

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 Talus Talk so that we can all learn who they are and why they do what they do for the Preserve. Let's meet our volunteers!*

Denyse Variano

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Brooklyn and spent my youth on Long Island on the South Shore near the beach. I was fortunate to spend my young adulthood in Ithaca where I met my husband Vincent and lived with our two children until we moved downstate.

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

My long-term volunteer role has been that of an Interpretive Guide, assisting weekend visitors to select trails suited to their desires and abilities. It's great fun to help out-of-towners experience the Preserve for the first time and see their expressions when they witness the breadth of this beautiful land. As a volunteer, I also co-captain for the morning registration at the annual Rock the Ridge and enjoy helping with various "other duties as assigned."

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

My husband and I were always library volunteers. When we moved here, I wanted to try something completely different! My love of the land began with sleepaway camp in the Catskills. The Preserve's habitat was reminiscent of that time. Helping people enjoy the natural world around them is a passion of mine. My role as a volunteer has allowed this to flourish.

What is a volunteer accomplishment you are really proud of?

Passing the baton to new volunteers always brings me a sense of accomplishment. As a long-term volunteer of 15 plus years, it is enjoyable to see the excitement of someone new to the Preserve, and help them feel comfortable and competent in their new shoes, or should I say hiking boots?

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

It is hard to choose just one place as each trailhead has such a different feel. I guess I would choose Spring Farm as my favorite because of the absolute peace and quiet. Each of the trails at SF is unique and the Spring wildflowers are amazing!



*Denyse Variano hiking at the Testimonial Gateway
Photo by Vinny Variano*