



2023 ZOO TEEN PROGRAM INFORMATION

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Zoo Teen program is designed for students 14-17 years of age who have a desire to explore animal-related careers, including zookeeping, conservation and wildlife education. An excellent leadership opportunity, this structured volunteer program will provide students with the opportunity to build a variety of transferable job skills, such as interpersonal communication, customer service, time management, problem-solving, professional conduct, and public speaking.

First year participants focus on foundational skills, practicing visitor engagement and wildlife education by assisting with a variety of education initiatives. Mentored by Zoo staff, these teens will work with a limited set of animals to develop a deep understanding of the importance of wildlife conservation and a Zoo's role in educating the public. Returning participants will further build upon these engagement skills and will also work with zookeepers on safe husbandry tasks, developing the knowledge and skillset needed for a future career in animal-related fields.

The Zoo Teen program is funded by program fees, donations and sponsorships of area businesses.

Zoo Teen Mission Statement:

The Mission of the Zoo Teen Program is to provide an opportunity for area youth to engage with Columbian Park Zoo, gain an appreciation for the importance of zoos and conservation, to explore animal-related careers while building transferable job skills, and to empower youth to become community leaders/advocates for conservation action.

WHAT DOES A ZOO TEEN DO?

Zoo Teens perform only non-dangerous zoo tasks and are supervised by a team of qualified, professional zookeepers and educators. First year participants focus on customer service and engagement, with limited zookeeping tasks, while returning Zoo Teens train on additional zookeeping tasks. The program is designed for up to four years of participation, with increasing levels of responsibility and new training opportunities in each returning year. Note: some changes to Zoo Teen tasks may be necessary as we continually adapt our operations to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the tasks that Zoo Teens may perform include:

1. Learning animal handling skills to present small animals to various audiences
2. Interacting with the public by answering questions about the Zoo, and the Zoo Teen program
3. Presenting bio-facts and animal information as exhibit-side interpreters
4. Monitoring immersion exhibits such as the Family Farm, Butterfly Garden Party and Wallaby Walkabout
5. Assisting in the classroom with the education programs, such as summer camps
6. Informing our patrons about the mission of Columbian Park Zoo and the important role zoos play in wildlife conservation
7. Assisting with enclosure cleaning and exhibit maintenance
8. Assisting with light landscaping and facility maintenance
9. Assisting with grooming or exercising education program animals
10. Assisting with diet preparation and feeding of the animal collection

ELIGIBILITY

In order to participate in the 2023 Zoo Teen program, an individual must be between 14 and 17 years of age on June 1, 2023. Students who turn 18 during the course of the summer are permitted to apply. Students who are already 18 years of age or greater on June 1, 2023 are not eligible to participate in the Zoo Teen program, but may apply to our adult volunteer program.

What qualities do we look for in a Zoo Teen?

A Zoo Teen Candidate will be:

- Trustworthy, reliable and responsible
- Able to present a neat and well-groomed appearance
- Able to accept supervision of adults and ask for assistance when needed
- Courteous to his/her peers, the general public, volunteers and staff
- Willing to learn new skills and get his/her hands dirty
- Willing to engage with others through public speaking and visitor interactions
- Able to share the Zoo's wildlife conservation and education messages with enthusiasm
- Comfortable working with patrons of all ages and backgrounds
- Able to demonstrate a positive attitude at all times
- Supportive of the Columbian Park Zoo's mission

What kind of effort is required?

Zoo Teens are required to perform many kinds of physical tasks which may include standing for prolonged periods of time, safe lifting, reaching, bending, climbing, kneeling, shoveling/raking, pushing/pulling objects, and handling/grasping objects.

Much of the work Zoo Teens do takes place outside and in various weather conditions. In addition, many zoo buildings are not air-conditioned and can be uncomfortable and smelly during hot summer months. A Zoo Teen must be willing and able to work in these types of environments. The Columbian Park Zoo will make reasonable accommodations to allow the participation of individuals with disabilities.

Other eligibility requirements

Zoo Teen candidates must:

- Be available to attend both of the interview components, if invited*
- Be able to attend the required training sessions*
- Be able to donate a minimum of 45 hours over the course of the Zoo Teen season
- Be able to commit to a weekly Zoo Teen shift with minimal time off needs and make up any missed shifts**
- Have reliable transportation to and from the Zoo
- Be willing to adhere to all Zoo Teen policies and procedures
- Obtain a parent/legal guardian's permission to apply for and participate in the Zoo Teen program.

**Please refer to the Important Dates section for more details*

***Please see the Time Commitment section for more details*

What is required of a Zoo Teen parent?

We believe participation in a program such as this can be an important step towards teen independence. For this reason, parent requirements are kept to a minimum. Parents of Zoo Teens are expected to:

- Ensure their child meets all of the eligibility criteria above and adheres to all Zoo Teen guidelines (outlined in the *Columbian Park Zoo's Zoo Teen Policies and Contract Form*)
- Sign all participation agreements and permission slips
- Ensure their child has reliable transportation to and from the zoo
- Be available for counseling and feedback as the need arises

TIME COMMITMENT

Zoo Teens are expected to donate a minimum of 45 hours of time over the course of the 2023 Zoo Teen season. This can be achieved through a combination of regular summer work shifts and special event shifts made available to Zoo Teens. The bulk of these hours should be completed during summer work shifts (June-August), with a finite number of fall weekends and special events available for additional hours and make-up shifts.

We understand that teens have busy schedules and can work with teens to come up with a regular work schedule that accommodates summer school, sports, band, jobs, etc. Time off requests can be accommodated on a very limited basis to allow for illness or family commitment, and make-up shifts are required. However, due to the limited number of weekly work shifts to go around amongst all participants, reschedules must be rare and necessary. Before applying to the Zoo Teen program, teens should consider all of the activities and obligations they will have this summer and decide whether the Zoo Teen program can be a priority in their lives. It is extremely important that an individual be able to commit to a consistent work schedule each week, during the summer season. Because this program is a unique opportunity with a limited number of spaces each year, only serious and committed individuals should apply.

In addition to summer work shifts, first-year participants must attend a week-long in-service training 'camp', taking place the week of June 5-9, 2023 from 1:00pm-5:00pm daily. Participants must attend all 5 mandatory training dates during the camp week. Each day, sessions will provide Zoo Teens with the opportunity to learn about important zoo safety and hygiene information, the zoo industry, wildlife conservation, customer service and interpretation. They will also complete animal handling training with eligible Animal Ambassadors (education program animals).

Returning Zoo Teens must also complete training each year. A single "fast-track" refresher training session is available only to returning participants. This fast-track session will be offered one time only, and participants must attend the session in full. Fast track training will take place on May 20, 2023 from 9:00am-4:00pm. Any returning Zoo Teen who is not able to attend Fast Track must report to the full week of training in June in order to be eligible to participate in the Zoo Teen Program.

During the fast-track session, returning participants will review all important training and safety information, and will be presented with any new information not covered in previous years.

WORK SCHEDULE

Work shifts begin on the following schedule:

- **Returning participants: Memorial Day Weekend***
- **New participants: week of June 11**

**An individual's first shift will not be required prior to the start of their school's summer break*

Summer work shifts will end on August 6th, 2023. Each work shift is 4 hours long, and the following daily work shifts are available:

8:00am-12:00pm, 1:00-5:00pm

Please note: changes to shift availability may be necessary as we continually adapt our operations to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Each student is expected to volunteer at least one work shift per week.

Teenagers are busy, and we get that! To allow for more flexibility, all 2023 Zoo Teen shifts will be self-scheduled through the Zoo's volunteer software. Teens will be responsible for their schedule throughout the summer, rather than Program Coordinators assigning a set schedule. Zoo Teens will be trained to utilize the software, signing up and modifying summer shifts as needed. They will also use this software program to sign up for additional shifts this fall for the Zoo's special events, and Zoo Teen weekend shifts.

Missed shifts due to excused absences must be made up by scheduling additional summer shifts or by signing up for a finite number of Zoo Teen Weekend shifts and special event opportunities in the fall. If a Zoo Teen is unable to complete the required 45 hours within these defined shift opportunities for any reason, special scheduling will not be considered. **Therefore, it is important to be certain that a teen has adequate and consistent availability for work shifts before applying to the Zoo Teen Program.**

INCENTIVE TRIPS

Every summer, Zoo Teens are provided with the opportunity to participate in incentive trips as a reward for their hard work. These optional trips may include local excursions, and/or a visit to a larger metropolitan zoo in the Midwest. In order to participate in an incentive trip, Zoo Teens must meet eligibility requirements.

More information about this year's incentive trip opportunities will be made available later in the season.

PROGRAM FEES

The Zoo Teen program is funded by participation fees, donations and the generous sponsorship of area businesses. For the 2023 program year the fees are as follows:

First Year Zoo Teens - \$130

Returning Zoo Teens - \$115

These fees will be applied toward the cost of class materials and instruction, a uniform t-shirt, incentive opportunities and other Zoo Teen activities and expenses. **DO NOT SUBMIT FEES WITH YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS.** Fees will be electronically invoiced to participants once selections are made, and must be paid by May 15, 2023.

Please note program fees are NON-REFUNDABLE. No refund will be made if a Zoo Teen does not complete the season for any reason, or if a selected applicant withdraws from the program during or prior to the training sessions.

We strive to keep the cost to participating families as low as possible. The Zoo Teen program is a unique opportunity that we feel no child should miss out on simply because of their family's inability to pay. Limited scholarship assistance is available to families with a genuine need. Likewise, those families with the ability to donate beyond their basic fees are encouraged to make a small contribution to the Zoo Teen Scholarship Fund.

SELECTION PROCESS

Acceptance into the Zoo Teen program is competitive. Applications will be reviewed only if all materials are submitted by the application deadline.

Applicants from whom a completed application packet has been received will be emailed no later than March 14th, 2023 notifying them whether they have been selected to interview. Not all applicants will be invited to participate in an interview. (*When completing your application, be sure to include the email address that will be checked regarding this communication. If you do not receive this email by March 14th, please contact the Zoo Teen Coordinator to inquire about your status - unfortunately we cannot reschedule interviews due to email/server failure.*) Those selected will be prompted to register for one of two group interview sessions, either March 18th or April 2nd. Candidates will sign up for an individual **VIRTUAL** interview appointment at the group interview session. A candidate invited to interview must participate in both the group interview and an individual virtual interview to remain in consideration for the program. Virtual Individual interviews will take place during after-school hours the weeks of April 3rd April 10th.

Acceptance into the program is based upon multiple factors including eligibility status, timely submission of all application materials, quality of essay, teacher recommendation content, and performance in all mandatory interview components. Acceptance into the program is highly competitive and not all applicants will be selected for participation. Those not accepted are welcome to apply again in subsequent years.

Applicants will be notified of their acceptance status by e-mail no later than May 1st, 2023.



2023 ZOO TEEN IMPORTANT DATES

Before applying to the 2023 Zoo Teen program, please review the following dates to confirm availability. **These dates reflect mandatory training sessions and events that all participants must attend.**

All events will take place in the Bill and Donna DeFouw Education Center, located on Zoo grounds

March 10th 5:00pm Application Deadline

MUST BE ABLE TO ATTEND:

March 18 th	1:00pm-4:00pm	Group Interview (In-Person)
April 2 nd	1:00pm-4:00pm	Group Interview (In-Person)

** You must be able to attend one of these sessions. The same material will be covered at both*

MUST BE ABLE TO ATTEND ONE 15 MINUTE VIRTUAL APPOINTMENT DURING:

April 5 th -7 th	3:30pm-6:00pm	VIRTUAL Individual Interviews
April 10 th -12 th	3:30pm-6:00pm	VIRTUAL Individual Interviews

May 1st Notification of Selected Participants

ORIENTATION AND PAPERWORK/PAYMENT DUE DATES:

May 3 rd	Parent Paperwork Distributed
May 15 th	All Parent Paperwork and Program Fee Payment Due

TRAINING AND WORK SHIFT START DATES:

{	May 20 th	9:00am – 4:00pm	Fast-Track Training for Returning Zoo Teens only
	May 27 th	Work shifts begin for Returning Participants who attend the Fast-Track Session	
{	June 5 th -9 th	1:00pm – 5:00pm Each day	Zoo Teen Training Camp: mandatory for New Participants
	June 11 th	Work shifts begin for First Year Participants/Returners who attend training camp	
	August 5 th	Tentative Zoo Teen Trip (Optional)	
	August 6 th	Last day for regular summer work shifts	
	August-December	Designated Zoo Teen weekends available for extra/make-up shifts	

The Zoo Teen applicant and their parent/legal guardian should carefully review all information provided in the above Zoo Teen Information Packet, including all dates and requirements.

Ready to apply?

The 2023 Zoo Teen application form is available by clicking [here](#). Please see below for instructions on providing the required recommendations to complete your application packet.

Recommendations

As part of the application process, candidates are required to have two recommendations from two different adults. At least one recommendation must be from a current teacher (2022-2023 academic year). The other recommendation may be completed by a current or past teacher, coach, youth group leader, program mentor, or other non-related adult who knows the applicant in an educational and supervisory capacity. It is the candidate's responsibility to provide the following link to their designated adult recommenders who will then submit their forms electronically.

You can find the link to the online recommendation form here:

[2023 Zoo Teen Recommendation Form](#)

Recommendations must be submitted no later than the deadline of March 10, 2023.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

The deadline to submit your online application materials is 5:00pm on Friday, March 10, 2023.

What's the next step?

Once a complete application packet is received, you may be selected to participate in the interview process. If selected, you will be notified via email by Tuesday, March 14, 2023. Please check your email for this important message!

Reminder: All applicants selected for an interview must attend the group interview session and be available for a mandatory individual interview that will take place during after-school hours in the following weeks.

QUESTIONS?

For questions regarding the Zoo Teen application process, please contact:

Jennifer Spence, Zoo Teen Coordinator

765-807-1558

zooteen@lafayette.in.gov

Thank you for your interest in Columbian Park Zoo's Zoo Teen Program!

