

## Welcome!

The roles that volunteers play at the Seneca Park Zoo are as varied as our volunteers themselves and the work that they do here will greatly contribute to our mission: through the exhibition of animals in naturalistic settings, the Seneca Park Zoo will provide engaging and educational experiences to give our community the motivation and skills to act as stewards of the environment. Volunteers are member of an organization that strives to achieve its goals of education, recreation, conservation and community involvement. These common goals are what bind together zoos and aquariums from around the world.

As you begin this experience, you will serve as a representative of the Seneca Park Zoo and the Seneca Park Zoo Society. It is important that you have a cooperative attitude with Zoo employees, other volunteers and especially our visitors. In exchange, you will feel confident that you are contributing to a worthwhile organization that values your time, efforts, creativity and passion.

This handbook is designed to be a guide to help you understand what it means to be a volunteer at the Seneca Park Zoo, what our expectations are and what you can expect from us. If you should have any questions about the information presented in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Have fun and thank you for your commitment!

## Seneca Park Zoo Volunteer Handbook

**Please read this carefully and complete the requested information. This completed form must be returned to the Volunteer Coordinator before your service can begin.**

I have received a copy of the Seneca Park Zoo volunteer handbook and acknowledge my obligation to read, understand and comply with its contents. I understand that the handbook is intended to provide an overview of the Zoo's policies and does not necessarily represent all policies in place. The Zoo may at any time add, change or rescind any policy or practice at its sole discretion.

---

Volunteer's Name (please print)

---

Volunteer's Signature

Date

---

Guardian's Signature (if Volunteer is under 18)

Date

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK  
January 2012

## About the Zoo

Seneca Park Zoo is owned and operated by Monroe County. The Seneca Park Zoo Society is a not-for-profit organization which has, since 1957, provided education, fundraising, special events and public relations support to Monroe County's Seneca Park Zoo. The Zoo Society is committed to enhancing visitor experience by providing food service operations, retail services, special events and education programs. For additional information, visit [www.senecaparkzoo.org](http://www.senecaparkzoo.org).

### Seneca Park Zoo's Mission

Through the exhibition of animals in naturalistic settings, the Seneca Park Zoo will provide engaging and educational experiences to give our community the motivation and skills to act as stewards of the environment.

### History of the Volunteer Program

In 2003, the Volunteer Program at the Seneca Park Zoo began to take shape. It was in this year that volunteers were actively recruited, information was stored and meetings were held. Shortly after the start of the program, the 'Jim Grapenstetter Award for Outstanding Volunteerism' was created. This award, which is given to a volunteer who provides exceptional dedication to the Zoo, continues to be given out today at the annual Volunteer Picnic.

### Becoming a Volunteer

All applicants must complete and sign an application and complete an interview prior to volunteering.

### The Seneca Park Zoo Expects You To:

- Know your duties and how to do them promptly, correctly and pleasantly.
- Cooperate with staff your fellow volunteers, and maintain a positive team attitude.
- Voice your opinions and contribute your suggestions in a constructive manner to help us improve the quality of the Seneca Park Zoo Volunteer Program.
- Inform the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible of any planned absence or tardiness.
- Wear your name tag at all times.
- Report on time.
- Complete an application annually or immediately upon change of information.
- Be neat, clean and well-groomed at all times.

### What You Can Expect From Seneca Park Zoo

As a Seneca Park Zoo volunteer you have the right to:

- Receive a description of your assignment
- Be given appropriate assignments according to skill, interests, availability and training.
- Be given appropriate expressions of appreciation and recognition.
- Receive training and supervision for approved assignments.

- Receive communications from the Volunteer Coordinator keeping you up-to-date.
- Expect that your time will not be wasted by lack of planning, coordination and/or cooperation within the organization.
- Expect that volunteer records will be kept.

**Benefits of volunteering at the Seneca Park Zoo include:**

- Training and other learning opportunities.
- Special recognition for **active** volunteers on an ongoing basis.
- The benefit of using the Seneca Park Zoo Society as a reference for college, job, etc.
- Invitations to volunteer social events.
- Knowledge that you are donating your time to a worthy cause and that your assignments directly benefit the mission of the Seneca Park Zoo.

**You can help us serve you! Here's how:**

- Keep us informed of changes to your personal information.
- Keep us informed of schedule and volunteer status changes.
- Offer constructive criticism.
- Be patient! We try to respond to messages quickly but it's not always possible. This doesn't mean we value your services any less it just means that we need more of you.

## What is a Zoo Volunteer?

Anyone who donates their time to Seneca Park Zoo or the Seneca Park Zoo Society without compensation is a volunteer. Although each person fitting the description above is considered a volunteer it is often helpful to understand the difference in the variety of volunteers at the Zoo.

**General Volunteers:** Volunteers help at our special events and fundraisers and assist various departments within the Zoo Society. Volunteers must be at least 13 years old or come with a parent or guardian.

**Docents:** Volunteer educators with access to Biofacts (teaching tools) that they share with visitors. Becoming a docent involves submitting an application, interviewing and participating in six, very informative classes held on Saturdays in the fall. Once trained, docents must make a five-hour-a-month commitment to assist in the Zoo's educational activities.

**ZooTeens:** The ZooTeens program began in 1993 to give young adults the opportunity to explore their interests in ecology and conservation. The teens are chosen from a pool of applications. The unique training ZooTeens receive engages them not only in the sciences, but also provides activities that foster self-esteem and encourage positive social interactions.

**Standards of Conduct:**

By accepting a volunteer position with us, you have a responsibility to Seneca Park Zoo, the Seneca Park Zoo Society and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain guidelines of conduct. We try to keep rules to a minimum. The purpose of these rules are not to restrict your rights, but rather be certain you understand what conduct is expected and necessary. When each person is aware that he or she can fully depend upon fellow volunteers to follow the rules of conduct, then our organization will be a better place to volunteer for everyone.

**Volunteer Policies:**

Generally speaking, we expect each volunteer to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. Questions concerning any volunteer or safety policy should be directed to the Volunteer Coordinator. If a volunteer violates any rules, that person may be subject to discipline up to, and including, immediate dismissal.

**Appearance and Dress Code:**

All volunteers shall be neat and clean in their person and attire when on duty. Our dress code for volunteers is casual, however, you must refrain from wearing clothing with offensive language or displays of alcohol/tobacco; tops that expose your midriff or are sleeveless; sweat pants or open-toed shoes. At some events, jeans are not permitted.

**Attendance:**

There are many different ways volunteers contribute to the Seneca Park Zoo and each of those positions hold a minimum time commitment. As with any employee, you are expected to call if you cannot make an assigned shift. Remember, both paid staff and fellow volunteers depend on you to show up. Excessive absences may be cause for dismissal.

**Cell Phones & Cameras:**

Please refrain from using your cell phone or camera while you are volunteering. It is important that our patrons feel they have our undivided attention during their visit.

**Confidentiality:**

Certain volunteer positions may expose volunteers to sensitive or privileged information about the Seneca Park Zoo, Seneca Park Zoo Society, other volunteers or employees. It is expected that all such information will be kept confidential. The volunteer will be held responsible for any misuse of information.

**Drugs and Alcohol:**

The use of alcohol or any controlled substance greatly impairs a person's judgment and performance. To protect all Zoo employees, volunteers and patrons from harm, we enforce a zero tolerance policy with respect to drug and alcohol use.

**Employment:**

In some cases, volunteers may be uniquely qualified for paid positions available at the Zoo. We encourage all interested and qualified volunteers to apply for openings as they occur.

**Volunteering at the Seneca Park Zoo does not guarantee a job applicant employment.**

**Equal Volunteering Opportunity:**

We provide equal volunteering opportunities for everyone regardless of age, sex, race, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, political belief or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the duties of a given assignment, as well as the volunteer's demonstrated reliability.

**Introductory Period:** Your first **eight hours** of service are considered an Introductory Period. This Introductory Period is a try-out time for both you as the volunteer and Seneca Park Zoo as an organization. This Introductory Period will be a time for you to get to know your fellow volunteers, Zoo staff and the tasks involved in your position. During this Introductory Period you are encouraged to share your comments and ideas as well as address any questions or concerns that you may have.

**Media Representation of the Seneca Park Zoo:**

Like employees, volunteers are not authorized to speak to the media without the expressed consent of the Public Relations & Marketing Director. All media inquiries must be directed to the Public Relations & Marketing Director. Media includes any type of press including print, television, radio or the Internet.

**Restricted Areas:**

For your safety, as well as for the safety of our animals, volunteers are expected to observe all posted restricted area signage. Permission may be granted to those who require access to an area vital to job function only.

**Right of Publicity:**

The volunteer irrevocably gives his or her unrestricted permission to the Seneca Park Zoo the absolute right to copyright, use and/or publish names, photographic images or likeness on videotape in which the volunteer may be engaged in a volunteer activity. The volunteer waives the right to inspect or approve the finished product and to any monetary compensation.

**Smoking:**

For the health and safety of the animals and visitors there is no smoking in the Seneca Park Zoo, with the exception of the Zoo's Parking Lot and the one designated area located on the lower road behind Eagle's Landing Pavilion. Therefore, smoking in buildings, in public areas, and in any role in which the volunteer is serving as a representative of the Zoo is strictly prohibited.

**Vocabulary Etiquette:**

Foul language whether directed at someone or in casual conversation is not permitted.

**Volunteer Procedures:****Emergency procedures:**

There are two types of emergencies at the Seneca Park Zoo:

- Those which require evacuation

- Those which do not

**Emergencies which may require evacuation** are weather, fire and dangerous animal escapes. In the event of an emergency, if you are not sure if an evacuation is necessary please head toward the exit. If an evacuation is necessary please exit the Zoo immediately and direct any patrons along the way to the exit. All volunteers should report to the parking lot to sign in with a staff person. Please do not leave until you have checked in with your event supervisor as it is the only way that we can account for everyone.

**For non-evacuation emergencies** please remove yourself and any patrons in immediate danger from the area. Collect as much information about the occurrence as possible and notify staff immediately. If a patron is having an emergency, i.e., they have collapsed, please notify staff immediately. Be sure to give them as many details about the incident as possible, such as location and a description of the person. Please stay with the person until staff arrives.

**Reaching security:**

Zoo security can be reached by notifying members of staff, animal care, or grounds maintenance who carry radios.

**Lost Child Protocol:**

If an adult reports a missing child or if a child reports a lost adult, please find a staff member with a radio. **Do not** attempt to handle this on your own. The Seneca Park Zoo and Seneca Park Zoo Society have protocols in place to handle these situations.

**Code Green/Visitor Disturbance:**

If you notice or are informed of a visitor problem please notify someone with a radio.

Visitor problems may include:

- Disturbing or harassing animals
- Confrontations with staff or other visitors

**Do not** attempt to handle this on your own. The Seneca Park Zoo and Seneca Park Zoo Society have protocols in place to handle these situations.

**If you are injured:**

If you are injured while on Zoo grounds, please report to the county office at the front of the Zoo for treatment. You must notify your direct supervisor immediately to fill out an accident report form **on the same day that the incident occurs.**

**Grievance:**

While conflicts between members of the Zoo team are rare, they do occur. Volunteers have the right to voice their opinions and feelings in an environment free of judgment. The moment a conflict occurs, use the following guidelines for reporting the incident. Please do not let feelings fester.

- Report the incident to the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.
- Follow up on this with a written note to the Public Relations & Marketing Director.
- If the volunteer feels that the corrective action taken has not solved the problem it should be brought to the attention of the Associate Director immediately.

