

A FEW WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

President's Message

Tommy Bryant, Director of Facilities, Oklahoma City Zoo



Hello everyone, I hope the holiday season has treated you well. This time of year at OKC is always busy as we catch up on things we put off during the holidays, move right into preparing our budgets, and then to all the projects and issues we need to address. Please re-

member to add a little to your budgets so you can bring someone along to our annual conference. We look forward each year to seeing new faces and learning a bit more about our sister zoos.

Many of us oversee more than just Maintenance and are responsible for Housekeeping, Grounds, Security, and Horticulture. The folks in these departments are an integral part of our daily processes and should be recognized for the important role they play. Many times, they are the face of the Zoo and the first contact to engage with the public. Our patrons often tell us how someone helped them but they do not know who they were. I get busy sometimes and forget to tell my staff how much I appreciate them for their dedication to making our zoo look clean and presentable and

keeping everything functional. I know at OKC we have some difficulty finding resources for these departments to network and learn the good and bad that others are experiencing so let's look at inviting these disciplines to the conference and include vendors as well.

I learn so much from my colleagues when we get to visit at meetings and I like to believe I can learn from anyone, including how not to do something. We all seem to run into the same challenges, and sharing information not only saves time but can ease some of the stress we find ourselves with. We have all had our failures and successes and should share them with each other.

I am sending a great big thank you to everyone for doing what you do and for helping to keep this organization moving forward and growing each year. We could never be what we are without the support and interest you all show. In addition, I would like to thank each of the new officers who have stepped up (or been hustled into their position) and started this year with such enthusiasm. We welcome any input or suggestions.

Here is to a great new year!

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Plastic Use Reduction in Zoo Atlanta's Animal Commissary

Christina Lavallee, CIG, CPAT, Lead Keeper, Green Team Chair, Zoo Atlanta

Over the past year, Zoo Atlanta has taken steps to reduce plastic bag use in the animal commissary by increasing the number of reusable containers. Prior to implementing changes, all animal areas' individual diets were delivered in bags of varying sizes to accommodate the numerous diets, with some even needing to be double bagged. This totaled over 35,000 bags a year.

In the commissary, some foods are bagged so produce and meat drainage do not contaminate other diet items. They are prepared a day or two in advance and were stored in round buckets in the refrigerator. Keepers were able to find other uses for some of the diet bags by reusing them for animal waste removal or food storage, or were recycled. To address biocontamination concerns, the buckets were unloaded by commissary keepers upon delivery, but did not remain in animal areas.

A meeting was scheduled to understand the needs and concerns of the commissary and keeper staff, and also veterinary considerations. Some of the challenges identified included the small footprint of the commissary, water and chemical use for cleaning, staff time, and cost. Staff time is a challenge to take into consideration due to additional cleaning and

disinfecting of the buckets. There was no budget to add more staff. Also, with more cleaning comes more water and chemical use.

Commissary staff switched from round to square buckets since they are easily stacked to save space in the cooler, washer, and drying area. We have also switched to using decomposable bags for produce, chow, and insect diets. These bags can be placed in our compost bins that are collected and taken to a commercial composting facility.

Reclosable Green-lined biodegradable bags are used with various meat items. These bags are rinsed out and can be collected and deposited in the bag receptacles in front of grocery stores or at our local Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (CHaRM) facility.

Animal staff have been excited for the changes and have been helpful in finding alternative solutions during the changeover. Staff continue to suggest alternatives and make small improvements. Even though it is not perfect, the continuation of making small changes for Zoo Atlanta makes big changes in the long run for Georgia.



Compostable Baggies



Reusable Containers

Integrating Sustainability Across Your Organization: Establishing a New Industry Norm

By Fia Turczynewycz, Sustainable Communities Advocate & GSAG Communications Manager, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

Across industries, institutions that embrace organizational sustainability as a business advantage consistently outperform their peers. In Zoos and Aquaria, no longer are just monitoring the metrics of water, waste, and energy sufficient toward meeting our collective mission of conserving wildlife and wild places. Our existence as stewards of the natural world requires examining the root causes of species loss, doing our part to stop it, and improving our individual and industry impact. It is time to lead by example through leveraging our conservation cultures, planning for climate resilience, addressing our accessibility barriers, and directly engaging our communities in this work.

Join the AZA's Green Scientific Advisory Group (GSAG) in April as we host the 10th Annual Green Summit during the Midyear meeting in Palm Springs, CA. The two-day Summit brings together facilities managers, sustainability coordinators, animal caretakers, zoo directors, industry partners, educators, and anyone with a focus or passion for natural resource conservation. This year, we will focus on ways to integrate sustainability across our entire organization - how to ensure sustainability does not just sit in the hands of one specific department or role, but is embedded across our zoo and aquarium institutions and into our culture - the core of all of our job roles and responsibilities.

This year's sessions will cover topic areas like climate change solutions (both from a facilities operation perspective and an education and engagement perspective); the circular economy and green

purchasing policies; the brass tacks of natural resource management and metrics; communicating sustainability across our staff, within our communities, and with each other; dynamic design and building to last; regenerative resilience; net zero or beyond net zero; and sustainability in our local communities.

The Green Summit is planned by members and supporters of the GSAG who span AZA institutions and partners across North America. The GSAG works together to lead the AZA community in reducing human impacts on natural resources and wildlife through sustainable operations. Our vision is sustainability embedded in the culture and implemented through the strategic plan and daily operations of every AZA institution. Want to get involved? Reach out to GSAG Chair, Elizabeth Bagley at ebagley@calacademy.org.

Of course, the planning process does not end as the week closes out. The concentrated time and effort spent on learning new concepts and organizing data, provides clarity of existing performance baselines and fuels aspirational goal setting. The work really begins upon return to respective organizations where stakeholder consensus can be garnered, plans adopted, and practices implemented.

For more information about the course and registration please visit: <https://oglebay.com/groups-and-conferences/national-training-center/sustainability-institute/>.

We hope to see you there!



Green Summit

“I’d like some clear, well-seasoned perspective.”

Nikki Meyers, Director of Facilities Operations & Maintenance, Denver Zoo

When I wrote my last article, “Don’t Call Me Honey” I put myself out there and took myself out of my comfort zone because I wanted to tell my truth. It was uncomfortable and it made me nervous. What I did not realize is I was not just telling my truth, I was telling my team’s story. By writing the story from only my perspective, I missed the opportunity to include a strong group of individuals that are a part of my every day narrative. Lesson Learned. My story is about me but it is also about those around me.

When the article went out, I received feedback from people I had never met and also from friends, family, and coworkers. I received good feedback but also some constructive criticism. I reached out to a small group of individuals, both people I am close to and acquaintances, for feedback about my article and to find out how it made them feel.

I received a response from a woman in a male dominated field who has experienced uncomfortable situations similar to mine. She found the article empowering and relatable. To me, her most impactful comment was “I wish when I was younger I had a female role model to guide me through this.” How can we be role models now? Are there younger individuals in your office that you can be a role model for and coach them through some difficult conversations?

I met with a Vice President for coffee and we discussed his initial thoughts on the article. He was shocked about the article from a couple different angles. His initial reaction was incredulous as no one has treated him that way. As an upper middle-class, white male, he did not understand why someone would treat his staff differently. This initiated a conversation about privilege blindness, meaning being unaware of one’s own privilege. The other perspective he had was to ask why he had not heard about this before. I thought it was petty to complain and bother him with these issues. After further discussion, I realized that as long as I treat this as petty and small, it will remain that way. This is not petty or small, and it is not something to dismiss. I also thought I had it under control. If a

contractor wants to treat me that way, I won’t hire him again. Now I know, I could have made an impact by going to my boss and letting him know that I needed him to go to this company’s leadership and let them know we are no longer going to contract with them anymore because of this experience. That is an opportunity for us to truly make change.

I met with a coworker that told me, “If you are saying something about someone or a group, try saying it with your name instead of theirs. How does it make you feel? Would you be ok with it?” This was incredible advice. It has helped me to slow down. When I am about to comment about a team or send an email generalizing something, I will think about how I would feel if someone said that about me. How would I feel if it was about my team? But here is the hard part – What if I put my name in it and think, I am ok with it. Then how do I walk a mile in someone else’s shoes? What I can do is try to understand, ask questions and to be open to feedback. The best I can do is listen and learn.

The most important thing I have learned from diving into diversity and inclusion is being open to feedback. I might say the wrong thing, but more often than not it will be because I have made an honest mistake. I am reaching out and asking questions and taking this feedback. I am not afraid to call someone to ask, “What is inclusivity?” I want to hear from my team if I have overstepped with a comment or a joke. It is not about shaming or guilt. It is about learning, gaining a new perspective, and showing up differently.

So now that I have put myself out there and really made myself vulnerable, I am going to admit that I do not have all of the answers, but I have taken this big pot of diversity, set it on the stove, brought it to a nice boil, and now I am going to stir. Let’s keep talking about diversity and inclusion and learning about ourselves and our teams. It is ok to have an emotional reaction and get uncomfortable, because it leads to change. Let’s make ourselves better.

We Want You!

Seeking Presenters & Championing Diversity for Louisville 2020

Samanthe Peterson, Sustainability Coordinator, San Antonio Zoo & Aquarium

It is never too early to get started for the AZFA Program & Education Committee! We are already seeking presenters for this year's conference hosted by the Louisville Zoo September 27th - October 1st in Louisville, KY.

We had a wonderful program a few months ago in Oklahoma City with a mix of presentations, workshops, and roundtable discussions. Our goal is to keep building with another robust offering in Louisville. The underlying theme, which grew from some excellent discussions last year, will be diversity and how AZFA can help lead the industry towards greater inclusion and representation. As such, the women of AZFA will be a major focus and key contributors to the program. If you would like to be a part of this effort, please contact sam.peterson@sazoo.org to be added to the Women of AZFA e-mail list.

In addition to the themed presentations, there will be plenty of room for sessions on sustainability, professional development, safety and emergency response, exhibit design and project management, life support systems, exhibit accessibility and more. If you have a topic suggestion around diversity in the zoo and aquarium industry, if you would like to present at the conference, teach a workshop, or host a roundtable, or if you know someone who could, please contact the Program & Education Committee Chair, Allmon Forrester, at aforrester@jbzoo.org. Please respond by Wednesday, April 1st to help us finalize the program as soon as possible to share with our members.

Once again we must note that the annual conference would not be possible without the participation and collaboration of the AZFA membership. Enormous gratitude goes to all of the members who volunteer their time and expertise to keep the program improving year after year. See you in Louisville!



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New Members

Professional

Karl Ahlers, Maintenance Coordinator, Texas State Aquarium

Max Albers, Maintenance Worker, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

Ron Darling, Exhibit Technician, Woodland Park Zoo

Russell Hoptowit, Maintenance Worker, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

Patrick Nichols, Paint Shop Manager, Denver Zoo

Sydney Pense, CAD Manager, Monterey Bay Aquarium

Brooke Pertile, Maintenance Worker, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

Matt Shelby, Director, Housekeeping and Grounds, Saint Louis Zoo

Steve Smith, Director Facilities & Animal Care, ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain Vermont

Stephanie Snyder, Exhibit Technician, Woodland Park Zoo

Ben Trawford, Project Specialist, San Antonio Zoo

Associate

Robin Alcorn, Project Manager - Municipal Facilities, City of Moncton

Jill Odachowski, Life Support Operator, Buffalo Zoo

Commercial

Stephanie Heffernan, Applications Engineer, IPEX USA, LLC

Editor's Note

By Jennifer Golden, Operations Project Manager, Zoo New England

I want to wish all of you and your families a very happy and healthy new year. Articles for the spring issue of The Outlet can be sent to me at jgolden@zoonewengland.org

Calendar

Deadline for the next newsletter April 17th

Annual Conference: September 27 - October 1, 2020
Louisville Zoo, Louisville, Kentucky

Publication Schedule

- Summer Issue - July
- Winter Issue - January
- Fall Issue - October
- Spring Issue - April

www.azfa.org

Don't forget to check out the AZFA website for updates and news.

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