



Hancock Park District Volunteer In the Parks Program

VIP Resource Guide



*"The success of society lies in the willingness of its citizens to give of themselves, to perform or give a service of their own free will."
– Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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Welcome to the Hancock Park District Volunteer In the Parks Program



Discover Your Hancock Parks... Become a Volunteer!

The Hancock Park District (HPD) has many interesting and rewarding volunteer opportunities to get you involved in YOUR Hancock Parks. Whether a student, individual, community group, or business, hours can be flexible to allow you to volunteer as much or little as you desire.

If you have any special talents or new ideas for our programs, please let us know. HPD welcomes people of all interests and abilities. People with diverse backgrounds and experiences can fill roles in a variety of areas.

The Board of Park Commissioners, all of whom serve as volunteers themselves, and the HPD staff is pleased to have you join our team of dedicated volunteers. Our Volunteer In the Parks (VIP) Program is a vital part of HPD operations and we look forward to working with you. (L-R Scott Younger, Barbara Deerhake, Judge Allan Davis, Gary Hirschfeld)

VIP Purpose Statement

The Purpose of the Volunteer In the Parks (VIP) program is to offer opportunities for county and area residents to give personal time and talents to supplement HPD staff in providing quality programs, maintaining parks for public use, and preserving natural areas.

HPD Mission Statement

The Mission of the Hancock Park District is to create, preserve, protect, restore, and manage a system of parks, nature preserves and outdoor recreation facilities to be held in public ownership, with a focus on local, natural, historical, and cultural resources, and maintained for the leisure use, education, and enjoyment of this and future generations.



Who Are We?

The Hancock Park District was organized through the cooperative efforts of the City of Findlay and Hancock County in 1970 with voter support funding the HPD as a coordinating agency for parks and outdoor recreation.

HPD currently manages and owns a variety of park areas throughout the county where volunteers can share their time and talents including:



- ◆Blue Rock Nature Preserve
- ◆Centennial Park
- ◆Civitan Park
- ◆Heritage Trail Center
- ◆Litzenberg Memorial Woods

- ◆Oakwoods Nature Preserve
- ◆Riverbend Recreation Area
- ◆River Landings
- ◆Riverside Park Waterfront
- ◆And other river park areas

Scheduling and Absences

Generally, volunteer scheduling is handled through the Volunteer Coordinator or HPD staff member who is in charge of the event. If a volunteer needs to change or cancel his/her shift, contact the HPD staff member with whom the volunteer opportunity was made as soon as possible. A contact phone number will be provided to confirm volunteer activity.

Conduct and Appearance

The Volunteer Coordinator may issue articles of clothing or name tags. Since HPD volunteers represent the Hancock Park District, the following guidelines have been established:

- Volunteers should be friendly and helpful.
- Volunteers should only provide accurate information to visitors. If you cannot answer a question, refer them to a HPD staff person.
- Volunteers should dress appropriately for the job being performed. If you have been issued an article of clothing, it should be worn while volunteering.
- You may be asked to wear nametags provided during special events. Please return when event or shift is complete.



Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in any area of any HPD buildings or in view of the public during volunteer times. If you smoke, please do so outside and extinguish and dispose of cigarettes properly.

Safety Rules, Restricted Areas and Equipment

Volunteers are expected to follow all HPD safety procedures and guidelines. Safety training will be provided according to the needs of the job by HPD. For reasons of safety, security or legal requirements, some areas and/or equipment are off limits to volunteers.

No volunteer shall operate/drive any motorized equipment, unless prior approval and training have been supplied.



Background Checks

HPD reserves the right to make background checks on individuals

participating in the VIP program. Volunteers who are assigned to work independently with children will require prior successful completion of a background check before volunteering in that capacity. Background checks will be conducted at a local certified agency and are conducted at the expense of the HPD.

If HPD performs a check on the background of a volunteer, we will seek your prior permission and share the information with you upon request. Volunteer assignments may be restricted due to the health or qualifications of the volunteer.



Expense Reimbursement

Volunteers should not purchase anything using their personal funds with the expectation of receiving a reimbursement from the HPD, unless prior authorization has been secured beforehand by contacting the Volunteer Coordinator or other staff in charge to follow approved purchasing procedures.

Insurance Coverage

Volunteers are covered by HPD liability insurance while they are on site. Liability insurance covers volunteers and the HPD against claims of negligence during the time that they are on duty as volunteers. Volunteers must provide their own medical insurance should they become injured while volunteering. HPD does not carry worker's compensation. In the event of an accident, all registered volunteers are now covered by medical insurance secondary to their own health insurance first, which covers medical expenses due to any injury incurred while volunteering for the HPD. Travel time to and from your volunteer assignment is not considered volunteer time, unless travel is actually a part of your volunteer service. In the event of an accident, an HPD staff person or Volunteer Coordinator needs to be contacted immediately.



Assumption of Risk

It is understood that depending on the volunteer service, volunteers may assume certain risks including, but not limited to, inclement weather conditions, slips and falls, climbing and descending stairs, premise defects, and all other circumstances inherent to the particular volunteer service. Volunteers always have the right to refuse any task they are not comfortable with.

Resolution of Conflict Procedures

Personal conferences requested by volunteers to discuss work or private issues can be scheduled with the Volunteer Coordinator. If the Volunteer Coordinator and volunteer have attempted to solve the problem and it remains unresolved, the problem may be referred to the HPD Director and finally the Board of Park Commissioners in that sequence.



Termination from the Volunteer Program

Volunteers make specific commitments to the Hancock Park District upon joining the VIP Program. Park visitors, other volunteers, and staff members depend upon volunteers to perform the duties that they have agreed to undertake. In many cases a volunteer may be the only contact a visitor has with the HPD. Therefore, volunteers are expected to present a positive image to the public. Although extenuating circumstances will be considered and allowances made where appropriate, a volunteer may be asked to resign or be terminated from the VIP Program for any of the following reasons:



- Failure to follow safety procedures or instructions
- Failure to dress appropriately
- Inappropriate behavior
- Dishonesty
- Illegal activities at the parks or away from the parks that would reflect poorly on the integrity of the HPD

A volunteer may resign from the program by notifying the Volunteer Coordinator at any time.

Tracking/Recording Volunteer Hours

It is extremely important to track hours of services provided even though volunteers do not receive a salary or benefits. This includes any volunteer hours including work done from home and at other locations, on behalf of the Park District, with or without HPD staff supervision. Accurate record keeping will help to ensure the HPD that volunteers are being used effectively, evaluate and justify program growth, document volunteer achievements, assure accountability, define training needs, pinpoint gaps of volunteer service, provide letters of recommendation, and help with long-term planning. Considerable public expense is involved in the



coordination and supervision of the VIP Program and recording volunteer hours allows HPD to clearly demonstrate the value of the public's investment.

If you do not wish to have your hours tracked, please let the Volunteer Coordinator know your wishes. Otherwise, all volunteer hours will be tracked and recorded on VIP Sign-in Sheets, per project/event, by the HPD staff member(s) in charge of the volunteer(s) to accurately verify volunteer hours.

Upon arriving at an HPD volunteer event, volunteers will be asked to check in with the HPD person in charge to register your attendance and arrival time. Upon departing, volunteers need to sign out to verify your departure time. Doing so will validate your volunteers hours accurately.

If you forget to sign-in or sign-out, please contact the HPD staff person in charge or the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible to verify your hours for tracking purposes.

In the event that the volunteer opportunity is unsupervised by HPD staff, the volunteer individual/family/group will need to record their hours of service on a VIP Timesheet and return to the Volunteer Coordinator periodically for recording. VIP Timesheets can be obtained through the HPD office or downloaded at www.HancockParks.com.

The Hancock Park District sincerely appreciates your cooperation and willingness to comply with this tracking procedure.



Volunteer Surveys

The HPD is committed to measuring volunteer and visitor satisfaction as they enjoy the parks. Periodically, you will receive a survey sheet regarding your volunteer service. Your participation in the survey process is needed to address the needs, thoughts, and suggestions of our volunteers regarding your volunteer experience. The HPD strives to provide positive, fun, rewarding, and educational experiences and opportunities for all volunteers and the continuation of your community service for many years to come is very important. We encourage all volunteers to participate in volunteer surveys.



VIP Recognition & Incentive Program

Volunteer hours are recorded after each volunteer experience and accumulated annually and on an on-going basis throughout the volunteer service time. If a volunteer ever wants to know how many hours they have accumulated, at any time, please feel free to contact the Volunteer Coordinator for up-to-date information.

Presidential Service Awards will be presented to volunteers (youth, young adults, adults, families/groups) at our annual banquet/special event, hosted by the Hancock Park District.

An annual reception/open house invitation will be extended to all volunteers who have provided volunteer service during the current year, regardless of how many hour they have served, will be be invited to attend as guests of the HPD.

Presidential Service Awards were established in 2003 by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation to recognize the valuable contributions volunteers are making in our communities and encourage more people to serve. To receive an award, at any level, is extremely honorable. The Hancock Park District is very proud to be an Official Certifying Organization to offer these distinguished awards to our volunteers.

For any questions regarding tracking hours or the VIP Incentive Program, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at 419-425-PARK/7275.

Volunteer In the Parks Incentive Program

All volunteers who provide volunteer service within the given year will receive an invitation to the HPD Annual VIP Recognition/Open House event.

Presidential Volunteer Service Awards

Only one award, per year, will be provided. The award will be based on the final number of volunteer hours provided within the given year, January - December, and accumulatively year to year.

50 – 74 hours - (Kids, under 14 yrs.).....Bronze Level
100 – 174 hours - (Young Adults, 15-25 yrs.)
100 – 249 hours - (Adults, over 25 yrs.)
200 – 499 hours - (Families & Groups)

75 – 99 hours - (Kids, under 14 yrs.).....Silver Level
175 – 249 hours - (Young Adults, 15-25 yrs.)
250 – 499 hours - (Adults, over 25 yrs.)
500 – 999 hours - (Families & Groups)

100+ hours - (Kids, under 14 yrs.).....Gold Level
250+ hours - (Young Adults, 15-25 yrs.)
500+ hours - (Adults, over 25 yrs.)
1000+ hours - (Families & Groups)

VIP Benefits & Appreciation

There are many benefits to becoming a Hancock Park District VIP:

- Great opportunity to make new friends
- Meet people with similar interests who share in the excitement of the out-of-doors
- Make a positive difference throughout Hancock County – naturally
- Share your skills and talents with people of all ages
- An opportunity to help others
- Do something you enjoy
- Learn new skills and information.
- Keep yourself active and involved in the community
- Help to build your resume
- Make a lasting impression
- Opportunity to fulfill your civic duty
- Able to spend time with family and friends
- Explore a different career field
- Able to show others that you support HPD
- Feel good about yourself and proud of your service
- Having opportunities to just have fun



What every volunteer should know:

Our volunteers serve as “ambassadors” of the Hancock Park District while serving the park district, residents, and visitors to our system of parks.

Volunteers demonstrate this support by:

- Promoting truthfulness and integrity in all interactions.
- Protecting HPD land and property, including area flora and fauna.
- Complying with all HPD rules and regulations.
- Demonstrating respect and appreciation for the diversity of the staff, volunteers and park visitors.
- Pursuing the highest standards of excellence in all operations of the park district.
- Delivering excellent service to park visitors, staff and other volunteers.
- Supporting the HPD mission statement, operating principles and procedures through positive and constructive communication and actions.
- Performing all jobs in a safe manner and providing a safe environment for park visitors, staff and volunteers.

HPD volunteers are the  of the parks!!

VIP Positions

- **Adopt-A-Park** – Groups, families, organizations or businesses can adopt a park to provide on-going support including: cleanups, landscaping, land stewardship, and park improvements at HPD parks around the county.
- **Adopt-A-Trail** – Groups, families, organizations, individuals, or businesses can assist with litter pickup along a specific trail or section of trail as needed. Notify park managers if attention is needed and help park staff with trail improvements, such as marking trails for visitors, cutting overgrown brush and low lying branches, and re-routing trails around wet or eroded spots.
- **Discovery Center Assistant** – Assist with the setup and preparation of the Discovery Center for programs. Greet visitors and offer assistance during programs and unstructured open houses. Assist with cleanup of programs.
- **Environmental Education Assistant** - Help with public or requested programs, camps, guided hikes, and presentations.
- **Gold Award/Eagle Scout Projects** - Work with staff to complete and earn your Eagle Scout or Gold Award or other scout project requirements.
- **Horticulture Assistant** - Maintain landscaped areas and shrubbery at Riverside Park or other park areas.
- **Living History Volunteer (1847 Historic McKinnis Homestead)** - Develop a living history character or learn to demonstrate a period skill. Advanced training is offered to help develop a living history character and learn other period skills to demonstrate.
- **Maintenance/Operations Volunteer** - Assists operational staff with painting, assembling projects, small repairs, and/or other construction projects as needed.
- **McKinnis Gardener** – Assist with perennial plantings, herb cultivation, vegetables harvest, workshops, and regular maintenance at the period McKinnis Garden or other sites throughout the parks system.
- **Outdoor Recreation Assistant** – Assist with events and outdoor recreation programs (canoeing float trips, workshops, disc golf tournaments) at various park locations.
- **Special Events** - Help during special events and annual festivals and assist with setup and cleanup.
- **Stewardship Assistant** - Monitor specific species (bluebirds, spring wildflowers, wetlands, frogs & toads) at variety of park locations or designated sites. Help monitor birds inside as part of Project Feeder Watch at the Discovery Center. Assist in the control of invasive species and replant natives to reclaim the area, inventory overall park species.

Do you have some additional talents or skills to help enhance the Hancock Park District? Carpenter, plumber, graphics and design, artist, photographer, teacher... a creative mind can find a way to help!

Give us a call at 419-425-PARK/7275. We would love to hear from you!

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