

ROGER WILLIAMS PARK ZOO AND RHODE ISLAND ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# DOCENT VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE AT THE ZOO

**Please mail completed application to:**

*Manager of Volunteer Resources*

*Roger Williams Park Zoo*

*1000 Elmwood Avenue*

*Providence, RI 02907*

OR

**Email completed application to:** [volunteer@rwpzoo.org](mailto:volunteer@rwpzoo.org)

**Application Deadline:** December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

After the application deadline passes, we will review applications and offer interviews to candidates.

Acceptance into the Docent training program does not guarantee acceptance into the Docent program. Applicants who are accepted into the Docent training program will be considered Docent Trainees until they have completed the training program and passed all exams and evaluations.

**Please direct all questions to** [Docents@rwpzoo.org](mailto:Docents@rwpzoo.org)

# Docent Volunteer Position Description

POSITION TITLE: Docent

CLASSIFICATION: Volunteer

DEPARTMENT: Guest Engagement

REPORTS TO: Docent Coordinator/Manager of Interpretation/Manager of Volunteer Resources

DUES: \$75 to cover polo shirt, access badge, background check, and onboarding process (due upon start of program)

COMMITMENT: Hours Requirement 60; minimum one-year commitment

## **Summary of Responsibilities:**

Roger Williams Park Zoo Docents are frontline volunteers whose primary function is to enhance the visits of our guests through conversational interactions.

1. Seek out opportunities to enhance each guest's visit and to share and support the Zoo's mission and messaging, with an emphasis on long-term conservation behavior.
2. Provide opportunities for "profound experiences" – interactions and experiences that create emotional connections to the Zoo and nature.
3. Engage guests at exhibits by focusing on their interests and experiences then guiding the conversation to the appropriate animal-related educational content.
4. Prioritize safety, courtesy, and professionalism.

## **Essential Position Functions:**

1. Provide answers to general Zoo questions, such as directions and daily happenings.
2. Assist guests as necessary, including offering to take family photos, park and straighten strollers.
3. Depending on the chosen assignment(s) and their availability, Docents will be responsible for one or more of the following on any given day:
  - a. **Greeter:** Welcome visitors, answer general guest questions.
  - b. **Farmyard/Contact Yard:** Engage with visitors, provide general animal info (names, boy/girl, etc.), support Wild Bunch staff in ensuring safe guest use of the area.
  - c. **Activity Carts:** Facilitate educational hands-on activities and games designed to highlight conservation and animal care.
  - d. **Habitat Interpretation:** Using storytelling skills to connect guests to the zoo's animals and conservation programs.

Additional training may be offered based on the needs of the program, and the zoo. After completing one season, pending additional training and end of year evaluations, Docents will have the opportunity to be trained to interpret at other animal habitat locations.

## **Qualifications:**

1. Superior people skills: ability to read and interpret social cues and body language; awareness of own body language and visual cues.
2. Excellent verbal communication skills.
3. Excellent guest service skills; instinct for exceeding guest expectations.
4. Interest/experience in conservation and education.

## Requirements:

1. Due to the independent nature of Docent responsibility, must be at least 18 years old by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Age verification may be required.
2. Ability to pass a background check.
3. If selected for an interview, must be available to interview in-person at the Zoo on January 8, 2025, from 6:00PM-8:00PM or January 11, 2025, from 10:00-12:00PM.
4. If accepted as a Docent Trainee, participate in general orientation required of all staff and volunteers, which may include in-person and online components.
5. Attend in-person Docent training dates hosted at Roger Williams Park Zoo, and complete required on-line training on your own time. In-person training sessions will occur weekly, tentatively on Tuesdays 1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/18 or, Saturdays 2/1, 2/8, 2/15, 2/22. On-line training will run concurrently with in-person training.
6. Demonstrate understanding of trained materials by verifying competency via an evaluation which may include written and observational components.
7. Arrive for shifts on time and stay until their conclusion.
8. Ability to:
  - move from location to location throughout the Zoo.
  - be outside in all weather for the duration of your shift.
  - reliably read and respond to email.
  - interact with guests of all ages and abilities.
9. Must have access to the internet, either at home, at a shared location (including the Zoo, or local library), or on a mobile device. Internet access is required to receive news updates, sign up for shifts, and complete evaluations.
10. Must be flexible and supportive of the Zoo and its mission.
11. Must adhere to all policies in the Roger Williams Park Zoo Volunteer Handbook.
12. Undergo:
  - periodic observations and assessments of performance administered by Roger Williams Park Zoo staff.
  - refresher trainings on key components (emergencies, guest interaction, etc.).
  - Occasional first-time training as the Zoo adds and changes exhibits.

## Benefits:

1. Occasional opportunities to attend continuing education programs.
2. Broad exposure to many facets of Zoo operation.
3. Excellent resume builder for careers focusing on customer service, education, science, conservation, and more.
4. Community service hours for schools, etc.
5. Volunteering in a fun and energetic environment!
6. Free year-round admission to Roger Williams Park Zoo for yourself.
7. Eight free passes per year to Roger Williams Park Zoo to give to friends/family.

RI Zoological Society is a nonprofit entity dedicated to the development and enrichment of Roger Williams Park Zoo.)

## DOCENT APPLICATION

### Applicant Information

Applicants will receive consideration without discrimination based upon any legally protected class, including but not limited to race, age, color, religion, sex, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, protected impairment, military status, veteran status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity or ancestry, or other legally protected status except where a bona fide occupational qualification exists.

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First M.I.

Present Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address Apartment/Unit # City State ZIP Code

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about the volunteer program at RWPZ? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you legally prohibited from performing volunteer work of this nature in the U.S.? YES NO

Have you worked/volunteered for this organization in the past? YES NO If yes, when and in what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever applied to work or volunteer for this organization in the past? YES NO If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you at least 18 years old? YES NO

### Previous Employment/Volunteer Experience

From	To	Employer Name	Telephone( )
Position Title		Address	
Immediate supervisor and title		Summarize the nature of work performed and position responsibilities	
From	To	Employer	Telephone( )
Position Title		Address	
Immediate supervisor and title		Summarize the nature of work performed and position responsibilities	
From	To	Employer	Telephone( )
Position Title		Address	
Immediate supervisor and title		Summarize the nature of work performed and position responsibilities	

(By providing the above information, you are authorizing RWPZ/RIZS to contact your former employers regarding your suitability for volunteer work.)

May we contact your present employer? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

## Education

EDUCATION	School Name	#Yrs. Attended	Degree Received	Subjects Studied/Major
High School				
College or University				
Graduate School				

## Professional/Academic References

Please list two professional or academic references. Please do not list relatives. By providing these references, you are authorizing Rhode Island Zoological Society to contact these individuals regarding your suitability for volunteer work.

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Years Known: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Years Known: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

## Paper Interview Questions

**\*\*Please submit a separate page with your application answering the following questions\*\***

1. Why do you want to volunteer as a Docent at Roger Williams Park Zoo?
2. Please describe any professional experiences or skills you have that you think would be useful as a Docent.
3. What environmental issue or issues (social, cultural, etc.) are you most passionate about and why?
4. What elements make a good story in your opinion? What kind of storytelling do you think Zoo visitors would enjoy and that furthers our mission?
5. RWPZoo is dedicated to being a space of and for the community. The Zoo values diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is important that all team members, including volunteers, can support this mission. Can you express your thoughts on this mission and how you may be able to support this at the Zoo?

## RIZS Smoke-Free Workplace

By Rhode Island law, smoking is prohibited in all enclosed facilities within places of work without exception. This includes common work areas, auditoriums, classrooms, conference and meeting rooms, private offices, elevators, hallways, medical facilities, cafeterias, employee lounges, stairs, restrooms, vehicles, and all other enclosed facilities. All volunteers must abide by these smoking restrictions.

## Disclaimer and Signature

***I hereby certify that the information stated above is to the best of my knowledge true, correct and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation of facts or any false or incomplete statements in this application are sufficient cause for dismissal if I am accepted as a volunteer. I authorize the investigation of all statements contained in this application in return for being considered for a volunteer position. I know that my completion of this application form does not mean that any volunteer positions are available. I acknowledge that RIZS has not made any promise that I will be accepted as a volunteer. I understand that RIZS has no obligation to offer me a volunteer position, and that I have no right or entitlement to a volunteer position. I understand that any offer of a volunteer position by RIZS is for no definite period of time and that either RIZS or I may terminate the relationship at any time without prior notice and without any reason or cause. I have read the Docent volunteer description, and certify that I am able to perform the duties described therein with or without reasonable accommodations. I understand that I am applying for a volunteer position. No payment or remuneration will be given in exchange for volunteer service. I further certify that I am applying for this volunteer position out of a desire to further my personal education and development, as well as to further the civic and community benefits which the Zoo provides.***

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_