



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Position Description

Title: Midewin Interpreter

Purpose: Interpreters deliver educational programs for groups that should promote awareness, knowledge and appreciation for the environment and natural and cultural resources. This is a key role in sharing Midewin's history, mission, challenges and accomplishments. Interpreters help directly with part two and four of our mission which are to provide opportunities for scientific; environmental; and land use education and research and also to provide recreational opportunities.

Duties and Responsibilities: An interpreter may play the role of the following: youth program educator, tour guide, Midewin exhibitor at fairs, educational presentations, Welcome Center host, and/or along trails. Programs take place on-site & off-site for the general public, school groups, partner sponsored day camps, clubs, etc. Interpreters may be required to drive their personal vehicles to offsite locations and also set up and break down displays. Interpreters should be able to train into a leadership role and are encouraged to mentor others. Some interpreters are responsible for speaking in front of individuals or groups up to 50 or more. If you are only interested in a certain type of interpretation such as youth education, please contact the volunteer coordinator for details specific to that role.

Department and Location: Under the direction of the Interpretive Specialist and/or Environmental Education Specialist, interpreters may have several jobs within Midewin's Public Services Department. The primary check-in locations are the Welcome Center, River Road Trailhead and the Iron Bridge Trailhead, but these may vary.

Qualifications: Interpreters may be required to drive a Forest Service vehicle; in this event a valid driver's license is necessary and drivers must pass an online defensive driving course. Individuals must be friendly and enjoy working with all ages and backgrounds; Individuals are required to have excellent communication skills including being a clear and enthusiastic speaker. Part of interpretation is the ability to analyze information and construe meaning using general knowledge, specific knowledge or intuition. Interpreters must be able to express information to a variety of demographics and be aware of cultural differences. Midewin interpreters must have the best interest of the U.S. Forest Service and Midewin in mind. An Interpreter must act tactfully and professionally when dealing with difficult situations, misunderstandings and/or tension.

Time Commitment: Midewin interpreters are needed year round. Most youth programs take place during the school year on weekdays, however summer youth programs are growing. Based on the current school programs scheduled, interpreters are asked to participate in a minimum of 4 days (3 hour sessions) in each school year cycle (Fall, Winter, Spring), which is a minimum of 12 days annually. Tour guides in training must first learn the general Midewin sampler tour. Then interpreters can choose additional tours of interest and shadow seasoned interpreters each time that tour is scheduled. Tours may be 3-5 hours each including preparation time. Midewin does ask that once the interpreter declares their commitment to a scheduled tour they adhere to that commitment, and let their supervisor know at least 48 hours in advance when a change is needed.

Training: All interpreters are required to complete the in-house orientation and shadow seasoned interpreters until they are comfortable and approved to take a lead role. For youth program educators, an initial orientation/refresher course is provided before each school cycle. Videos for certain trainings are available. First Aid and CPR is encouraged, but not required. Training opportunities are occasionally provided such as National Association of Interpretation certification and Environmental Education Association of Illinois workshops.

Working Conditions/Physical Effort: Interpreters are covered by the Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) for injury compensation during scheduled volunteer shifts. Monitors must read, sign and consent to the U.S. Forest Service Job Hazard Analysis, which includes safety requirements and recommended best practices. Interpreters may work in variable conditions including:

- Exposure to outdoor weather conditions & allergens
- Standing for up to 2 hours or more at a time
- Walking on uneven ground for short distances
- Light to moderate lifting

Benefits: Interpreters will learn the history and the future plans of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and be a part of our mission along the way. Interpreters play a critical role in sharing Midewin's history and mission and delivering environmental messages. Interpreters gain the satisfaction of helping people learn first hand what they can do to become a steward of the environment. Interpreters have the opportunity to inspire tomorrow's decision makers and positively affect their environmental awareness. Midewin's volunteer staff receives ongoing recognition from their supervisor and other staff. Volunteers that contribute 12 or more hours are invited to an annual volunteer recognition banquet in November. Midewin's volunteer staff receives the bimonthly Prairie Telegraph. Volunteers may be featured in the telegraph, newspaper articles and/or U.S. Forest Service success stories. Awards can be received for outstanding, innovative and/or long term, core volunteers.

Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator about this opportunity.