

Volunteer Opportunities

So What Can You Do At The Zoo?

We have different opportunities to fit everyone's interest, from animal keeping to public speaking. The following are a few of the opportunities available at the Peoria Zoo. All of the jobs require an interest in animals!

Department: Education

Duties: Under general supervision, volunteers/docents will be expected to work both independently and with Educators. Hours are flexible, depending on the assignment. There are many opportunities open in the Education department, such as:

Special Events- Under general supervision, volunteers will help with set up and take down as well as with the actual event (such as Howl-Zoo-Ween, the Easter Egg Hunt, Critter Christmas and Zoofest). It helps to have a general knowledge of the zoo.

Summer/Day Camps, Home school classes, and Zoo Tot classes -Volunteers will assist in supervision of the children during crafts, games and activities.

Volunteers interested undergo extensive training and may then become:

Rovers- This position requires general knowledge of the zoo and a more specific knowledge of a certain animal area, biofact, etc. Stationed near an animal group, this assignment requires the volunteer to present information about the animal/biofact to the general public (it's cool to see a sea lion, but to touch sea lion fur is even cooler).

Tour Guide- Present tours of the Zoo to school groups and to the general public (a great help especially from April-September).

Animal Handler- Learning how to handle and present selected education animals to use in programs and during talks in the Zoo.

Zoomobile- Assist in all tasks involved in taking programs off-site. This docent may also be required to handle animals as part of the assignment.

Africa Guides- Learn all about the animals in our new exhibit and share that knowledge with our visitors. Special training classes will be held to prepare you for this experience.

Qualifications: Excellent public speaking and listening skills are essential (these can be learned!) This volunteer must be comfortable in front of crowds, be able to present information in a smooth confident manner, and must be able to project his/her voice in a loud, positive manner. Additionally, these volunteers must have the ability to manage groups of adults and/or children.

All of these skills can be worked on and developed through this program. All volunteers will be thoroughly trained in the area(s) assigned before independently volunteering.

Department: Animal

Most positions require you to volunteer at least 2 hours (with a 4 hour shift preferable) between the hours of 9:00 AM- 4:00 PM. You may volunteer any day of the week.

Classification: Diet Cutter

Duties: Under general supervision, diet cutters will prepare animal diets for various animals at the zoo. These volunteers will be measuring food, cutting fruits and vegetables, preparing dishes, and cleaning up afterwards. Diet cutters must be able to function independently or with volunteers and staff.

Qualifications: Diet cutters must be able to follow detailed, written instructions with little supervision. They must also be skillful using knives and become comfortable handling a variety of different types of food.

All diet cutters will be trained by keeper staff.

Shifts run from 1:30-4:00 initially, once you are trained on diets, your schedule becomes more flexible (anytime between 9:00-3:00).

Classification: Assistant Zookeeper

Duties: Assistant zookeepers will volunteer under the direction of the Zoo's professional zookeepers. Volunteers will assist in the cleaning of animal displays, windows, floors and other items as necessary.

Qualifications: A strong desire to be near animals. **"Near animals" does not mean touching the animals.** For the most part there will not be direct contact with the animals. Assistant zookeepers must be mature, responsible people who are willing to "get dirty" during their duties.

Assistant zookeepers are under the supervision of a keeper at all times. You must sign up to become an assistant zookeeper on the calendar in the biocenter. Initially you will be in the contact area so dress for the weather.

After 5 positive evaluations, an animal area will be assigned to you the day you arrive.

Requests of areas to work in or people to work with will be considered but cannot be guaranteed. If there are fears/hatred of certain animals, we can work around those.

Classification: Behavioral Enrichment and Enhancement Program (BEEP)

Duties: Under the supervision of the Enrichment Coordinator or Education Department, BEEP volunteers will design and institute enrichment activities for the animal collection. BEEP volunteers may also be responsible for collecting data on enrichment activities (observing the animals after the BEEP item has been placed in the enclosure).

This program will occur the second weekend of the month Saturday from 11-1 and Sunday from 1:00-3:00 (unless otherwise noted).

Qualifications: A desire to volunteer around animals. A creative interest in animal behavior is essential.