

You have been nominated to serve as an adult mentor for a team of passionate youth who are applying for the Youth Engagement Program (YEP) at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Before agreeing to support the teens, we'd like you to take some time to learn about the expectations of the adult mentor role.

YEP will consist of approximately 10 teams of three to five youth from various communities in Minnesota. Teams of youth will join our program from a variety of settings; after school clubs, rec centers, and communities of faith to name a few. The teams will kick off the season with a multi-day development workshop in August 2016. After that, teams will spend approximately six months developing and implementing conservation-based service-learning projects in their home communities. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory has a limited amount of grant money set aside to fund community-based projects. Teams will be encouraged to develop their grant writing skills and request support from the grant funds.

Once a month, teams will return to Como for a Saturday workshop to reconnect and learn skills to help them be successful in the next stage of the project. At these workshops, Como staff will outline the steps and stages of the projects and programs.

The majority of the work for this program will happen back at home. We have the expectation that teens will:

- Check-in with Como staff on a monthly basis. This may be simple email updates, phone calls, online interactions or facilitating Como staff visits to your site. Como staff will determine the parameters for each check-in and youth will be responsible for follow through.
- Complete the assigned action items each month to ensure projects stay on track. The action items will be outlined by Como staff and will be explained, modeled and developed by the larger group during monthly workshops at Como.
- Document their journey. Como will provide opportunities for youth to grow as artists and teams will be asked to share their experiences at Como on Saturday, April 29, 2017. Como staff will provide guidelines for assisting youth with managing this portion of the project.
- Call on you for help when they need it. It is important that youth know they have adult support, both from Como and within their community and that we are here to help them be successful.

The adult mentor's role is to support teams when they return to their communities. Mentors are not required to attend any of the Como-based workshops. Your primary role will be to help your team stay on track back at home. As an adult mentor, we'd like you to:

- Guide the youth on their journey. Teens may have questions about navigating different systems within your community. Your role will be to facilitate those conversations and point them in the right direction. As an example, we would like to see you help your team define their questions instead of asking the questions for them.
- Check-in with teams at least once a month. Be sure they are completing all tasks related to their project and are staying connected to Como as well.
- Monitor your team's progress as they document their journey through photography, video production, journaling or whatever avenue of expression they have committed to.
- Offer your team a place to meet or help them find a place to meet.
- Stay up-to-date on the materials Como provides to teams. Documents and timelines will be shared with the entire group and we'd like adult mentors to reference these resources often.
- Stay connected to Como, your team, and other adult mentors through the systems provided.
- Serve as a trouble-shooter. We would like adult mentors to help teams identify potential roadblocks in advance and brainstorm opportunities to avoid those roadblocks when possible.

- Ensure your team is calling on all of the appropriate resources to overcome barriers.
- Provide logistical support for your team's project. This may be anything from keeping track of reimbursement receipts, to providing an extra set of hands for the project, to providing youth with a place to store supplies and equipment.
- Attend the day of celebration at Como on Saturday, April 29th, 2017. We are looking forward to celebrating the success of each team and learning from one another as well. You will play an important role in their journey – please come and celebrate!

The time you spend supporting your team's project advances the conservation mission of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Your time will count as volunteer hours at Como. We will provide the needed documentation to be sure that your time is recorded and included with our volunteer program. This program would not be successful without your help and support. THANK YOU for all you do for youth, your community, and Como Park Zoo and Conservatory!

If you are willing and excited to support a youth team after reading through the expectations outlined above please sign each teen's application with your commitment of support.

Teams will be interviewing for the opportunity to participate in YEP during the summer of 2016 and notifications will be sent out shortly after.

If you have any questions between now and then, please don't hesitate to contact me as outlined below.

Thank you for your interest in supporting a youth team from your community. We look forward to the journey this program will offer!

Sincerely,

Steph Kappel
Conservation Engagement Coordinator
Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
1225 Estabrook Drive
St. Paul, MN 55103
Email: Stephanie.kappel@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Phone: 651-487-8271

