



APPLY TO BE A YOUTH VOLUNTEER GUIDE AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

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TACOMA, Wash.— Applications are now open for high school students to become summer Zoo Guide volunteers at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. As a Zoo Guide, students will educate guests about the zoo and aquarium’s animals and important conservation and environmental issues. Zoo Guides will also inspire guests to prioritize protecting wildlife while gaining valuable volunteer experience in a zoo and aquarium setting.

High school volunteers must be between the ages of 14 and 18 and entering 9th through 12th grade in Fall 2024. High school seniors graduating in the spring of 2024 are also eligible to apply.

“Applicants should be comfortable learning, growing, and taking concrete actions in a community focused on conservation through the lenses of animals, environment, and climate,” said Youth Volunteer Coordinator Wilson.

Zoo Guide applications are due Monday, Jan. 8. If accepted, Zoo Guides must commit to attending nine required training sessions in March - June and working one six-hour shift per week for ten weeks during the summer season.

MEET OUR ZOO GUIDES

Below, meet three of Point Defiance Zoo’s current Zoo Guides.

“These youth have worked hard to encourage both children and adults to think about their place in the natural world and their role in actively working to protect nature,” said Wilson. “We are so grateful for their commitment to conservation and animals.”

RIYA ALI

Volunteer hours: Riya, a sophomore at Tacoma’s School of the Arts, has volunteered 151 hours as a Zoo Guide so far in 2023.

Why become a Zoo Guide? As a Zoo Guide, Riya says they’ve learned life skills such as public speaking, teamwork, and communicating with others. They say the volunteer experience gives them the tools to be successful in their future endeavors.

Favorite animal: Polar bear

Favorite fun fact: Polar bears may look white – but their skin is black, and their fur is clear and hollow.

Goals: After high school, Riya hopes to study medicine and become a pediatric surgeon.

GABRIEL CROSS

Volunteer hours: Gabriel, a homeschooled sophomore, volunteered 158 hours as a Zoo Guide in 2023.

Why become a Zoo Guide? Gabriel is one of four boys in his family and is the third sibling to volunteer at the zoo. After hearing how much his older brothers enjoyed their experience, he wanted to continue the family tradition.

Favorite animal: Marion the goat. Gabriel was honored with the zoo's "Goat Whisperer Award" for his passion and dedication to the goats. He knows each of the 11 goats by name and personality.

Favorite fun fact: Gabriel loves to tell people how friendly goats are.

Goals: After high school, Gabriel wants to pursue a career as a construction engineer.

TINA BLUCHER

Volunteer hours: Tina, a senior at Tacoma's Science and Math Institute, volunteered a total of 500 hours in 2022 and 2023 and was named the zoo's Youth Volunteer of the Year in 2023.

Why become a Zoo Guide? Tina says volunteering has helped them develop better people skills and be more outgoing.

Favorite animal: Nugget the tufted puffin. Tina can name every puffin and common murre in the Rocky Shores habitat at the zoo by name.

Favorite fun fact: Puffin beaks and feet turn bright orange every spring in preparation for breeding season. The orange coloring is from eating krill.

Goals: After high school, Tina wants to study marine science. Tina says volunteering in the Rocky Shores habitat at the zoo has helped inspire them for the future.

[The Zoo Society](#), the non-profit fundraising organization for the zoo, provides funding for the Zoo Guide program, along with support for zoo and aquarium exhibits, education programs, scientific research, conservation activities, animal care, and capital. Funds are generated through annual gifts, grants, individual donations, corporate support, and fundraising events.

To learn more about applying to be a Zoo Guide, visit pdza.org.