

## 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
- Docents meet and greet

### Independent Study

- Read - MPZBG Volunteer 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
- Tour: contact zoo
- Tour: biofacts
  - Biofacts inventory
  - How to use and display biofacts
  - Tour of biofact table presentations

### Independent Study

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

## Level 3 (prerequisite Level 2) **\*\*Docents that train at Level 3 and higher are expected to use their training to handle AA in formal and informal interpretive experiences, programs, and events.**

- Intro to Living Ambassadors
- Animal welfare / stress / zoonosis
- Animal handling policies & procedures
- Intro to Plants & Animals
- Tour: meet the MPZ ambassador animals

### Independent Study

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

### Certification:

- Take 3 animal handling practice sessions - (with mentor)
- Take animal handling test - (with mentor)

## Level 4 (prerequisite Level 3)

- Take 3 animal handling sessions - (with mentor)
- Take animal handling test - (with mentor)
- Take animal certification test - (online)

## Level 5 (prerequisite Level 4)

- Take 3 animal handling sessions - (with mentor)
- Take animal handling test - (with mentor)
- Take animal certification test - (online)

| <b>Training Schedule 2024</b> |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Feb. 1</b>                 | <b>Application deadline (spring)</b>        |
| <b>Feb. 3</b>                 | <b>Level 1 Class</b>                        |
| <b>Mar. 2</b>                 | <b>Level 2 Class</b>                        |
| <b>Aug. 17</b>                | <b>Level 3 Cert / Recertification Class</b> |
| <b>Sept. 1</b>                | <b>Application deadline (fall)</b>          |
| <b>Sept. 7</b>                | <b>Level 1 Class</b>                        |
| <b>Sept. 28</b>               | <b>Level 2 Class</b>                        |
| <b>Nov. 16</b>                | <b>Level 4/5 Cert &amp; Recert Class</b>    |





# Volunteer Structure

## 2024

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 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 their high school freshman year, and they can reapply annually to volunteer through the end of the summer of their senior year. Zooteens can volunteer for as little as 6 hours of training and 40 hours per year.

### Volunteer today, your way!

See below for the new tiered volunteer structure, and on the reverse side for the volunteer class schedule. To find out more information, visit our website at [www.meskerparkzoo.com](http://www.meskerparkzoo.com). Register to become a volunteer by submitting an application, which can be found on our website. Questions? Contact the Education Department at [education@meskerparkzoo.com](mailto:education@meskerparkzoo.com) or (812) 435-0809.

| Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden<br>Volunteer Program<br><small>last updated 1.2024</small> |  | Level 1 - Volunteer  | Level 2 - Interpreter | Level 3 - Ambassador | Level 4 - Ambassador | Level 5 - Ambassador |     |
|---|--|--|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----|
| Requirements  | To Train   | Class training & certification (hrs)                                     | 4-10                  | 8-10                 | 10-14                |                      |     |
|   |  | Animal handling certification (hrs)                                      |                       |                      | 6                    | 12                   | 12  |
|   | To Stay Active   | Annual <b>service</b> requirement (hrs)                                  | 20                    | 20                   | 40                   | 60                   | 60  |
|   |  | Annual <b>volunteer meeting</b> requirement (# of meetings) * <b>NEW</b> | 3                     | 3                    | 3                    | 3                    | 3   |
|   |  | Annual <b>scheduled assignments</b> requirement (# of assignments) **    | 4                     | 6                    | 8                    | 10                   | 10  |
|   | To Advance Levels  | Annual animal handling recertifications if fluent *** <b>NEW#</b>        |                       |                      | 1                    | 1                    | 1   |
| Complete volunteer time at the zoo (months)   |  | 2  | 6                     | 9                    | 12                   | 24                   |     |
|   |  | Complete cumulative hours at the zoo (hrs training & volunteering)       | 6                     | 40                   | 100                  | 130                  | 160 |
| Privileges  | <b>Level 1</b> - Assist on zoo grounds with general projects & events                        |  | .                     | .                    | .                    | .                    | .   |
|   | <b>Level 2</b> - Interpret exhibits, biofacts, animal contact yard, & educational activities |  |                       | .                    | .                    | .                    | .   |
|   | <b>Level 3</b> - Interpret/ handle beginner level ambassador animals ****                    |  |                       |                      | .                    | .                    | .   |
|   | <b>Level 4</b> - Interpret/ handle intermediate level ambassador animals ****                |  |                       |                      |                      | .                    | .   |
|   | <b>Level 5</b> - Interpret/ handle advanced level ambassador animals ****                    |  |                       |                      |                      |                      | .   |

\* Emeritus Docents need attend only if actively volunteering at Level 2 or above.  
 \*\* **Scheduled assignments** are experiences, programs, or events that are **scheduled by zoo staff to fill a specific need (not self-scheduled)**.  
 \*\*\* Only one recertification is required per level as long as **volunteer stays fluent on handling**. Recert classes are always open to those that need a refresher.  
 \*\*\*\* Docents **must be approved to enter training in Levels 4/5/L**, to be based on knowledge, skill, and **fluency handling animals** in current level.