



## **JACKSONVILLE ZOO AND GARDENS TEEN VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

Objective: To provide an opportunity for area youth to mentor with our professional zookeepers and education staff. Through this activity, teens that are at least 14 years of age and **completed** the 9<sup>th</sup> grade will learn and develop the skills needed to pursue a career in exotic animal care by assisting our staff in the daily husbandry needs of our animals. In the Education Department, Teen Volunteers will assist with daily care of an animal collection, assist with classroom activities and learn animal handling skills to present small animals to our summer camp students. As students advance in the program they will be given more responsibility and opportunities to progress into other animal areas in the Zoo.

This is a program for Teenagers who are serious about learning about plants and animals and the way a Zoo is run. Teen volunteers will make a serious commitment to their fellow volunteers and zoo staff and will be expected to honor their obligation to its entirety. In return, volunteers will receive real job experience, a unique chance to interact with exotic animals and an opportunity to learn a great deal about our natural world.

### **The Teen Volunteer Candidate will be:**

1. Trustworthy, reliable and responsible;
2. Able to present a neat and well groomed appearance;
3. Able to accept supervision of adults;
4. Courteous to his/her peers, the public, volunteers and staff;
5. Willing to learn new skills and get his/her hands dirty;
6. Comfortable working with various ages;
7. Able to work out-of-doors during our Jacksonville summer weather;
8. Able to donate a minimum of 12 hours a week from June 11<sup>th</sup> through August 23<sup>rd</sup> and 12 hours a month from September through May (with the exception of pre approved absences);
9. And, will be supportive of the Jacksonville Zoo's mission.

### **Parents/Guardians of the Teen Volunteer Candidate will:**

1. Be able to attend the initial orientation session with their child;
2. Be able to drop-off and pick up their child as prescribed during orientation;
3. Ensure that their teen will present a neat and well groomed appearance;
4. Be able to provide their child with the proper attire as prescribed during the orientation session and in accordance with the zoo's policies;
5. Allow their teen to donate a minimum of 12 hours a week from June 11<sup>th</sup> through August 23<sup>rd</sup> and 12 hours a month from September through May (with the exception of pre approved absences);
6. Support their teen in the commitment they make to the Zoo;
7. And be available for counseling and feedback as the need arises.

# Teen Volunteer Program Description

**Volunteers with the classification of Teen Volunteer Explorers (first year volunteers) , once they have completed the appropriate training, will be able to:**

1. Assist in the classroom with the summer camp program;
2. Assist with light landscaping and exhibit maintenance;
3. Assist with record keeping;
4. Interact with the public by answering questions about the animals and their positions as volunteer staff members;
5. Act as Exhibit Guides and interpret our animal collection to Zoo guests;
6. Assist with special events as they arise;
7. And, inform our guests about the mission of the Jacksonville Zoo.

**Volunteers with the classification of Teen Volunteer Specialists (second year volunteers) , once they have completed the appropriate training, will be able to:**

1. Assist with the feeding, cleaning and daily care of the Education animal collection as a Keeper Assistant;
2. Learn animal handling skills and present small animals to various audiences;
3. Assist on group tours of our animal hospital;
4. Prepare diets in the Commissary for the animal collection;
5. Participate in any of the Explorer Positions;
6. And, inform our guests about the mission of the Jacksonville Zoo.

**Volunteers with the classification of Teen Volunteer Experts (third year volunteers), once they have completed the appropriate training, will be able to:**

1. Assist with the feeding, cleaning and daily care of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens animal collection as a Keeper Assistant;
2. Assist on group tours of the Zoo;
3. Assist with keeper talks open to the public;
4. Participate in any of the Explorer or Specialist positions;
5. And, inform our guests about the mission of the Jacksonville Zoo.

# Teen Volunteer Application Procedure

Applications are sent to school guidance counselors in the first week of January. Students can request the application from counselors or from the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Volunteer Office. Application materials must be returned as follows:

1. A completed Teen Volunteer application,
2. Two letters of recommendation from adults who are not related to the applicant.

**Application Period:** To be considered for the Teen Volunteer Program, required paperwork must be **received** by the Zoo Volunteer Office *no later* than April 1 each year. **All required paperwork must be returned as a single packet.** *If incomplete information is received, it will not be considered.*

After the application materials have been reviewed, each student will be notified that they are eligible to attend the group interview in April. At the group interview the Teen Volunteer will sign up for a one on one interview with the Volunteer Coordinator. Teen accepted to the Teen Volunteer Program will be notified by May 10th and the program will start June 1. There will also be a **mandatory orientation session** for all selected Teen Volunteers. At least **one parent is required** to attend the orientation with their child, as important information will be discussed and signatures are required. If selected for the Teen Volunteer Program, candidates would be required to attend **all** applicable trainings and volunteer at least 12 hours per week for the extent of the summer and at least 12 hours per month from September- May.



**Before applying, students with a heavy schedule of spring and summer activities such as summer school, sports, camps, long vacations, jobs, etc. should consider whether or not they have the time to commit to the program.**

The Teen Volunteer Program can further students' interests, explore career goals, and develop interaction skills in a professional zoological environment. The skills and work ethic developed will also apply to any other work environment. This unique opportunity for North Florida students is surely one of a kind.

Please send complete application packet to:

Volunteer Office  
370 Zoo Parkway  
Jacksonville, FL 32218

For questions, contact the Zoo Volunteer Office:

Phone: (904) 757-4463 #176

e-mail: [volunteer@jacksonvillezoo.org](mailto:volunteer@jacksonvillezoo.org)

# Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Teen Volunteer Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Current grade in School  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have an answering machine/voicemail? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you want to be a Teen Volunteer at the Jacksonville Zoo?

What are your best qualities?

Which qualities do you think you need to improve?

What extracurricular activities do you participate in? (i.e., Marching Band, 4-H, Church Groups, Youth Groups, etc.)

How did you find out about this volunteer opportunity?

Do you have reliable transportation to and from the zoo?

Do you want to pursue a career working with animals? Why?

Will you be able to volunteer the amount of hours required?

If selected, what adult size T-Shirt would you like?

\_\_\_\_\_S\_\_\_\_\_M\_\_\_\_\_L\_\_\_\_\_XL

**Letters of Recommendation:** You must submit two letters of recommendation with your application. *An application submitted without letters of recommendation will be considered incomplete, and therefore, cannot be considered.* Both letters can come from any adult not related to you. For your convenience, a guide for the letter of recommendation has been provided with this application. Please provide each of your references with a copy.

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the Parent/Guardian:** I have read my child's completed application and understand that I am required to attend the orientation session with my child should he/she be accepted to the Teen Volunteer Program. I also understand the time commitment my teen is making and I am sure that he/she will uphold their obligation.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the event of an emergency, please contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Relation: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

After completing the application, please mail to:

Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens  
Teen Volunteer Program  
370 Zoo Parkway  
Jacksonville, Florida 32218

# Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Teen Volunteer Application Letter of Recommendation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the Applicant:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of months/years you have known the applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

You are recommending this teen for a volunteer position at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. The Teen Volunteer Program is a mentoring opportunity for teens interested in pursuing a career in an animal-related field. The applicants must be at least 14 years of age and completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Teen volunteers will be working in a one-one-one situation with our professional zoo staff assisting in various areas of the Jacksonville Zoo, including daily care of exotic animals, interacting with guests, and assisting in the summer camp program for children between PreK and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. It is extremely important that we know that this applicant is well suited to this position. In your letter, please answer the following questions:

1. Is the applicant trustworthy, honest and dependable? Give examples.
2. Does the applicant arrive on time?
3. How is the applicant's attendance history?
4. Does the applicant meet deadlines?
5. How is the quality of the applicant's completed work?
6. Does the applicant arrive prepared for class or other activities?
7. Is the applicant neatly groomed and properly attired?
8. Does the applicant work well with peers and adults? Give examples of when you have observed this ability to work with others.
9. Does the applicant listen and follow directions?
10. Does the applicant accept adult supervision and obey rules?

You may use the back of this paper to write your letter on, or you may attach a separate letter. Please complete and mail to:

Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens  
Teen Volunteer Program  
370 Zoo Parkway  
Jacksonville, Florida 32218  
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

Please rate the following areas by your interest level (1 = very interested, 2 = interested, 3 = mildly interested, 4 = not interested):

- Reptiles       Birds       Mammals
- Horticulture     Classroom Aide     Crafts
- Special Events     Play Park       Birthday Party Assistant
- Touring Guests     Animal Handling       Assisting on the Train
- Talking to Guests about Animals

**You also must adhere to the following guidelines:**

**PRIME DIRECTIVE:** Follow all safety procedures as directed by your supervising staff member. Follow all animal-handling procedures as trained when handling the education animals at the Education Campus. Failure to follow will result in dismissal.

**NEVER BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU.** You are the one we accepted into the program.

**MAKE SURE YOU ARRIVE ON TIME AND HAVE A RIDE HOME IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING YOUR SHIFT.** The Jacksonville Zoo is a place of business. The day waits for no one. If you are late, your supervising staff member will not wait. You will waste your time looking for him/her. Teens are not allowed to "hang-out" at the zoo.

**MAKE SURE YOU SIGN-UP IN ADVANCE AND KEEP A CALENDAR OF YOUR SHIFTS.** We expect you to be here when you say you are going to be here. Missing two scheduled shifts without notifying the staff will result in dismissal from the program. If you come in without signing-up in advance, you may be sent home. We cannot be ready for you if we do not know you are coming. Failure to follow this policy may result in dismissal from the program.

**ALWAYS FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS OF YOUR SUPERVISING STAFF MEMBER.** You will not be asked to do something you feel uncomfortable doing. Your supervising staff member will offer you various opportunities. It is your responsibility to communicate whether or not you feel comfortable performing a certain task and to ask questions if directions are not clearly understood. Failure to follow directions will result in dismissal from the program.

**DISHONESTY OF ANY KIND WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.** Stealing, foul language, dishonesty of any kind are automatic grounds for dismissal from the program.

**DRESS APPROPRIATELY.** Shorts are allowed, but must be in good condition (no frayed edges, no holes, not faded) and no more than 4" above your knees. You will be provided with a nametag and a T-shirt. These must be worn at all times when working at the zoo.

**NO SANDALS.** Proper footwear means closed toe shoes or boots, and socks. In areas that use water to flush the exhibit space (Great Apes, Rift Valley, Lions, etc.) high rubber boots are recommended.

**IF IT IS RAINING, BRING A RAINCOAT!** The animals still need to be cared for and camps go on regardless of the weather, so dress accordingly.

**ALWAYS PRESENT A NEAT AND WELL-GROOMED APPEARANCE.**

**YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR HOURS.** Sign-in when you arrive and sign-out when you leave in the Volunteer Office. Only those hours recorded on the sign-in/out sheets will be recorded.

**YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SIGNING-IN AND OUT FOR BREAKS.** We need to know where you are at all times. Teens are not allowed in any of the Staff Breakrooms.

By following these rules you will have a safe, educational and rewarding experience as a Jacksonville Zoo Teen Volunteer.