LIONS, TIGERS, AND TEENS: PROMOTING INTEREST IN SCIENCE AS A CAREER PATH THROUGH TEEN VOLUNTEERING

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Abstract
The Saint Louis Zoo’s teen volunteer program, Zoo ALIVE fosters teen interest in science and conservation by providing volunteers with a myriad of opportunities to engage in, while building a community for science learning. Using an online questionnaire, we studied individuals (n=71) that were currently or previously involved in Zoo ALIVE to determine the program’s influence on their science perceptions and pathways. Results showed a statistically significant, positive correlation between participants’ views of science, science careers, and environmental awareness. Our study provides evidence that engagement in science learning opportunities influences interest in science and science careers. Our study also highlights the importance of programming that engages teens through the progression of their childhood science interest to adult career pursuits.