

Featured Volunteer Work: Training to Discover

Given I enjoy being outdoors in nature, when I learned of the Master Naturalist program and all that it offers, I quickly applied. It is one thing to enjoy walks and bike rides in the Forest Preserves, but another thing to start to see and experience more of the woods given the knowledge I have gained through the classes and material provided through the Master Naturalist program. We learned how to identify trees, animal tracks and even animal scat. There are a lot of hands on learning as well, such as obtaining the skills to determine the health of a stream by collecting macro-invertebrates and recording data, even water flow.

Each class is taught by knowledgeable and experienced professionals who are also skilled in making the material fun to learn and memorable. With the knowledge gained, I have a new experience when I am outdoors, whether it is in the forest preserves, my neighborhood or backyard. I have learned how to look at nature and the environment with a completely different view that I did not even know existed.

The personal relationships gained throughout the program have been rewarding as we all entered this program to learn and with a common interest in nature. What a great group of people to be associated with, now and into the future. Going forward, the fun of teaching this information to others interests me. My family and friends are gaining a better understanding of nature and the woods as I share stories of what I have learned in the Master Naturalist program. I look forward to continuing my volunteering with the Cook County Forest Preserve.

When one learns a small thing about nature they would never have even known, it can spark a seed within them to learn more and look at the next thing a little differently hopefully with a little more curiosity.

-Sue Gulotta-Marron, Cook County Master Naturalist Intern

