2015 Reston Association Volunteer of the Year

Ilene McNeal – Nature Center Volunteer

Ilene McNeal is one of RA's most reliable volunteers, and an example to all of a true community-minded citizen. She has devoted hundreds of hours of her time during the past three years that she’s been volunteering with the Reston Association. As one of our top performing Welcome Desk Attendants at the Walker Nature Center, Ilene volunteers on a weekly basis, which involves greeting visitors, taking program reservations, answering phones, assisting with opening building procedures, receiving mail and deliveries, answering visitor questions, disbursing nature center materials, supporting staff with program preparation, and keeping the resource room well maintained.

Ilene has been able to bring her skills gained as a Kindergarten teacher to her volunteer work, which makes her especially well-suited to her role at the Nature Center where she joyfully interacts with visitors all of ages. She has built many special relationships with our visitors, including some of our regular senior patrons. Beyond her welcome desk duties, she volunteers at various programs, wildlife
counts, stream monitoring, and bird box monitoring. As a bird counter she works through the rain, snow, or shine in order to collect data on the abundance of birds in our community, which allows the count to reach a wider area and a diversity of habitats. She is also responsible for monitoring 3 bird boxes in The Glade Stream Valley, which involves weekly check-ins on the boxes for six months and data collection on nest material, egg development and fledgling birds.

Ilene’s dedication to her volunteer work has not gone unnoticed by RA staff and Reston community members. As one of our most reliable volunteers, she consistently provides clear communication about her volunteer schedule and goes above and beyond to provide help when needed. Ilene is always doing her part to be an engaged community member, and is a thoughtful neighbor who looks out for others in need. We are honored to award Ilene with the Volunteer of the Year award, and feel fortunate to be able to benefit from her passion for volunteerism and her positive impact on our community.