

Volunteer Information Booklet

Answers the most frequently asked questions about what to expect, how to be involved, what to wear and what to do next.

Catoctin Wildlife Preserve and Zoo
13019 Catoctin Furnace Rd. Thurmont, MD 21788
301-271-3180

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Participant Requirements

Open Opportunity

CWPZoo's Volunteer Program offers many diverse opportunities for the Volunteer. We welcome and encourage participation from all sectors of the community.

Membership

All Volunteers are required to become annual members of Catoctin Wildlife Preserve and Zoo. Memberships are purchased through the Gift Shop and are valid for one full year from date of purchase.

Age

Junior Volunteers must be 13 to 17 years of age to participate without their parent's presence. Parents must consent in writing.

Adult Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older.

Liability and Medical Screenings

In all cases, a release of liability must be signed before volunteer work begins. All volunteers must complete and sign an official registration form. Any medical conditions or allergies that could become a safety issue for you or the animals should be disclosed at that time. Please see "Requirements" for additional information.

Because of our varied work environment, all volunteers must also show proof of a current tetanus booster. Your doctor will be able to provide this documentation or booster shot. Volunteers obtain this at their own expense.

Illegal Drugs/ Alcohol

We do not tolerate the use of alcohol or illegal drugs in our guests, staff or volunteers. Anyone who reports for duty while under the influence of either substance or uses the substance while at the preserve or while representing the preserve at an outreach event will be immediately and permanently terminated.

Eligibility

We strive to create positive matches between our zoo's needs and the interests and abilities of our applying volunteers. Our application and interview process is designed to help us make those matches. Please see "Availability and Training."

Positions within our Volunteer department are based on availability, satisfactory completion of assigned tasks and supervisors approval. All positions may not be open at the time of you begin volunteering, and everyone will not qualify for every position.

If you request a position that is not open, or one that you do not qualify for, you will be notified and encouraged to select something else.

Whether junior or adult, all volunteers must be in good standing at their school, employment or home to participate. People who have been suspended, expelled or "grounded" at their school, employment or home are also suspended from volunteer duties until they return to their regular activities.

Minimum Commitment

Volunteers must commit to a schedule of 15 hours a month for at least 4 months of the year to be considered active. New volunteers should schedule their time in 3 to 4 hour blocks, at least twice a month. Trained volunteers may be able to schedule for full days, based on availability and the needs of the department.

Volunteers who are not maintaining an active schedule will be notified that they are in danger of losing their volunteering privileges. If a satisfactory schedule cannot be rearranged, they will be suspended from the program. Volunteers who wish to resume a schedule after suspension may have to wait until the next open house for new volunteers. Depending on the length of time away from the program, they may also have to attend additional orientation or training sessions to become current on information and procedures.

Ability and Training

Volunteers must demonstrate basic ability required for each job. They should be enthusiastic and show pride in themselves and in their volunteer work.

In addition to the open house, participants must complete at least 15 hours of general involvement (GI) and attend and pass any necessary training classes. The first 15 hours of duty allows you to become familiar with several different areas, staff and tasks as we become familiar with you and your strengths. Duties usually consist of grounds or building cleaning, guest services, special events or education assistance or "odd tasks."

Concurrent with your GI are information and training sessions. About 50% of this information is provided to you in written form for you to study and learn on your own. The other 50% is accumulated through brief classes and hands on training. Participants must complete all parts of this process before applying for a specific area of interest. For these specialized positions, advanced training is required. Each position differs and so will the training. Generally, the number of hours committed increases, and written and performance evaluations are involved. Health screenings may also be required.

General Information

First Aid

First Aid kits are located in the Gift Shop and Snack Bar. Please review emergency

procedures. We offer it but do not administer it ourselves.

Animal Donations

Animal donations are accepted by the Executive or Administrative Directors only. If someone asks you about animal donations, have them contact the Gift Shop or call the Preserve office.

Length of an average visit

Approximately 2 to 3 hours.

Policies and Procedures

Responsibilities

As a Volunteer, your responsibility is to:

Follow policies and procedures established by the Volunteer office.

Accept assignments with a level of responsibility that you can handle. If you believe a task is beyond your abilities, please tell your coordinator or area supervisor. There is no shame in recognizing your limits, but it can be dangerous if you don't.

Fulfill your commitment, find a substitute, or notify the office as soon as possible.

Use reasonable judgment in making decisions on your own where there is no understood policy, then, as soon as possible, consult with your supervisor for future guidance.

Attend all orientation and training sessions as scheduled, and undertake continuing education to maintain competence.

Accept CWPZoo's right to dismiss any Volunteer for failure to meet the program's guidelines, including unsafe practices, poor performance, poor attendance, etc. (Please see Disciplinary Policies)

Be considerate and contribute fully to maintaining a smooth relationship with all guests, staff and other Volunteers.

Be flexible. We all "wear many hats" to accomplish our duties to the animals and guests. To fully participate, we ask you do, too.

Provide suggestions to your supervisor if these might increase the effectiveness of the Program.

Volunteer Benefits

As a volunteer, you will be able to:

Be assigned and trained to a job that is worthwhile, challenging and that you can perform with confidence.

Expect that your time will not be wasted by the lack of planning or coordination.

Know whether your work is effective and how it can be improved.

Receive a recommendation for outside employment, if requested.

Attend periodic programs and special events provided for staff and volunteers.

Be given appropriate recognition of your contributions to the Catoctin Wildlife

Preserve and Zoo.

Evaluations

Volunteers will be evaluated at the end of their training, annually during a conference with the staff and periodically throughout the season. Volunteers will be asked to evaluate the Volunteer Program annually.

Disciplinary Policies

Although every precaution is taken to educate the Volunteer so as to equip them for their Preserve duties, from time to time a problem may occur. If any volunteer fails to comply with Preserve policies and regulations while at the Preserve or representing the Preserve at an outreach function, a conference will be setup with that Volunteer. The Volunteer Coordinator shall inform the Volunteer as to the nature of the complaint. At that time there will be a review of Preserve policies with the Volunteer. The Volunteer Coordinator will interview the parties involved and make every attempt to resolve the complaint. The Volunteer has the right to express their views at these interviews.

Any safety violations will be dealt with in a very serious manner. This may mean termination of duties.

If work fails to meet required standards, or if agreed time commitment is not met, (see section on Volunteer requirements), the Coordinator will set up a meeting with the Volunteer to go over the facts. An informed decision will be made as to what steps should be taken to resolve the situation to everyone's benefit.

Dress Code

All Volunteers are asked to report to work in a clean, official uniform and pants. In all cases, priority is given to safety over fashion.

Shirt - A volunteer "jersey" or collared shirt (One shirt is given to you after successful completion of GI and training tests. Additional shirts are available at cost – currently \$15) Our shirts are worn tucked in.

Pants/Shorts – Tan or khaki colors and a cotton/canvas type material is preferred. They must be well fitted. For safety, no flare or bell bottoms are allowed. Shorts should be mid-thigh or lower in length. Nylon "running" shorts or pants are not allowed as they do not offer enough protection.

Shoes - No exposed toes. Boots or hiking style shoes are preferred. Sneakers are acceptable. Shoe laces must be tied.

Jewelry - For your safety and the safety of our animals, please refrain from wearing anything that can easily be dislodged. Oversized or "dangly" jewelry may become entangled in plant material or fencing or might be grabbed by one of the animals. This includes bracelet style watches, bracelets, long necklaces, hoop earrings, clothing chains, oversized belts. Rings can also be a hazard if they become caught in fencing or tools.

Hair – Must be kept short or pulled back to avoid entanglement in the working environment. A plain or CWPZoo logo baseball cap is acceptable.

Name Tag – One is given to you after successful completion of GI and training tests. Replacements cost \$2 each. Tags are clipped to a front shirt pocket or collar.

Personal cleanliness is a must due to the fact that our Volunteers are meeting a lot of Preserve visitors each time they come to work. Fresh breath and clean, attractive styles are always met with approval by your peers and our staff and visitors.

Volunteers who do not come to work in acceptable uniform will be reminded once about the uniform code. The second time a Volunteer is out of uniform, we shall ask him or her to leave and return when clothing can meet specifications.

Your Role as Ambassador

ALWAYS wear your uniform when you are at the Preserve or when representing the zoo at any function outside the Zoo. You will then become a spokesperson/emissary for the Preserve and people will know whom to thank for a good time.

Remember that you are an ambassador for the zoo when you are in uniform. Your actions, appearance and comments are watched more closely than you may think and all contribute to the impression our guests form about us. Make sure it is a courteous, professional one.

Signing Up for Duties

Volunteer time is generally scheduled during regular business hours., beginning when the zoo opens and ending one hours prior to closing time. Special events are sometimes held in the evenings (Jungle nights, Boo-in-the-Zoo), and special projects may also be scheduled after-hours. Alert the coordinator if you are interested in after-hours activities.

New volunteers may sign up for general grounds/facilities duties, special events, onsite education, and visitor services. After the completion of your GI and training tests, you will consult with the coordinator and may select from other areas as you both see fit. Returning volunteers may sign-up for any category they are qualified for.

One of the keys to successful volunteering and training progress is to be consistent. Try to set a regular schedule that you can stick with (Every Tuesday morning, every Sunday afternoon, etc.)Volunteer Scheduling sheets are located in the Visitor Services office in the gift shop.

Promptness

Promptness is expected. Being late inconveniences all involved. This applies to both when you arrive and when you depart. Junior volunteers or others who are being picked up by someone need to make sure that arrangement is timely.

Substitutes

If you are unable to meet your scheduled Volunteer time, you are required to phone the Volunteer Office as soon as you are aware of it. You may obtain your own substitute (especially if you are doing an education program) from the list of Volunteers qualified to replace you.

If you do get a substitute, the Volunteer Coordinator must be made aware of the change. This keeps each department functioning in an orderly manner.

No-Show

Failure to appear for a scheduled lecture, Petting Zoo shift, special events job etc., more than once without making provisions for a substitute or calling in can result in your dismissal. An unfulfilled commitment dilutes the strength of the Program, at best, the staff must search for a replacement; at worst, it hurts the Preserve's image and efficiency.

Daily Routine

Volunteers must check in at the Gift Shop desk upon arrival at the Preserve. Clocking in and out on your time card is necessary each time you volunteer. Time cards are not to be removed from the Preserve premises. If there is a problem with your time card or with the time clock bring it to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible so it may be rectified.

You will then meet with the coordinator or your area supervisor to review the tasks for the day. General volunteer tasks frequently change from session to session. Be flexible. If you designate and are selected for a specific area of interest, your routine will be more standardized.

If a task is completed ahead of schedule, please complete the safety checks for the area (fences closed, locked, tools away, scraps picked up, etc.) and then check back in with your supervisor.

All special events will have a special sign-in/out sheet at the front desk and it will not be necessary to use your time card at those events.

Your Volunteer hours are totaled each month and records are important for our awards, evaluations and records.

Handy Items/ Tools

Some items that may come in handy while volunteering are: a watch, notepad and pen (pencil points tend to break just when you need them the most) and a pocketknife or multi-purpose tool. Volunteer aprons are available for certain Volunteer jobs to be determined by the Volunteer Office.

If a special project requires other tools that you may have and can safely use, the coordinator or area supervisor may ask you to bring them. The decision is yours. Marking or otherwise identifying your tools will help avoid any confusion later.

Restricted Access to Areas

Only Animal Care Staff are allowed in large carnivore and primate areas, with the exception of the Lemurs. At no time will volunteers be allowed in carnivore and primate areas while animals are present in the area.

If specific assistance has been requested by the staff member and approved by the supervisor, entrance may be permitted into secured areas where the animal(s) is not present, as in the case of an enrichment or re-dressing project.

Volunteers may enter other non-public areas only with the specific permission of the appropriate supervisor. (Permission once does not necessarily indicate permission thereafter.) Non-visitor areas include behind guardrails, exhibits, service areas, maintenance, offices, the residence and the property beyond the zoo perimeter.

Smoking Policy

While smoking is allowed in the park, our staff and volunteers must set a good example by abiding by the following: No smoking is allowed in any of the buildings or in animal areas. This includes in the offices, commissary, barns, den areas, etc. No smoking is allowed while operating equipment, such as golf carts, lawn tractors, trucks or power tools.

We also ask that you dispose of your butts in a proper trash receptacle. Please do

not toss them on the ground.

Guests of Volunteers

When you are scheduled for work, please do not bring guests. You are certainly welcome to enjoy the preserve when you are not scheduled, but you may not bring family into the Preserve free of charge. Any guests brought with a Volunteer will be given the members discount.

When you are here “on your own time” or with guests, you must stay in the guest areas. No exhibit or non-guest access is allowed. A special event for Volunteers and their guests is set-aside during the season as THANKS to everyone in the Program.

Valuables

Please leave important valuables at home or locked in your automobile. The Preserve cannot be responsible for personal items.

How to handle...

People Emergencies

If a child is lost and afraid, have the child remain with you for awhile, the parents are usually nearby. If an uncomfortable amount of time has elapsed, escort the child to the Gift Shop and have them gather information to be announced over the public address system. DO NOT go in search of the parents, children and parents, both in search of each other become a sad comedy of crossed paths.

To report a severe emergency, go to the nearest Preserve staff member or directly to the Gift Shop desk. If you are unable to leave the situation, send a responsible person in your stead. STAY CALM. Help is on the way. Gently but firmly, keep other visitors away from the problem area.

In case of a medical emergency, Volunteers should seek help from Preserve staff as soon as they can. The Good Samaritan Law applies. We DO NOT administer any kind of first aid. We may offer our First Aid Kit supplies for visitors to use, but we CANNOT TOUCH anyone. Make sure an Incident Report is filed at the Gift Shop desk. This protects your Preserve by getting all the facts in writing.

Animal Emergencies

If inedible objects are thrown into exhibits, it is important that the animals do not eat the object. Prompt attention is important. Contact an Animal Care person and/or someone in the Gift Shop so it can be followed up on.

If you see any behavior that is unsafe and you can correct it in a diplomatic way, do so. Report serious (life threatening) actions and your response to the Volunteer office as soon as possible. If routine, report it to staff or leave a message for the appropriate staff before you leave that day.

Report unusual animal behaviors, any inappropriate visitor behavior and other problems that do not require emergency response as soon as you can to the Volunteer Office.

Visitor Problems – Related Challenges

Disenchantment & General Complaints:

If a visitor is totally disenchanted with the Preserve be sympathetic not defensive. There may be situations the visitor is not aware of. Ask Visitor specifically what they did not like so you can take their suggestions back to the staff. Acknowledge legitimate complaints and suggestions. Explain situations when you are able. Refer questions you cannot answer to Gift Shop or Animal Care staff. If a Visitor want to register a formal complaint, contact the Office.

Assertive Visitors

If a Visitor refuses to accept your information, contradicts you, disagrees with you or embarrasses you;

Do not be defensive. Explain that, as you understood the information Determine what the person disagrees with. The Visitor may be right and you will learn something. Thank the person for sharing information with you.

Above all: Keep Your Sense of Humor!

Anti- Zoo Advocates

If a Visitor hotly contests the idea of Zoos and believe animals should be left in the wild, explain that animal husbandry is the very best of animal care and mortality is generally less than in the wild. Good Zoos attempt to promote understanding and appreciation of the diversity of life and the fragile nature of the ecosystem.

Out aim is to make the public aware of its responsibility in preserving our planet and its resources.

Baffling Question

Someone poses a question you cannot answer:

If you are approachable, this will happen all the time. If you know the exhibits and the graphics as well, you might be able to refer visitors to another area for information. Say that you do not know the answer (after all we are learning new things daily)

Do not guess and do not give misinformation. This is very unprofessional. Keep track of what you do not know and find out for future reference. Refer them to an Animal Care staff person of the Gift Shop.

What We Do

GET CLOSE! Catoctin Wildlife Preserve and Zoo specializes in bringing people and animals together. We deliver safe, fun, intimate, educational encounters with over 400 exotic animals of over 100 different varieties. Covering 30 acres filled with natural wildlife, bears, boas, macaws, monkeys, big cats and small mammals are exhibited in an up-close manner.

"Encounters" are scheduled seasonally, where visitors can touch a baby animal, get the "bear" facts on Grizzlies, rub and scrub a 575-pound Aldabra Tortoise or hug a boa constrictor.

When We Do It

Internally, animals are on property and business continues throughout the year. To

the public, we are open as follows:

December, January and February -closed

May through September – open daily 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

April & October – open daily 10 am to 5 p.m.

Nov. and March - 10 to 4 weekends, weather permitting

Special Events

Annually, events include Earth Weekend, Catfish Derby, Members Picnic, Jungle Nights Sleep-Overs, Boo-in-the-Zoo, Wild Wednesdays summer camps, Sunset Safaris and Special Animal Exhibits.

Rest rooms, Telephones, Snacks

The public telephone is located in the parking lot just outside the Gift Shop. For family to reach you in an emergency, direct them to the incoming office number – 301-271-4922.

Rest rooms are located in the entrance of the Tropical Building.

Drink machines are scattered around the Preserve.

The Snack Bar is located directly behind "Griz".

Visitor RE-ENTRY Procedure

As the name would imply, One-day Admission is valid for that entire day. Visitors may leave and reenter the Preserve only if they have identified themselves to the staff at the Gift Shop counter. They should have their hand stamped for reentry.

Contact Information

General information (301) 271-3180

Office (301) 271 - 4922

Fax (301) 271-2673

Each voice line has an answering machine on it for after-hours messages.

Website – www.cwpzoo.com Email – volunteer@cwpzoo.com

“We do not inherit this land from our
ancestors:
we borrow it from
our children.”

Haida Indian Saying