

Museum Volunteers

From data entry to curation assistance, Illinois State Museum volunteers are a jewel behind the displays.

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Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Illinois State Museum system. More than 150 volunteers help at ISM facilities in a variety of public and behind-the-scenes capacities. Volunteers orient school groups, work as docents, prepare mailings, help with collections and assist with special events.

The museum's volunteers come from all walks of life and range in age from teens to octogenarians, but have two things in common—they want to give back to the community and they have an interest in the museum and its mission to promote discovery, life-long learning and stewardship of Illinois' cultural and natural heritage.



Volunteers assist curators with collections work and database entry—often tedious but very important duties. Public volunteers get to meet visitors from all across Illinois and beyond. One long-time volunteer said: “I enjoy work-

Volunteer Ila Roberts demonstrates a weaving activity at a family event.

ing in *A Place for Discovery* because of the diversity of people. I have traveled a lot in Illinois and around the country, so I always ask where they're from.”

Working with museum visitors also means seeing a child's eyes light up in amazement when they get to touch a real mastodon tooth or feel the woolly texture of bison fur—another plus for many volunteers.

Museum staff strive to make volunteers feel welcome and vital to its operations.

“They make us feel like a real member of the museum team,” said one long-term volunteer.



Spring Rush greeter Patricia Redenbo orients a school group on the Illinois State Museum's front porch.



For information about volunteering at the Illinois State Museum, visit www.museum.state.il.us/jobs/volunteer.html.