level 5 - Interpret/ handle advanced level ambassador animals						•
Typical Training Timeline			March	May	Sept.	Feb.	August

\* Cumulative hours - 20 hrs are a soft guideline to move onto Level 2; but 40 hrs is a requirement to move on to Level 3

\*\* Interpretive activities are educational public interactions about an event, exhibit, biofact, animal, or environmental topic.

## Level 1

- Get to know the Zoo
  - Mission & Accreditation
  - Staff & Departments
  - Map orientation
- Zoo History
- MPZ policies & procedures
- Volunteering
  - Volunteer types & opportunities
  - Volunteer service levels & training
- Lay of the Land zoo tour & scavenger hunt
- Zooteens meet and greet

### Independent Study

- Read - MPZBG Zooteen Handbook Level 1
- Login to Volgistics
- Take Level 1 Class Quiz - (online)

## Level 2 (prerequisite Level 1)

- Conservation & Education
  - What does conservation look like?
  - Conservation education messages
- Ecological Concepts
  - Ecological terms & definitions
  - Ecological concept use & messages
- Interpretation
  - What is interpretation?
  - MPZ interpretive resources
  - Effective interpretation know-how
  - Interpreting to your audience
- Intro to animal contact zoo tour
- Intro to biofacts
  - Biofacts inventory
  - How to use and display biofacts
  - Tour of biofact table presentations

### Independent Study

- Read - MPZBG Zooteen Handbook Level 2
- Take Level 2 Class Quiz - (online)

## Level 3 (Prerequisite Level 2)

- Intro to "Plants & Animals"
- Animal welfare & ethics of use
- Stress/ Enrichment/ Zoonosis
- Interpreting live animals
- Tour: meet the MPZ ambassador animals
- Animal handling policies & procedures
- Handling 101

### Independent Study

- Read - Level 3 Zooteen Handbook
- Read - Ambassador Animal Fact Sheets
- Take - Level 3 Class Quiz - (online)

### Certification:

- Take 4 animal handling practice sessions - (with mentor)
- Take animal handling test - (with mentor)
- Take animal certification test - (online)

## Level 4 (prerequisite Level 3)

- Take 4 animal handling sessions - (with mentor)
- Take animal handling test - (with mentor)
- Take animal certification test - (online)

## Level 5 (prerequisite Level 4)

- Take 4 animal handling sessions - (with mentor)
- Take animal handling test - (with mentor)
- Take animal certification test - (online)

## Camp Workshop

- Mandatory for all zooteens helping with summer camp
- Latest zoo updates & tips for a successful camp summer

### Training Schedule 2021

<b>Apr. 16</b>	<b>Spring application deadline</b>	
<b>May 1</b>	<b>9 am - 3 pm</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
<b>May 8</b>	<b>9 am - 3 pm</b>	<b>Level 2</b>
<b>May 26</b>	<b>6 - 7:30 pm</b>	<b>Camp Refresher</b>
<b>August 1</b>	<b>1-5pm</b>	<b>Level 3</b>
<b>Aug. 2-7</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>Level 3 practice</b>
<b>Sept. 10</b>	<b>2021-22 application deadline</b>	
<b>Sept. 25</b>	<b>9 am - 3 pm</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
<b>Oct. 2</b>	<b>9 am - 3 pm</b>	<b>Level 2</b>
<b>Winter 2021</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>Level 4 &amp; 5</b>

