

A Warm Welcome to Hillwood's New Volunteers

Lisa Leyh, Head of Volunteer and Employee Engagement
& Erin Allen, Volunteer Programs Manager
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Hillwood's volunteer program is rooted in a tradition that began with our founder, Marjorie Merriweather Post. Welcoming guests and sharing her extraordinary collections and gardens were central to her vision of Hillwood. For nearly 50 years, our volunteers have carried that legacy forward by helping visitors engage with the mansion and gardens while supporting the care and stewardship of the estate to the high standards set by Post.

To ensure this tradition continues, the first half of 2026 focused on recruiting and training new volunteers across three different roles around campus: mansion docents, visitors services volunteers, and horticulture volunteers.

Please join us in welcoming the newest members of the Hillwood volunteer community!

Horticulture Volunteers

Under the direction of Matt Boyle, cutting garden & volunteer manager, the horticulture volunteer team welcomed **five new volunteers** this year. After completing their onboarding, new horticulture volunteers spend their first several shifts training alongside experienced volunteers and staff, gaining hands-on experience throughout the gardens. Among Hillwood's seven horticulture volunteer roles, these new additions have helped grow the outdoor garden volunteer cohort to 70 volunteers, the orchid collection volunteer team to 25 volunteers, and the birder volunteer group, Hillwood's newest volunteer position, to 24 volunteers.

Whether tending the outdoor gardens and greenhouse orchids or assisting with bird identification across the property, these volunteers are already making meaningful contributions to the beauty, care, and vitality of Hillwood's grounds.

New Orchid Volunteer

Deidre Carr

New Birder Volunteer

Bess Touma

New Outdoor Garden Volunteers

Christine Bowker
Peni Critchell
Sara Doar

Mansion Docents

After completing an intensive six-month training program, **21 new mansion docents** graduated this summer, bringing our mansion docent cohort to 86 volunteers. The program included 16 three-hour evening classes led by Lisa Leyh, head of volunteer and employee engagement, Audra Kelly, director of interpretation, and Erin Allen, volunteer programs manager.

The carefully designed curriculum combined scholarship, discussion, and hands-on practice. Throughout the training program, each docent-in-training developed and presented four presentation projects, building confidence in collection knowledge and tour development.

The training materials also serve as a valuable continuing education resource for both volunteers and staff. The program includes ten pre-recorded lectures and more than 100 readings, including chapters, handouts, book scans, and reference materials. Volunteers are welcome to explore these resources by visiting the [2026 Mansion Docent Training](#) page on the volunteer website, where materials are organized by topic. Simply expand each section to access the lectures and assigned readings.

Our newest docent class has already begun making an impact. Since mid-June, they have joined the tour schedule, sharing the beauty of Marjorie Post's collection and legacy with visitors.

New Mansion Docents		
Katie Abarr	Sheila Flick	Nancy Ridgway
Chelsea Beaupre	Diane Hight	Terry Romine
Caitlin Bergin	Taryn Mitchell	Jenna Rupp
Evan Cale	Fatemeh Movaghari Pour	Mattie Schloetzer
Alison Cave	Madelon Mulcahey	India Scribner
Rachel Erlebacher	Marina Pogossova	Zac Stillerman
Christina Fleps	Barbara Richardson	Julie Vaillancourt

Visitor Services Volunteers

This spring, **23 new Visitor Services Volunteers (VSVs)** joined the volunteer cohort, increasing our total to approximately 128 volunteers.

In response to volunteer feedback, the onboarding program was enhanced and expanded into a three-week course. The revised program now includes two training sessions, a mansion tour, and two on-the-job training shifts alongside experienced VSVs. Led by Holly Scanlon, volunteer programs coordinator, the updated curriculum provides a comprehensive overview of Hillwood's policies, procedures, and volunteer responsibilities.

Training resources have also been expanded to better support volunteer learning. These materials include presentation slides, training documents, operational guidelines, a curated reading list, and recommendations for further study. A new, dedicated section, [Onboarding Resources for Visitor Services Volunteers](#), on the volunteer website now serves as a central hub for these resources, accessible for both new and seasoned volunteers.

Our newest VSVs have quickly adapted to their new roles, working alongside our seasoned VSVs to welcome guests and ensure visitors enjoy a warm and memorable experience in the visitor center, mansion, and beyond.

New Visitor Services Volunteers		
Wendy Allan	Laura Klaus	Lindsay North
Whitney Babash	Yuliya Kolesnik	Nathalia Pavez Riva
Pam Barr	Marina Livezey	Colette Prentice
Emilie Booth	Sonia Lurye	Yana Ragozina
Sue Charlton	Julie Mamunes	Patsy Smith
Suzanne Eckert-Burton	Marianne McElroy	Valerie Swain
John Ganoe	Wendy Morris	Barbara Wanner
Celia Hoke	Karen Nakamura	

Welcome to the Hillwood Volunteer Community

To all of our new volunteers, welcome! We are delighted that you have chosen to become part of the Hillwood community. Your time, talents, and enthusiasm help make every visitor's experience exceptional, and we are grateful to have you with us. We look forward to working alongside you for many years to come and are always here to support you as you settle into your new role. We're so glad you're here!

To our seasoned volunteers, thank you for your continued dedication and support. Your generosity in sharing your knowledge, mentoring new volunteers, and fostering a welcoming, inclusive environment helps ensure that every new volunteer feels valued from day one. Your commitment to Hillwood and to one another is what makes our volunteer program so special, and we are grateful for all that you do.