



Roger Williams Park Zoo / Rhode Island Zoological Society

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

Docent Volunteer Application

Complete Applications Include the Following:

Completion of Digital or Paper Application (Pages 1-3)

Completion of Application Short Answer Questions (Page 3)

To Submit Your Application:

Please email to:

volunteer@rwpzoo.org

OR

Please mail to:

Manager of Volunteer Resources
Roger Williams Park Zoo
1000 Elmwood Avenue
Providence, RI 02907

Application Deadline:

December 1st 2026

Next Steps →

After the deadline passes, we will review applications and reach out 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.



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Position Title:	Docent	Department:	Guest Engagement
Classification:	Volunteer		
Reports To:	Docent Coordinator, Manager of Interpretation, Manager of Volunteer Resources		
Dues:	\$75 to cover t-shirt, badge, background check, and onboarding process		
Commitment:	60 hours required during the season; minimum one-year commitment		
Season:	April 1st-Indigenous People's Day		

Position Description

Roger Williams Park Zoo Docents enhance each guest's visit by engaging visitors at animal habitats, responding to their interests and experiences, and connecting conversations to meaningful animal, nature, and conservation content. Docents create opportunities for profound experiences that foster emotional connections to the Zoo and the natural world, while sharing and supporting the Zoo's mission and inspiring long-term conservation behaviors. Docents prioritize safety, courtesy, and professionalism while creating welcoming, memorable experiences for guests of all ages. *As a note, this role works with people. Docents do not work directly with the care and management of the Zoo's animal collection.*

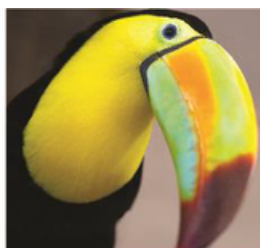
Volunteer Responsibilities:

1. Enhance each guest's visit by supporting the Zoo's mission and inspiring long-term conservation behaviors.
2. Create meaningful, "profound experiences" that foster connections to the Zoo, wildlife, and nature.
3. Engage guests by exploring their interests and connecting them to relevant animal and conservation content.
4. Prioritize safety, courtesy, professionalism, and exceptional guest experiences.
5. Volunteers fulfill these expectations by completing shifts in the following assignments:
 - a. **Greeter:** Welcome visitors, answer general guest questions.
 - b. **Farmyard/Contact Yard:** Engage with visitors, provide general animal info (names, boy/girl, etc.), support Exhibit Interpreter 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.



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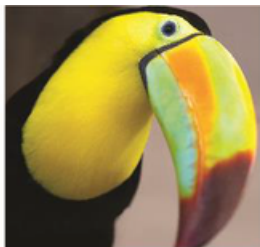
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Requirements:

1. Due to the independent nature of the Docent responsibility, applicants must be at least 18 years old by April 1st.
2. Successful completion of a background check.
3. Ability to:
 - arrive for shifts on time and stay until their conclusion.
 - 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.
4. 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.
5. Must be supportive of the Zoo and its mission.
6. Must adhere to all policies in the Roger Williams Park Zoo Volunteer Handbook.
7. 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 animal exhibits.
8. Completion of 60 hours of service each season (April 1-Indigenous People's Day). Volunteer shifts are flexible. Shifts can be as short as 1 hour shifts or shifts can be stacked with up to 6 hours of service in one day. Shifts are available each day of the week during the season and are scheduled online. Docents are still welcome to volunteer off season.
9. **If selected for an interview, applicants must be available to interview on one of the following interview sessions - Wednesday, 12/9 6:00pm-8:00pm or Thursday, 12/10 6pm-8:00pm.** Applicants should be available for the full two hours, as a group style interview and one-on-one interviews are conducted during the scheduled time.
10. If accepted as a Docent Trainee, participate in general orientation required of all staff and volunteers, which may include in-person and online components.
11. Attend in-person Docent training dates hosted at Roger Williams Park Zoo, and complete required online training on your own time. **In-person training sessions are scheduled on Sundays: 1/17, 1/24, 1/31, with a weather date of 2/7.** Online training will run concurrently with in-person training.
12. Demonstrate understanding of trained materials by verifying competency via an evaluation which may include written and observational components.

Benefits:

1. Free year-round admission to Roger Williams Park Zoo for yourself.
2. Eight free passes per year to Roger Williams Park Zoo for your friends and family.
3. Additional free tickets to Zoo events and offerings when available.
4. Good resume builder with potential opportunities for professional development.
5. Community service hours for school, sports teams, etc.
6. Meeting new people in a fun environment.
7. Supporting the Roger Williams Park Zoo's mission by creating engaging experiences that empower guests to join us in conserving wildlife and wild places.



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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 expression or ancestry, or other legally protected status except where a bona fide occupational qualification exists.

Applicant Information

Full Name: **Date:**

Last Name First Name M.I.

Address:

Street Address Apartment/Unit # City State ZIP Code

Email: **Cell Phone:**

How did you hear about this volunteer program?

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 and for what position?

Will you be 18 years old as of April 1st 2027?

YES
☐

NO
☐

Education

School Name	# Yrs. Attended	Graduation Year	Area of Study

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Professional / Academic References

Please list two professional or academic references. By providing these references, you authorize Rhode Island Zoological Society to contact these individuals regarding your suitability for volunteering.

Full Name: Relationship: Years Known:

Company Name: Phone:

Full Name: Relationship: Years Known:

Company Name: Phone:

Previous Employment / Volunteer Experience

By providing these references, you authorize Rhode Island Zoological Society to contact these individuals regarding your suitability for volunteering.

Start Date: 	End Date: 	Employer Name: 	Telephone:
Position Title: 		Address: 	
Nature of Position/Position Responsibilities: 			

Start Date: 	End Date: 	Employer Name: 	Telephone:
Position Title: 		Address: 	
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Start Date: 	End Date: 	Employer Name: 	Telephone:
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Paper Application Questions

Please submit your responses on a separate page/document. Do not complete these answers on this form. Applications submitted without this information will not be considered.

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 issues 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 strives to create a welcoming environment and culture where people from all backgrounds feel valued, respected, and that they can be a part of our mission. How might you contribute to fostering a positive, inclusive experience for our guests, staff, and fellow volunteers?**

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 Play Partner volunteer position 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: