

## Volunteer FAQs

### **How do I become a volunteer?**

The first step to becoming an Elmwood Park Zoo volunteer is to complete an online application. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Those whose application is considered will receive an email from the volunteer office to setup an interview. A reference check will also be conducted. Upon completion of the interview and reference check, individuals invited into the volunteer services are required to complete paperwork as well as a PA criminal background check and child abuse clearance. All new volunteers attend a general orientation that includes a tour of the zoo and discussion of policies and protocols. Some positions require additional specialized training. Individuals can start signing up for shifts once these steps are complete!

### **How long does the process take to become a volunteer?**

The entire process can take anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks as a general rule. While the volunteer office makes it a priority to review applications and help individuals complete onboarding in a timely fashion, the timeline is contingent upon various factors including availability of staff, replies from references, and clearances. The length of the process is also dependent upon finding a suitable position that matches the applicant's needs to the needs of the zoo.

### **How many hours are required to volunteer? What days and times are available?**

Each position has a different time requirement and level of commitment. Shifts vary depending on the needs of the zoo and staff and volunteer availability. Please refer to the position descriptions for more detailed information on service requirements and scheduling.

### **Why isn't my assignment preference available on the application?**

The needs of the EPZ determines the amount of spaces available for each opportunity. Some assignments will not be available because our current volunteer corps is successfully filling those needs. The Education, Junior Education, and Tour Guide opportunities require specialized training that cannot be offered continuously; as a result, recruitment is closed for a portion of the year. The volunteer office encourages individuals to periodically revisit the application to see what is available. Please contact the Manager of Volunteer Engagement if you have any questions regarding specific positions.

### **I need to complete service hours/job shadowing project for school. Can I complete my requirement at your zoo? Would I be able to interview animal care/veterinary staff?**

The EPZ is not able to accept students who wish to fulfill school projects or service learning hours. Because our staff is so busy, they aren't able to set aside time for interviews or oversee job shadows.

### **I can't commit to a year-long program. Are there short-term volunteer opportunities?**

The zoo primarily offers long-term (one year) opportunities that generally take place throughout the year. We invest a great deal of resources into our volunteers. However, the zoo does host group/corporate "days of service." Occasionally, when the need arises, we recruit volunteers for one-day assignments at special events like Boo at the Zoo or Oktoberfest. The volunteer office is currently developing more single-day family friendly opportunities as well so check back with us periodically to see what we have planned!

### **Can volunteering at the zoo guarantee a paid position?**

There are no guarantees that any volunteers will be offered a paid position. When a position becomes open, volunteers will be given equal consideration as other applicants.

**I have experience working with animals. As a volunteer, can I be trained to handle zoo animals?**

Volunteers, even those with experience, do not handle any of the zoo animals nor do they have access to exhibits. While some positions allow volunteers to work more closely alongside select animals, employees are ultimately in charge of the handling, cleanliness and welfare of all zoo animals. The EPZ does offer Animal Care and Education internships for college students wishing to gain experience in a professional zoo setting. Please review the "Internship" section of our webpage for more information.