



ALBUQUERQUE AQUARIUM

TOUCHPOOL VOLUNTEER

BIOPARK EDUCATION VOLUNTEER

JOB DESCRIPTION 2009

PURPOSE

Touchpool Volunteers teach about marine invertebrates and guide visitors with gentle touching of live invertebrates at the Touchpool in the Albuquerque Aquarium. They also teach about Sharks and Stingrays at the Shark Ray Encounter. These two exhibits are the only exhibits in the Aquarium that allow contact with animals, and are extremely popular with visitors.

REQUIREMENTS

Anyone over 16 years old is eligible. Teens under age 18 must work with an adult volunteer or staff person at all times. Skills needed to become a successful Touchpool Volunteer include enthusiasm, flexibility, a commitment to teaching conservation, a sense of responsibility, and patience working with visitors. You must also be able to tolerate your hands in salt water for most of the shift and demonstrate proper handling techniques at all times. The required knowledge is taught. As a safety precaution, all applicants are required to submit to a City of Albuquerque background check before they can begin volunteering and an annual security check thereafter.

DUTIES

Touchpool volunteers work with a variety of Marine animals as they teach visitors about tidepool invertebrates, sharks, stingrays, and ocean conservation. Visitors are only able to interact with the animals when a volunteer is present to explain the animal's natural history and to guide in appropriate touching techniques. Touchpool Volunteers work **only** at the Touchpool and Shark Ray Encounter exhibits and not in other areas of the aquarium. Touchpool Volunteers are also responsible for cleaning the Touchpool at the end of every shift, and notifying the Aquarium Education Coordinator of any potential animal husbandry issues.

MINIMUM TIME

Volunteers create their own schedule. They may work anytime the Aquarium is open, 9:00am-5:00pm, seven days a week, year round. The most popular visitor hours are 10:00am-2:00pm. Evening hours may be available during special events, such as Aquarium Overnights. Most volunteers work a two-hour shift. A regular weekly schedule is encouraged, but not required. Touchpool Volunteers are asked to sign-up in advance, and to find their own substitute if they cannot make their scheduled shift.

A minimum of 60 hours a year is required to receive recognition as a BioPark Education Volunteer. At least 30 hours of these must be spent directly working as a Touchpool Volunteer; the remaining 30 hours may also be spent directly working as a Touchpool Volunteer or doing support work such as research, writing, attending monthly meetings, continuing education classes and Brown Bags, assisting with general BioPark projects, etc. Volunteers are responsible for tracking their own hours on an honor system.

If a Touchpool Volunteer is active in another BioPark Education Volunteer program, the minimum number of required hours does not increase. The total of 60 hours may be divided between both or all jobs.

TRAINING

Touchpool Volunteers go through a training process which begins with a full-day training class. The process also includes, studying marine invertebrates, completing three shifts of on-the-job training (to learn and demonstrate proper

handling techniques), and taking a written assessment to demonstrate an understanding of the natural history of the marine invertebrates, as well as correct protocols for the Touchpool. Training dates in 2009 are: Tuesday, April 14; Friday, June 5; Tuesday, August 25; and Thursday, October 15.

UNIFORM

Touchpool Volunteers wear a blue uniform vest, which is borrowed from the BioPark Education Building. Volunteers must also wear their BioPark ID and nametag. Volunteers are responsible for acquiring solid-colored clothing (blouse/shirt and pants/skirt/shorts) in uniform colors to wear with the vest. Uniform colors are black, brown, beige, tan or white. (Blue jeans are not considered appropriate). Comfortable shoes with a good, non-slip tread are recommended.

BENEFITS

BioPark Education Volunteers have the opportunity to do meaningful and gratifying education work with thousands of visitors to the BioPark, an important intangible benefit. Tangible benefits are also available. Upon completion of the training and a commitment to give the minimum number of hours, Touchpool Volunteers will be given an identification badge, which allows free regular admission to all BioPark facilities (zoo, aquarium, and botanic garden). While on duty, volunteers receive a discount at the food and gift concession stands. After the end of each calendar year, volunteers are awarded recognition items for their service. Volunteers are offered discounts to all fee-based BioPark Education programs and are invited to special volunteer-only events.

SUPPORT

Resources exist throughout the BioPark to help volunteers fulfill their duties. Education staff can provide assistance, and small Education Libraries are available. Monthly education meetings are generally held on the first Thursday and first Saturday of each month, and all volunteers are encouraged to attend. The Aquarium/Botanic Garden meetings are at 11:00am in the AQ/BG Education Building. Current BioPark happenings and facility-specific information are discussed. Volunteers are also invited to attend monthly Brown Bag Seminars following the meetings. Mid-month, a written update is mailed to all BioPark volunteers. Information on current happenings is also available in the Volunteer Communication Room at the AQ/BG Education Building.

COSTS

BioPark Education Volunteers are responsible for acquiring their own uniform clothing.

STRUCTURE

Touchpool Volunteers report to the Aquarium Education Coordinator, Dave Karrmann (848-7172). Dave reports to the Acting BioPark Education Curator, Allyson Zahm. The AQ/BG Education Clerk, Lee Ann Rivera, and the BioPark Program/Volunteer Specialist, Cathy Wylie, are also available to provide assistance.

HOW TO JOIN

Fill out the attached volunteer information and contract/release forms, and bring to training. Once your forms are received, you will be asked to complete a separate background check form.

CONTACT

For more information, contact BioPark Education: (505) 764-6214, Lpowdrell@cabq.gov, www.cabq.gov/biopark.



The BioPark is a division of the City of Albuquerque's Cultural Services Department. For general inquiries, please call 311 (Relay NM, TTY 1-800-659-8331, or 711).