

Volunteer Vibes - *Volunteers play many crucial roles at the Preserve. They maintain trails, welcome visitors, conduct research, educate youth groups, support special events, beautify our gardens, capture breathtaking photography, and much more, contributing their time, talents, and thousands of volunteer hours annually. We will be regularly featuring our volunteers in Volunteer Vibes so that we can all learn who they are and why they do what they do for the Preserve. Let's meet our volunteers!*

Renee Zernitsky

Where did you grow up?

I was born in the Bronx and our family moved us to the country when I was 3. I immediately fell in love with nature. I moved back to NYC in 1969 to pursue a job, got married, and raised our two kids in Queens. After 16 years, and missing the sounds of nature, we moved back to the country where we raised our children. So, I'm more of a country mouse than a city mouse. Fell in love with the Preserve 33 years ago.

What is your volunteer role(s) here at Mohonk Preserve?

My first volunteer role at the Preserve was 20 years ago. I then joined the volunteer photography team 18 years ago. I was the co-coordinator to the group leader for over 8 years. I've been the coordinator of the group for two years now. I've covered every race, photographed many science and school programs, multiple assignments, and staff events over the years. I briefly volunteered as a bike leader for beginners. In my spare time, I run a camera Club in Orange County and spend lots of time with my two grandchildren, teaching them about photography and exploring the Gunks.

Why did you decide to volunteer your time and talents at Mohonk Preserve?

The friendly staff and numerous supporters were a cause I wanted to be a part of. I'm retired now and have been able to spend more time volunteering at the preserve.

What is a volunteer accomplishment you are really proud of?

I feel I have accomplished the role I set out to do for the Preserve and I'm most proud of being a part of the Volunteer Photography team. I'm especially grateful to my two co-coordinators for their continued support, and our team of over 100 volunteer photographers, for their dedication to the leadership of the team. We have supplied the preserve with thousands of photos over the years and continue to do so today. We have been able to share something we are all personally passionate about and I enjoy working with like-minded people with the same goals.

Where is your favorite place/trail on the Preserve and why is it your favorite?

My Favorite place/trail on the Preserve will always be Bonticou Crag. It's like you can see the whole world from up there. It makes me proud to think that I am a part of preserving it for future generations. My favorite trails are Lenape Lane to Duck Pond.



*Renee taking nature photographs on the land
Photo by Maryalice Citra*