

## Featured Volunteer Work: Students & Citizen Science

Gary Morrisey has been a volunteer with Master Naturalists since 2013. Over the years, he spends his time doing a little bit of everything: restoration work, public speaking, and a bit of pollinator gardening. Not only does he help with the various stewardship projects around Cook County, but he's also active in citizen science; helping advance scientific research through the collection of data. Some of the data he gathers is for BackYard Nature Center and West Ridge Nature Preserve. Not only does he gather data, but he also runs programming and educational components.

One of Gary's passions is getting students involved in these Citizen Science Programs. He works with teachers to help design field trips and follow-up activities to enhance their educational goals. Working with all ages, Gary has done Project Squirrel with kindergarteners; macroinvertebrate investigations with eighth graders; and collection, processing, and cutting and burning buckthorn with sophomores. Gary also facilitates activities with clubs and summer camps catching fish and seed collecting.

When asked about something he's learned as a Master Naturalist, he states:

“In the process of organizing and conducting these programs, I have come to realize that I can't do it alone. I had to reach out to fellow naturalists and found that their willingness to help me help the kids is the most rewarding aspect of my volunteerism. “

Previously a teacher, Gary did not have a lot of previous experience with the environment, so he has taken this opportunity to learn more. Taking part in the [ENTICE program](#) run by the Illinois Department of Naturalist Resources has given him a lot of background information. They have classes on a variety of topics similar to the training Master Naturalists go through initially, so it is good to continue to learn with high-quality educational programs.

Gary loves working with his community as a Master Naturalist, and if looking to be part of the program, he states that “The fact that a Master Naturalist can have an impact on the environment in so many different ways is a great plus. I would encourage everyone to try out as many activities as possible. You might just find a niche you didn't know would fit you. And if you are still looking for your niche, email me, and I'll hook you up.”

