

**Saint Louis Zoo**  
**Fall 2005 Docent Training**

**Pre-Evaluation Report**

Submitted by Jim Jordan, Curator of Education



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## **Program Description**

### **Saint Louis Zoo Docent Program**

The Saint Louis Zoo enlists approximately 1,000 volunteers in a wide variety of capacities ranging from special events to education programs, animal husbandry to behavior observations, and gift shop operations to training. Volunteers are a vital part of the Zoo's operation and contribute over \$500,000 of services each year to accomplish the Zoo's mission "To conserve animals and their habitats through outstanding educational and recreational experiences, research and animal management. Volunteers undergo an orientation and various levels of training." In order to become a Docent, interested Zoo volunteers apply and are interviewed before being accepted into Docent Basic Training. Saint Louis Zoo Docents undergo the greatest level of training and help the Education Department achieve its mission "To nurture respect for animals and their habitats and promote conservation action by providing educational opportunities and experiences."

Saint Louis Zoo Docents conduct education programs and on-ground interpretations that meet the needs of the visitors and Zoo while achieving the program or interpretation objectives. Docents are also requested to provide interpretive and educational opportunities for events conducted by other Zoo divisions and departments. As such, Docents are the most requested and versatile volunteers. In order to provide the world class experience that visitors and groups expect, a 13 week basic training is prerequisite to becoming a docent. Docent training is offered twice each year with both weekday and weekend training. This training is the equivalent of a graduate level education course and is offered for 3 hours credit through four local universities.

### **Docent Goals and Objectives**

The purpose of Docent Basic Training is to prepare the trainees to successfully implement, at minimum acceptably competency or at the entry level, Docent Programs to program participants and Interpretive Opportunities to the general Zoo visitor. By the end of training the Docent trainees will have a basic understanding of the Science necessary to implement programs and carry out interpretations in select ecology and zoology. Trainees will have the basic skills necessary to conduct education programs and on-ground interpretations that achieve the program or interpretation objectives. The Trainees will also gain an understand Zoo operations to the level necessary to answer basic questions from the Zoo visitor.

During Docent Basic Training, the trainees will . . .

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of Zoology concepts by successfully completing the weekly assessments with a minimum of 80% correct responses or correctly conveying the concepts in their practice interpretations.
- Design thematic interpretations for a target audience and theme using the interpretation outline and submit them for feedback by evaluators.
- Actively participate and share in a fun and engaging way with trainers and trainees as demonstrated through observations and discussions designed to solicit feedback with their mentors.

At the end of Docent Basic Training, the trainees will . . .

- Employ their knowledge of Zoo operations to correctly answer basic questions asked by Zoo visitors while at docent carts.
- Appropriately choose and arrange information delivered in on-grounds interpretations that are both age appropriate and sequenced to fit the developmental stage of the children and adults they encounter four out of five times.
- Become a valued member of the docent organization as demonstrated by joining a docent shift and participating both verbally and programmatically for 65 hands-on hours of service.
- Help accomplish the Zoo’s Conservation Education Mission in various events and programs by adapting their activities and actions to meet the participants personal goals and needs through getting to know your audience questioning at the beginning and subsequent modifications of planned activity during program delivery.

A logic model was developed that identified the inputs, outputs and outcomes of Docent Basic Training. See Table 1.

Table 1 – Saint Louis Zoo Docent Basic Training Logic Model

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes		
	Activities	Participants	Short	Medium	Long
<u>Staff/Volunteers:</u>  Docent Coordinator Curator of Education Education Dept. Staff Animal Division Curators Within Docent Org.: - Training Assists. - Mentors - Evaluation Comm. - Exec Committee - Recruitment Comm. Administrative Assist.	<u>WHAT WE DO</u>  13 6 hour sequential training sessions 1x/week Training offered Sept. – Nov. and Jan. – March each year  Convey Content, Pedagogy, and Zoo operations info in learner centered format	Up to 25 docent trainees/training session.  Trainees are Zoo Volunteers and must be 16 years of age or older  Trainees will commit 65 hours/year to Docent Organization	<u>Docent Trainees will:</u> Demonstrate a basic understanding of Zoology, Ecology and Zoo Operations  Be able to design thematic interpretations for a target audience and theme	<u>Docent Trainees will:</u> Employ their knowledge gained to correctly answer basic questions asked by Zoo visitors while at docent carts.  Delivered on-grounds interpretations that are both age and developmentally appropriate for the children and adults they encounter	<u>Docents will:</u> Become an active docent in a docent shift giving 65+ hours per year educating and interpreting to Zoo visitors  Help Zoo achieve its Conservation Education Mission  Provide world class service through personal interactions
<u>Budget:</u> Docent Operating Budget  <u>Time</u> 10% of Curator of Ed 20% of Docent Coord	Provide trainees practice and coaching opportunities  Trainers and mentors available for additional help		Actively participate in training sessions with trainers and trainees  Engage in a mentee role with	Change from a teacher focus to a learner centered approach in teaching and interpreting	Participate in Continuing Education to increase content knowledge, effective methods used, and current operations at the Zoo.

10% Docent Admin Assist 13 full day sessions/ Training program offered 2-3x/year			their docent mentors  Examine different pedagogy through participation, discussions and self reflection	Be able to convey Zoo's position on conservation issues in an objective way	Participate in other Zoo Departments/ Divisions as a Zoo Volunteer
<u>Supplies</u> - Docent Training Manual - Training Lessons & supportive materials - Zoo Activity Manipulatives - Zoo Biofacts - Docent Carts - AV equipment - Classroom - Training Snacks and Coffee	<u>Curriculum:</u> Docent Training Curriculum		Feel like a valued participant in Docent training and enjoy learning.  Build camaraderie with other trainees to support each other and have fun as a Zoo Volunteer	Continue with a mentor until familiar and comfortable with leading different education programs, tours and on ground interpretations	Take on an administrative role as member of Docent committee, Shift Captain or Docent Board member in the first 3 years.

### **Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of the **formative evaluation** is to check if the training program is 1) accomplishing the goals and objectives and 2) what improvements can be made on the way training is delivered. The results of this formative evaluation would be used to improve and further refine docent basic training. Both the curator of Education and the Docent Coordinator, the two implementers of Docent Training, will coordinate and carry out the Evaluation Plan. Current docents who are involved in training as training assistants and leadership role in the day to day operations will be involved in administering or collecting data during the formative and summative evaluation components respectively.

A variety of measures will be used including:

- Participant feedback, both oral and written, during the course of the training that examines balance between content and pedagogy and if the pedagogy used is appropriate for their learning styles
- Weekly assessments that assess course content
- Practice interpretations delivered during the training course
- Final take home written application assessment and interpretation
- Feedback from the docent mentors regarding trainees expectations and attitudes about training
- Final debriefing of training regarding training manual; support provided by mentors, assistances and instructors; and perceived preparedness to become an active docent

## Methods

The formative and summative evaluation for docent training will use a variety of data collection techniques. Some of the data sources will come from current assessments that have been developed over the course of the past seven years of docent training. Other data sources will come from newly developed instruments. The instruments described below and found in the appendixes will be piloted with the Fall 2005 docent training class and revised for use with the Winter 2006 training classes.

The evaluation questions for both the formative and summative evaluation is found in Table 2 which summarizes the evaluation plan.

Table 2 – Saint Louis Zoo Docent Training Evaluation Plan

Focusing the evaluation		Collecting the information			Using the information	
Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methods	Managing	Analysis	Reporting
What do you want to know?	How will you know it?	Who will have the information?	How will you gather the data?	When will the information be collected?	How will the data be analyzed?	How will the results be communicated? To whom?
<b>Formative</b> Did trainees increase their knowledge of course concepts?	% correct on weekly mini assessments	Docent trainees who completed the training	Administer weekly mini assessments	weeks 3 – 11 of training	Scoring rubric/ key. Provide trainee feedback regarding mastery of concepts	assessments with comments given back to trainees and copied for instructor records
Do we have the right balance of information and pedagogical presentations?	Improvement on Practice and final interps as well as oral and written feedback	Docent trainees who completed the training	Training staff and evaluators will complete interp. evaluation forms	Six interpretations spread out over 13 week training	Evaluators use interp. Eval. form. Feedback to trainee to help improve interp. skills & ability	Orally and written form to trainee and copy for instructor records
Did the variety and different types of assessments help trainees achieve the training's objectives?	Oral & written feedback as well as comments on mentor evaluation at end of training	Docent trainees who completed the training	Periodic group discussions during training Q's on mini assessments and mentor comments	Periodically during training, mentor comments throughout training	Qualitative analysis and compilation of mentor comments to modify training and review concepts	Written comments to instructors and verbal dialog between instructor and trainees
Did the training manual meet trainees' needs to master course content, beyond information?	Oral and written feedback from trainees	Docent trainees who completed the training	Final training written evaluation and interview after becoming a docent	At end of training and within one month after training ends	Review written comments for trends and modify training manual before next training	Summary to be given to docent coordinator, lead instructor and docent exec committee
How could basic training	Oral and written	Docent trainees who	Periodic group discussions	Periodically during training	Qualitative analysis of	Docent Coordinator

be improved to meet personal learning styles while helping prepare for conducting docent activities?	feedback from trainees	completed the training	during training as well as Q's on mini assessments and final evaluation	and 3 mini assessments spaced equally apart and end of training	trainee comments. Assessment will inform instruction during training	and Instructor will receive comments throughout training and afterwards
Did trainees receive adequate support during training from mentors, assistants and staff to help then succeed in docent training?	Oral and written feedback from trainees, mentors and training assistants	Docent trainees who completed the training and those who dropped out	Periodic group discussions during training as well as Q's on mini assessments, final evaluation, and interview after becoming a docent	Periodically during training and 3 mini assessments spaced equally apart, end of training and within one month of graduation	Qualitative analysis of trainee comments. One on One discussion between docent coordinator and support staff to meet trainee's support needs	Results will be in dialog format to staff, docents and trainee throughout training as needed.

### Data gathering instruments

Weekly mini assessments serve two purposes: a) to ensure that trainees review weekly content to learn main concepts and big ideas and b) to provide feedback on topics and concepts they need to review. An example of a mini assessment is found in Appendix 1.

The trainees will conduct five practice interpretations during the course of the training. They will be provided feedback in a variety of ways from informal accolades and suggestions at the beginning to a formal interpretation evaluation form. The final interpretation evaluation form is found in Appendix 2.

The trainees will be asked to demonstrate competency in course content by completing a written take home final and conduct a final interpretation to members of the docent evaluation committee. The written assessment is a constructed response test that is application of the different ways docents implement education programs and provide interpretive opportunities on Zoo grounds. The final written assessment is found in Appendix 3.

Selected trainees will be asked to participate in a Docent Training Interview. This will take place after training ends, but also provides information to go with evaluations conducted during the training. The interview guide is found in Appendix 4.

A questionnaire will be administered to all the docents that have completed Docent Training. The questionnaire's purpose is to determine if docent basic training has adequately prepared the participants to become active and competent docents as well as gauge if training and support systems has allowed the trainee to feel comfortable and accepted within the docent organization. In addition to this questionnaire, the docent coordinator will conduct personal interviews with the new docents and with their

mentors and shift captains in January or February and then again in the spring. The docent training questionnaire and cover letter are found in Appendix 5.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected from the various instruments will be either used by a) both the instructors and trainees during docent training to assess trainee understanding of course content and skills (weekly mini assessments and practice interpretations); b) to demonstrate proficiency at the end of docent training in order to become a docent (final written assessment and final interpretation); c) data collection tools to provide information to the trainers concerning whether docent training provided the trainees with the knowledge and skills outlined in the training objectives; and d) other data collection tools to provide trainers, director of education, and docent board and executive committee on trainees involvement and comfort level as a new member of the docent organization.

Each trainee is required to complete all training assessments and interpretations during docent training. Only the final written assessment and final interpretation will be graded and be used to determine if the trainees have met minimum standards to complete basic training. The minimum acceptable level for passing docent basic training is 80%. Participants will be allowed to redo any sections that are below the minimum level. Once the trainees have completed all the requirements for basic training they will become members of the Saint Louis Zoo Docent Organization.

Since the Docent Basic Training Course is small enough,  $n = 25$ , all of the participants will be administered the questionnaire. At least half of the trainees will be interviewed by the Docent Coordinator after docent training. They will be chosen randomly. If someone does not agree to participate, then another trainee will be randomly chosen. The Docent Coordinator will also gather information from the Docent Shift Captains, both verbal and written, regarding new docent participation in docent activities. This information will be compiled with the docent log sheets that record activities participated in when docents are volunteering at the Zoo.

The data collected from these instruments are descriptive in nature and will be compiled in excel using appropriate descriptive data analyses along with charts and graphs to present the data in a useable form. The data will then be organized by evaluation questions found in Table 2.

Data will be analyzed by percents and ranking for categories that ask what components of training were most helpful. Correlations will also be made between training components ranked both helpful and challenging and types of activities new docents participate in if the opportunities are available. Interviews will be coded by key words that can be categorized by knowledge gain, skill acquisition, support provided, and challenges encountered, to name a few. From the comments we will look for trends in the data. This will be used to provide details that could be overlooked by an end of course program evaluation and questionnaire with likert scale answers.

Since we are not trying to make generalizations about the general docent or volunteer core and the training group is small, the threats to internal validity are low. There is no pre to post test analysis so there should not be any instrumentation threats once we



pilot the instruments with the fall, 2005 group. Triangulation of data is also part of the plan in order to assure self reported data to provide a more accurate representation. This is being done through questionnaire responses being matched to interview questions with both trainees to mentors and shift captains. Further we will use docent shift records to verify actual participation of new docents in daily activities.

## **Results**

From the results, conclusions will be made that help answer the research questions under investigation. The results will provide information about knowledge and skills acquired through training, comfort level and other affective indicators as to successfully becoming an active docent, and types of support provided to the trainees that were helpful or need attention given to.

The trainers expect to find that the trainees felt very challenged by the rigor of the training course, but will feel well prepared to deliver educational and interpretive opportunities as a docent. Periodic discussions and checks during training indicate that this should be the final outcome. A lot of time and effort was put into the mentor program this year and it is anticipated that the comments and data collected about support provided during the training course will be positive. It is also anticipated that the new docents have had the experiences necessary to allow for them to transition easily into the docent organization. If not, it will provide information for the staff or docent board to correct the barriers. Another area of interest will be to compare recruitment efforts and the process this year to the success of trainees completing basic training.

The results of this evaluation will be shared at various details with the Docent Organization, through the executive committee and sub committees connected to recruitment and training, as well as the Docent board. This has not been done formally before and the training staff feels that it will provide a better sense of the nature of training and that it is built upon sound education principles. The results will also be shared with the director of education. The conclusions and results will be made available to the Zoo's training department and volunteer coordinator. It is felt that this will dispel false perceptions that have set up barriers to recruitment in the past.

## **Conclusions**

The conclusions will be used to help improve docent training and support trainees and new docents receive by both staff and docents. The conclusions will also be shared with the training department staff to help improve other volunteer training. This is a concern since other volunteer training is conducted by staff or volunteers that do not have any or have minimal education and interpretation knowledge. It is hoped that the conclusions can also be used to help improve and develop a model for Volunteer training at the Saint Louis Zoo.



# Appendix 1

DAY 10 MINI ASSESSMENT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TOPICS: Hoofstock, Animal Enrichment & Animal Collection.

1) What is the difference between a grazer and a browser?

A grazer eats \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ is an example of a grazer.

A browser eats \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ is an example of a browser.

2) Some hoofstock are called cud chewers. Why are they called cud chewers and how does it help digest food?

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3) Provide 3 points that you would make with a family about the Bactrian Camel.

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4) Compare and contrast the Okapi to the Giraffe for adaptations for their habitats.

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5) What is the **purpose** of and **difference** between horns (excluding rhino horn) and antlers?

Purpose of horns/antlers \_\_\_\_\_

Horns - \_\_\_\_\_

Antlers - \_\_\_\_\_

6) Name an animal for each of the following factors involved in building an animal collection?

**Flagship species with ed message** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Lemurs in Primate unit and Vipers in Herp Unit

Conservation success story \_\_\_\_\_

Very expensive to keep at St Louis Zoo \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor group of Gorillas

7) Which of the following is not a consideration of animal enrichment? \_\_\_\_\_

a) increasing physical activity      b) increasing mental stimulation      c) offering choices

d) providing enrichment on a regular schedule      e) controlling the animals environment

8) In 3 sentences or less explain why animal enrichment is a win win win situation.

## Appendix 2

### Saint Louis Zoo Docent Training Observation Protocol

#### Docent Trainee Interpretation Feedback Observation Form

\_\_\_\_\_ Docent Basic Training Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_  
(Season and year)

Docent Trainee name \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluator name \_\_\_\_\_

Interpretation (# and name) \_\_\_\_\_

Audience \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information (weather, crowd size, special event or normal activity, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

If simulated Interpretation who is the intended audience? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the intended setting/context? \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed with Trainee on \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signatures of trainee and evaluator)

The docent trainee would like the observer to take special note of the following:

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Follow-up Comments by Evaluator or Trainee

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**Engagement:**

**Presenter interacts appropriately with audience (energizes and elicits participation)**  
(not at all    seldom    sometimes    usually    consistently)

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter displays respect and courtesy to audience**

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter's delivery style is engaging/uses appropriate tone of voice**

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter determines prior knowledge by asking audience questions**

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter periodically checks for visitor understanding of concepts**

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter talks at a level that is age/grade appropriate**

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter varies instructional styles to address different (multiple intelligence) needs of audience**

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Use of aids:**

**Presenter uses biofacts and manipulatives to best advantage**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      NA

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presenter uses visuals (maps, pictures, technology) to enhance presentation**

**(not at all      seldom              sometimes      usually      consistently)**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      NA

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presenter uses animal(s) to enhance concept understanding**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      NA

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Content:**

**Presentation satisfies program/interpretive learning objectives**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presentation is thematic and states theme at beginning and end, body supports theme**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presentation uses Tilden's 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> principles and is provocative and/or includes a revelation**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presenter answers spontaneous questions effectively/takes advantage of teachable moments**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX 3

### FALL 2005 DOCENT TRAINING CLASS TAKE HOME WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

Due: November 22

Choose one or a pair of animals provided to write an interpretation for each question. Read each question carefully, and for only those points asked, provide animal information and supporting statements. **A strong interpretation includes the why and how behind a fact!** You do not have to write an essay but make sure you convey enough information to explain what you would cover in an interpretive presentation (between ½ - 1 page per question). You may use the interpretation outline, tables, or figures to answer each question.

- 1) Interpret an animal for PreK - Kg using the docent interpretive format - hook, 2 points, supportive information and final message. You decide the context (i.e., program, tour, cart, Zoo special event).

2)  
TARANTULA                      SEA ANEMONE                      SEA STAR

- 2) Interpret an animal using the docent interpretive format for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade summer camp group who approach you on the Zoo Ground in the area the animal would be found. You do not have any manipulatives for the animal in Question. Furthermore, you have no prior knowledge of what the group is doing during their visit to the Zoo.

MOUNTAIN LION/COUGAR                      RHINOCEROUS                      TOUCAN

- 3) Choose an animal that you would visit with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who are participating in a tour focusing on Animal Adaptations. Provide three facts that would be appropriate to discuss with the group. Name a hook that you could use with one of the facts and a way you would actively involve the students to understand another fact.

LEMUR                      HIPPOPOTOMUS                      POISON ARROW FROG

- 4) Choose an animal and list three facts or specific topics that would be appropriate to discuss with an adult AND three **different** facts or specific topics that would be appropriate to discuss with a young child (1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade). Provide one reason why each fact or topic is age appropriate for the adult or young student. You must provide different topics for each age.

ASIAN ELEPHANT                      HONEY BEE                      SEA LION

- 5) Choose an animal and provide the general conservation message that you would convey for the animal group it belongs to. How would you tie the conservation message to the animal chosen? Middle School is the age level you should target this conservation message towards.

AMERICAN ALLIGATOR                      RIVER OTTER                      MACAW

- 6) Choose two animals that you would visit on a Zoo Tour focusing on Animals and the Biomes they inhabit. This tour is for a middle school (grades 6 - 8) group. The tour examines how animals from different habitats have different adaptations and lifestyles that allow them to live in a specific environment. Briefly describe how you would compare and contrast these two animals while on a tour; furthermore, provide at least 3 adaptations for the animal surviving in its habitat.

GRIZZLY BEAR & SUN BEAR    OKAPI & GIRAFFE    PREHENSILE TAIL SKINK & LEGLESS LIZARD

- 7) Choose two animals that you would include in a Zoo summer program on a specific topic of your choice (other than Biomes and General Animal Adaptations which have been discussed with earlier animals). These animals could be presented as live contact animals (if appropriate), biofacts, pictures, puppets, etc. Name the animals, program topic and age/grade level of the audience. Explain how the two animals could be used in conjunction with each other to reinforce or build upon a major concept in the program.

CHOOSE 2 ZOO ANIMALS YOU HAVE NOT USED YET

- 8) Choose an animal that might be featured in a Zoo special event for families. You have time to prepare a station (that can include props and activities) about this animal that families will visit as part of this special event. Choose a fact that you would interpret and an action/activity the young children could experience to help them understand this fact.

HELLBENDER                      CHIMPANZEE                      GREVY ZEBRA

## APPENDIX 4

### Docent Training Interview Guide

Interviewers Name \_\_\_\_\_

Docent Trainee/New Docent Interviewed ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_ Start \_\_\_\_\_ End \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

**This interview will be conducted after docent training has ended. The interview can be conducted in person at the Zoo or over the phone if more convenient for both the interviewee and interviewer.**

**Interview Introduction:** Thank you for agreeing to meet with me/talk with me over the phone to provide feedback to help improve docent training. The docent training assistances will be conducting interviews with some of the trainees over the next few weeks. You will be asked questions that address both the positives and the negatives of docent training. We ask that you be honest with your feedback to improve docent training. This information will be shared with Rachel and Jim, however your responses will remain anonymous. This interview will take 30 – 45 minutes depending on the amount of comments you have. Are you ok with this time frame?

During this interview I will ask you some yes and no questions and several open-ended follow-up questions. Please ask for clarification for any question you do not understand. If during the course of the interview you would like to revisit a prior question, let me know and expand on an earlier response. I am going to take notes during this interview, so I may ask you to wait or repeat a response so I can capture all the information on paper.

#### Interview Q's

1) This training course is a mix of zoology/ecology concepts and information (50%); education and interpretive pedagogy/methods (30%), and Zoo operations (20%).

Is this the mix you expected when you entered docent training? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think this mix of information and methodology has prepared you for interpreting and conducting programs as a docent? \_\_\_\_\_

Name 4 points covered or presented in docent training that you found most helpful and tell me how they will help you successfully interpret or conduct programs as a docent?

2) What parts of docent training was review or reinforcement of topics and concepts you already knew?

#### Prompts:

Think in terms of Zoology topics/animal groups

Ecology topics like niche, habitat, food chains and webs, and keystone species

Teaching and Interpretation methods such as constructivism, learning cycle, Tilden's principles, thematic interpretation



Did any of the information presented during training contradict information or concepts you had learned in the past? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, name some examples if you can.

3) How did you use the training manual in training for guided note taking? \_\_\_\_\_

What changes would you suggest to make the training manual materials more user friendly during class time?

What changes would you suggest to make the training manual materials more user friendly outside of class time to make it a better tool for learning?

4) Did you find the weekly mini-assessments helpful in mastering the big ideas and concepts of the training course? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe how the assessments helped you?

Do you have suggestions that would make the mini-assessments more helpful so you know which topics or concepts you a) understand or b) need to review?

5) In what ways did the teaching methods used in the basic training match up or not match up with your learning style?

You were introduced to various teaching and interpretive methods over the 13 days of basic training. Please tell us how you have become a more effective educator or interpreter as a result?

6) Please name up to 5 presentations or specific activities that helped you understand the concepts and main ideas. (This is not a question about what you enjoyed the most.)

7) In what ways did you find the mentors helpful for you successfully completing docent training and in growing in your interpretive abilities?

What were some of the barriers or challenges you encountered with the mentor program?

9) Is there any other information that you would like to add that would be helpful for Jim and Rachel as they prepare and implement upcoming docent training courses?

Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed. We trust you enjoyed the training and look forward to having you on the docent. Feel free to contact us at any time we may help you or if you have anything more to tell.

## Appendix 5

### Docent Training Questionnaire and Cover Letter.

#### Cover Letter

Dear :

Again, congratulations on successfully completing docent training. We trust that you are settling in to your docent shift and enjoying the Zoo activities and programs as a docent you are helping with. As mentioned during the last session of training, we would be contacting you to help us ascertain how docent training has prepared you to become an active docent and what activities you feel comfortable in leading or helping with as part of a team.

Your participation is voluntary, but we hope you will take 20 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. The identification number on the questionnaire will be used only to check your name off when your questionnaire is returned. Your responses will remain confidential. Be assured that information that could identify individuals who participate in the survey will not be shared with the trainers or docent board.

If you have any questions regarding the purpose of this questionnaire or any of the items, please call Rachel at 314-781-0900, ext. 394 or email her at [arbogast@stlzoo.org](mailto:arbogast@stlzoo.org). Your answers are very important to us as we continue our efforts to improve Docent training and supporting new docents. Thank you for participating. When you complete this questionnaire place it in the envelop provided and drop it off in Rachel's mailbox on her door on your next visit to the Zoo.

Sincerely,

Rachel Arbogast

Jim Jordan

Docent Coordinator

Curator of Education

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NEW DOCENTS

**The purpose of this survey is to find out how Docent Training has prepared you to interact effectively with the visitors.**

We will ask you questions that address the following areas:

- Your knowledge base, skills and confidence for successful visitor interaction
- Your ability to navigate the administrative procedures and get the information you need
- Support you are receiving or wish to receive from the staff and docents
- And most importantly, your satisfaction level of being a Saint Louis Zoo Docent (Are you having fun?)

Complete the following questions to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer indicate don't know or NA for not applicable. There are no trick questions and they can be answered by

circling a response or providing a short answer. If you wish to provide additional comments for any of the items, indicate this and do so on the back of the page.

Date you completed the survey \_\_\_\_\_

ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Section A - Knowledge and skills for successful visitor interaction.

1. Did you have a background in education or interpretation upon entering docent training?

Yes No Don't Know

If yes, did your background help you to master the concepts and techniques presented during docent training?

Yes No

2. Do you feel that docent training provided you with the knowledge needed to successfully interact with the visitors at docent carts?

Yes No Don't Know

3. Do you feel that docent training provided you with the necessary skills to successfully interact with the visitors at docent carts?

Yes No Don't Know

4. Did visiting docent carts during training with your mentor result in your feeling more comfortable interacting with visitors at docent carts?

Yes No Don't Know

If No, what is it that makes you feel comfortable with interpreting at carts you did not visit during Docent Training? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you feel that docent training provided you with the knowledge needed to successfully lead a Zoo tour?

Yes No Don't Know

6. Do you feel that docent training provided you with the necessary skills to successfully lead a Zoo tour?

Yes No Don't Know

7. Do you feel that docent training provided you with the knowledge needed to successfully interact with visitors at a Zoo event?

Yes No Don't Know

8. Do you feel that docent training provided you with the necessary skills to successfully interact with visitors at a Zoo event?

Yes No Don't Know

9. Please name up to three things that training provided to build your confidence level to successfully interact with visitors.

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Section B – Ability to understand and navigate administrative procedures and obtain the information you need.

10. Do you feel that during docent training you were provided with the basic information to understand the way the Docent Organization is run and meets the Education Department's goals and objectives?

Yes No

11. Do you feel that your Docent Shift (Captain and other docents) provide you with the necessary information to understand the way the Docent Organization is run and meets the Education Department's goals and objectives?

Yes No

12. Do you feel that the Docent Coordinator and Administrative Assistant provide you with the necessary information to understand the way the Docent Organization is run and meets the Education Department's goals and objectives?

Yes No

13. Please name up to three things, ways or systems that have provided the necessary information you need to accomplish the tasks you do as a docent.

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14. Are there other ways that we could provide the necessary information you need as a Docent? If so, please name them.

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15. Have you been able to navigate the procedures to successfully sign up and conduct the various docent activities on your own?

Yes No

16. If No, have you been able to get the necessary help in a prompt and timely manner?

Yes No

17. Comments to make navigating the current systems to carry out Docent activities.

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Section C – Support you are receiving or wish to receive from the staff and docents.

18. On the following scale rate the support and assistance you have received from your shift captain since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	a little	some	a lot	NA

19. On the following scale rate the support and assistance you have received from your shift docents since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	a little	some	a lot	NA

20. On the following scale rate the support and assistance you have received from the docent board or executive committee (docent officers) since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	a little	some	a lot	NA

21. On the following scale rate the support and assistance you have received from Docent committee members/docent event coordinators since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	a little	some	a lot	NA

22. On the following scale rate the support and assistance you have received from Docent Coordinator since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	a little	some	a lot	NA

23. On the following scale rate the support and assistance you have received from Docent Administrative Assistant since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	a little	some	a lot	NA

24. On the following scale rate the support and assistance you have received from other Education Department staff since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5  
Not at all      a little            some              a lot              NA

25. Please tell us of up to three ways you feel you have been supported by staff and docents to be able to successfully interact with visitors.

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26. Are there any times that you have not felt supported by staff and/or docents since becoming a Saint Louis Zoo Docent?

Yes    No

27. If Yes, please elaborate to allow us to try to remedy this for all new docents.

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Section D – Satisfaction level being a Saint Louis Zoo Docent.

28. On the following scale rate the satisfaction you have with being a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1                    2                    3                    4  
Not at all      a little            some              a lot

29. On the following scale rate how much fun you are having being a Saint Louis Zoo docent.

1                    2                    3                    4  
Not at all      a little            some              a lot

30. Do you have a favorite Docent activity?    Yes            No

If yes, what is your favorite Docent activity? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments you would like to share about training, mentors, current support as a new docent and the docent organization.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.