

ACE for Wildlife Learning Group - Look ahead at 2021_2022 pr...

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center), Tierney Ball (ZooBoise), Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo), Augusta Grumdahl (Idaho Falls Zoo), Heather Merewood (Henry Vilas Zoo), Katie Elam (ZooMontana), Hannah Tilden (Woodland Park zoo), Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo), Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo), Sarah Witt (Zoological Society of Milwaukee), Speaker

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 00:25
Hello everyone.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 00:33
So, I imagine we're gonna get a couple people trickling in. But as it's going to be a great conversation, I think we can also start diving in and people can join as we go. So, welcome. I'm recording this meeting with the idea that we're going to be able to share it with folks who aren't going to be able to attend to in person. Look at all these people joining.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 01:12
Perfect, so it looks like we've got a pretty good number at the moment. So welcome, everyone. My name is Daniel Rother. I work at Woodland Park Zoo, (he/him/his) if you haven't had a chance to meet me before I help coordinate the ACE for Wildlife network. So this is going to be a really great opportunity to have a conversation about what the future of our individual programs look like. We've had, this is the third learning group conversation. Essentially, we're going for just a pretty informal vibe as an opportunity for folks to share some of the successes, the challenges, the questions that they have with other folks in the network, as we all kind of collectively work on similar things.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 01:52
And really what I'm hoping we'll focus on today is thinking through what are people planning for

And really what I'm hoping we'll focus on today is thinking through what are people planning for the 2021/2022 school year? What's that programming going to look like? Maybe you don't know yet, maybe it's all still half baked, and you'd love to hear what other people are working on. Maybe you know exactly what you're doing already. And you'd love to tell some folks about it, or maybe you are somewhere in between that. So what I would love to do is share a link to a Jam Board in the chat. If you haven't used the Jam Board before, it's kind of like a collaborative whiteboard, we can put some sticky notes on it. And if you all want to jump into here, and while you're loading it, you'll see right up at the top, there's a spot where there's a little box that says one out of two, if you see two out of two, just click the left arrow to get back to the first page, what you should be seeing is kind of a long, blue-gray bar. And what I'd love to do is just get a sense for where folks are about their program planning, right, we're in September, we've made it out of August, some of you might know exactly what you're gonna be doing for the other folks might still be in summer mode, and you're thinking like, "oh my god, we're actually planning for the year already?"

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 03:10

So on the left hand side of Jam Board, you will see some tools you can use. And I would love if you grab either a post it note or like there's that circle, which lets you just drop a shape. And I'd love if you got one of those things and just put it somewhere on this spectrum. So all the way on our left is you do not know what we're doing yet for 2021/ 2022 and all the way on the right maybe it's completely planned. And if you feel like you're speaking for your entire institution, that's totally fine. If you feel like you're speaking for your department or for the piece of the thing that you ever see that's totally fine too. This is just an attempt to kind of get a vibe for the room around where we kind of are within us.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 03:58

And as you drop them in they're all gonna appear in that top left corner. So feel free to go drag it to the right spot on our thing you can also resize it if you need.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 04:22

62.8 Wow, that's a specific number. Like you've got three people in the room and so I'm surprised you get to 62.8 by averaging those numbers together but yeah, fair enough. It's quick math.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 04:51

I like that it's live and you can see it moving. So Alaska Sealife Center is bouncing from the farthest left to the fastest checked.

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 04:59

All depends on the day, and the level of cases.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 05:02

Yeah, that's fair. It's really hard to plan this, yeah. But this is really helpful, it's good to see everyone's kind of, like, somewhere in the middle area, we've got some folks who are really far to the planning side of things that some folks who are definitely not. And that's great, this is a great opportunity to, for people to ask their questions and also to share what their plans are, because maybe their plans will inspire some other folks. So we're gonna use this Jam Board for a second purpose also. If you up at the top, you see what it says one out of three. Now, if you just scroll over to the next page and click that little right arrow to go to the next frame, so you get to two out of three, you should see three big boxes. "I'd like to learn about", "I'm excited to tell others about", and "everything else".

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 05:56

Feel free to say something in the chat or unmute yourself if you have no idea what I'm talking about and you can't navigate - you haven't successfully navigated this page. What I'm hoping to do is spend let's say three minutes and let everyone just think for a moment and drop some things on here because what I would love to do is figure out like what kinds of questions are you coming to this meeting with? What kind of stories or successes you're coming here with? It's okay if you don't put anything if you're like, "I don't really know where we're at. I'm just excited to learn and to contribute", you don't have to put something down. But if you are on the page of trying to get anything very specific at this meeting, I want to make sure that this conversation serves your needs.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 08:27

Okay, I see a lot of things getting added, I think the speed of things getting added is slowing down. So there's no reason you can't add more things while we're talking. It looks like we have a lot of stuff to chat about. I hope that this conversation coming up, we're gonna be chatting for the next like 15 minutes. And I hope that this serves a lot of your needs. But if it doesn't, or if you want to continue it, there's always a discussion platform on the ACE for Wildlife website as well.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 08:54

Doing a quick, kind of, skim through things. It looks like there's a couple of different thematic things I see on here. I see a bunch of things highlighting virtual programs, I see a bunch of things, thinking about safety protocols and kind of like COVID-19 response related things. I see some really specific, like empathy and evaluation things. And I see like some things that don't have a lot of other ones like them, like empathy building for adult programs, teen workshops, and things like that. So, what I would love to do is, we've got a number of people in the room, I think, why don't we dive into a bit of a conversation, but I want to leave the option open that it feels like where too many people want to talk and don't feel the opportunity to talk we can always break up into smaller groups to tackle any one of these topics. But one of the things I see first on this is there's a number of things on the left that surround virtual programs and empathy in virtual programs and virtual school programs. And there's a couple things on the

right around virtual programs also. So maybe that's where we should start, does anyone have anything? They have any burning questions or virtual programs or any cool things they want to share about virtual programs that can be the thing that kicks us off?

R Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo) 10:31

Oh, actually, I can start with a question. I'm sorry, my video was off there. Um, I guess I'm kind of curious with a lot of our virtual programs recently, um, attendance has been quite low. Does anybody have any recommendations on possible ways to maybe help us to increase some of our attendance? Maybe? I don't know. I've just, you know, you obviously post on social media and stuff to try to encourage people to attend programs and a lot of the programs I'm thinking of typically our library programs currently that we might only get a couple people to show up to these programs now. Whereas before we had 50, maybe even 60 people.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 11:21

See a question show up in the chat about that, which is asking if they're free or paid programs?

R Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo) 11:27

Yeah, those are free to attend. Yes. Registration is required. Yes.

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 11:41

Ryan, what platform are you using for those programs? Sorry, can you repeat that? What platform are you using?

R Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo) 11:54

I'm sorry. Um, we've been going through Zoom mainly. So some, some libraries have a preference to go through Google Meets but mostly Zoom.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 12:04

Yeah, a couple things to see in the chat. ZooBoise has been having a similar experience. Courtney at Henry Vilas Zoo, similar experience, summertime has people Zoomed-out. Zoom fatigue, especially for the summer. Is anyone seeing the opposite when we get back into the fall and there's now take up? Or is it kind of this is everyone on the same trend?

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 12:48

We took a specific pause for the summer for our free virtual programming, because we anticipated a drop. So we don't really have good numbers to base it on. But our specific

audience programs are on an uptick. So our pre-K program just started back up. And it's, it's very specific, kind of our general programs, those numbers are still pretty low.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 13:15

Do you want to tell us a bit about your pre K program?

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 13:17

Yeah, it's great. We called Smart Fry School here at the Aquarium and ideally focused the three to four [year] crowd. It's a companion piece to our in person, pre-K program that we have, which we're not doing currently. It's free, we stream it on YouTube. That goes pretty well, we we started doing the Zoom kind of free Zoom thing if registered and get a seat, but we found that just putting it out there and YouTube gets us a little bit wider audience. It's a sponsored program. So, we just have a little commercial ahead of the program for our sponsor, and their sign shows up on our cart. We were lucky, we were able to pick up a pre-K specialist because of COVID loss from another aquarium in the lower 48, so we've been able to add to our team and so I'm really looking forward to it. First two are in the bag. I think I've been out so [I] unfortunately missed them.

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 14:17

But yeah, we're really excited for some collaboration with those two, we've determined that we've we have the best kind of traction in our state when we collaborate with other pre-K options around the state. When we did it before we were very focused on trying to maintain connection to the ocean and we're not doing that now and just kind of giving good general kind of natural history programming for for kiddos. Real simple things like photosynthesis and explore your backyard. So those have gone pretty well for us. We're really excited for the option. We decided to go very kids program themes. So it's basically the same program every week with a different topic, Mr. Rogers-ish, you'll exactly know what the openings gonna look like there's a storytime at the same time every time. One of the challenges to keep in mind if you are going to stream on YouTube for kids is that YouTube disables content or comments for kids on YouTube platforms for content. So if you want interaction, you got to set up something else. We've set up a specific Ask Tuffy, Tuffy is our tufted puffin mascot. And an Ask Tuffy line, which is a supportive email, a text phone number, you can sign up through Google to get a specific phone number for you just to use for texts. And then we have that live. And we just kind of remind people throughout the program that they can Ask Tuffy anytime a question, and we can pick up interactions during the program. It's not 100% live content, but it is a live hosted content. So we are always saying hello and goodbye. Usually storytime is pre recorded, sometimes some of the content is pre-recorded depending on opportunity or subject matter. And so that allows us to be a little bit more flexible, because we can plan that stuff out in advance and do the video editing and graphics production ahead of time. But we do have some plans for all completely live programming as well.

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 16:19

And then one of the other things that's nice about pre-recording is that we can bump that

And then one of the other things that's nice about pre-recording is that we can bump that week's subject if we get something interesting say in our rehab department or something we can get a baby otter or something like that, we're not going to know where to fuzziess for you know, talking about something else. So it gives us a really nice flexible chance, it also allows me the chance to kind of take a broader look at what those subjects are necessarily need to know what you know, the content will be for, you know, April 12 meeting. But I do like to have kind of an idea of where the tangents going. So when my team brings it to me I can know what they're going to be doing. And then also I can let the funder know as well what to expect if they want to let any of their folks know about it. So going pretty well, Small Fry School, pretty fun.

D

Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 17:04

I don't see a question in the chat as much as the "cute", and I love the Ask Tuffy that's really good. I'd be curious, I see a couple other folks who wrote things on their own say to tell others about, who sound like they might have some plans for the fall, I think it's really helpful knowing hearing so much about what what Jeff and the folks at Alaska Sealife Center are planning for the fall. Does anyone else have specific plans for the fall and they know enough about that they want to share what they're working on?

K

Katie Elam (ZooMontana) 17:50

I could share. So my name is Katie, I work at ZooMontana. And we are in a lucky position due to COVID. We're on seventy acres and people have been coming here and coming here. We're in a relatively low populated area. So we've been really lucky with attendance and memberships and all that enough that my director, the zoo's director finally said I could hire a third full time person. This is relevant because we kind of are going to revamp our educational programming. We tried to do it in the past, but we've just put only two people full time, it's hard to revamp everything while you're also giving programming. So we took September to kind of like actually plan what is next summer look like for camps, and then also like get more solid on what we're offering for all of our programming. So we're actually going to do different curricula for an outreach program versus an on site like field trip versus a distance learning program. A distance learning program is going to be the same usually across all grades unless one like we have free distance learning that's going to be about animal adaptations. But people can also like pay a small fee and do like a customized longer program with animals as well. Those aren't super popular as you'd imagine the free ones are always the ones that go. But we wanted to make a different kind of, you know, quality over quantity for our programming, because we've done a lot of quantity. But now like for school outreach, you know, we want to grow our outreach, we want to grow our onsite field trips, and we want to do distance learning, but we have a very limited amount of animal ambassadors. So to compensate for that. Our school outreaches we used to do like anywhere from three to five animals depending on who's available. And we would go and do like a 45 minute hour long program, trying to base it around science standards. Now what we're going to do, and this is inspired by some friends of mine, in at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody Wyoming, they have like 12 birds to work with total. So, what they do is they're gonna pick like one or two animals what we're going to do, just bring one or two animals do like a 20-30 minute lesson on them, do an activity based on science standards with the kids like interactive and then like do like a Q&A and also like a critical thinking like, "why are these animals important?" "How can we help them" kind of thing. So it's more focusing on that empathy and conservation and not just cool animals.

K

Katie Elam (ZooMontana) 20:09

Because the more animals you do, as awesome as it is, the less they're going to remember about each animal. So that's how we're doing our outreach programs, our field trips on site. We're going, we can, we're going through it those just again, small population, and we're outdoors for most of it. So we're going to be doing excuse me, like 45 to 60 minute tours over parts of our zoo, with all the outdoor animals because the outdoor animals don't go to schools, so that we can offer two different kinds of programming. So if the teacher comes to us in the spring, but they've also seen us in the fall, they see two different programs. And they were both like science standards based and conservation, empathy stuff. So stuff that I put on there for what I'd like to learn about is how to evaluate all those. So that's what our fall's looking like. And probably, we're still solidifying, but we're going to look at the spring as well like that, I think.

K

Katie Elam (ZooMontana) 21:09

Oh, yes. And then CILC, I've just started looking into that the Center for Interactive Learning or something like that, I'm excited to look at that.

D

Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 21:20

I'm just going to quickly jump drop a link back to the Jam Board in the chat for folks who have joined since I originally posted that. So for anyone who's on this page, you can see some of the topics you'll want to be chatting about and some of the things that are excited to tell other people about so feel free to keep populating things there.

H

Heather Merewood (Henry Vilas Zoo) 21:47

I can share what what we have planned for the fall. So we last school year, when schools were virtual, we were running a zoo school program with 20 kids on site and providing that virtual learning support and then going in between classes and doing some fun zoo activities and seeing the animals. And kind of building off even though schools are back in session, for now knock on wood. We were trying to build off of that for the school year and create an after school program. The the really difficult part piece of that was getting transportation. We don't have, we have a van for for outreach. But it is not a not a 15 passenger van and we can't can't transport a lot of kids in it so that we were kind of working on that, putting that together all of August. And when that fell through, we started looking at other things that we were going to be doing. So we have brought back some of our programs that we did not do it all last year. We do an evening kind of Pajama jam program, a breakfast with the animals program that we'll also be doing in the fall. We haven't, we used to do a Snooze at the Zoo. And we haven't brought that back yet. Having people sleep sleep here overnight. I'm not sure when those will happen again.

H

Heather Merewood (Henry Vilas Zoo) 23:12

But we're, we brought back our preschool program, or preschool pride, which is an hour long

parent child program. And we didn't do it all last year. And then we're kind of just using this time to experiment with some new programs. We're going to be doing a family camp and an adult camp because we keep caring especially camp parents, but other other visitors at the zoo when they see the camp kids going and doing some cool thing they're like you should have usually have a camp for adults. So we're going to try it and we're going to do just two days of that which we just started some some registrations for. And then we're also going to try out a Stroller Safari for just zero to two [year olds] doing a little song. And the first one, Courtney correct me, it's seals on the bus, I think. So we're gonna try that next week and do a little song and tour around the zoo. Mainly just talking to the parents but doing some fun stuff for the kids too.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 24:20

Sounds like you have a lot of stuff that you're experimenting with. And I will say I want to sign up for adult camp. That sounds awesome. Does your, are you pulling from like your existing camp curriculum? And just trying to age it up to adults? Are you starting from scratch?

H Heather Merewood (Henry Vilas Zoo) 24:38

We're doing a little bit of both. We're kind of basing it off of our camp program because that's what you know, that's what the adults said that they wanted. So the family camp is for it's geared towards. I think I had that one for families with kids 5 to 10 [years old] or 4 to 10 [years old], something like that. And we're, you know, I created a different theme. But we're using a lot of pulling from different camp activities that we've done in the past to create that and similar with the with the adult camp, that one's going to be Zoolympics. So we're going to make the adults run around and do some fun stuff.

H Hannah Tilden (Woodland Park zoo) 25:16

You said you opened registration? Are you pleased so far with with sales?

H Heather Merewood (Henry Vilas Zoo) 25:22

I was hoping we would have more. And I we haven't done too much advertising right now I don't even, I think it's only been open for for like a week. We had it open a little bit earlier just for members for zoo members. And I think it's only been open to public for about a week or so. We haven't had, I haven't looked today, but I don't think I've had anybody sign up for the adult camp. A good number of people have signed up for the family camp and I'm pretty sure that one's gonna run but I want people to sign up for that adult one because I really want to do Zoolympics. We'll do some more advertising and see what see how it goes.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 26:11

So I've got another question for you, Heather also, but again, if other folks have questions or things they want to share, I invite folks to jump in, but I do see one of the things on here is the idea of trying to focus about our development, still the adult thing. That kind of sounds like Stroller

idea of trying to learn about outdoor early childhood activities. That kind of sounds like Stroller Safari hits that a bit. I'd be curious like I know a lot of institutions don't have indoor spaces during COVID to be able to do early childhood programs. So be curious, like, either, Heather, if you want to elaborate on Stroller Safari or you have other folks who are doing outdoor early childhood activities that might have formerly been indoors, what those look like.

H

Heather Merewood (Henry Vilas Zoo) 26:46

Sure, actually, Courtney, you want to take this? Courtney runs our Stroller Safari and our Preschool Pride.

C

Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) 26:53

So I wanted a way to like reach those little littles because you know, I'm sure you guys see that your institutions as well like parents with strollers, especially in the fall because most of the elementary students are back in school. So when we're just experimenting, I wanted to find a way to reach that age group. Keeping it all outside, obviously with COVID is really helpful. Thinking about strollers in a room too, it's really complicated. And thinking about just like babies, like what are you going to do for babies? So really, it's kind of a program for the adults, I play the ukulele. So I'm singing songs for the kiddos. And that's something that can be literally engaging for a baby, like hearing a song hearing that repetition. So it's 0 to 2 [years old]. So you know, toddlers too, which can like you know, sing along and interact. And then it's just kind of a guided tour. So each animal we're just singing a different verse of the songs. So the seals at the zoo, go swim, swim, swim, and then we move on to the next. As I was planning, and I was actually really surprised at how thematic it ended up being I was really just ready to sing a song with my ukulele going over over and over again. But you know, seals on the bus actually turned into like, how do each of these animals move, which is still something that very young learners can grab onto and do so I'm really excited. We haven't done it yet it, the first one's on Wednesday. But I think it's gonna be really great. And I think it's, again, a really good opportunity to capture those young learners and be totally outside.

K

Katie Elam (ZooMontana) 28:17

I love that, that sounds so cute. And I held it up just a second ago. But if anyone does any Project Wild stuff, this is called Growing Up Wild. It's got a lot of fun things, especially for exploring nature with young children ages three to seven. But it's got a lot of different activities that you can take and modify however you want. These are like all the list of all the activities that you can do, I put it in the links and ideas part of the Jam Board. But it's a really fun source for looking at. It's working your own ideas for little kids.

A

Augusta Grumdahl (Idaho Falls Zoo) 28:50

This is Augusta over at the Idaho Falls Zoo. We haven't been doing our our Tots program, we just haven't had that position filled. So I'm an educator at Idaho Falls Zoo. And we are just starting to hire someone who's going to be working specifically with those young kids because we do all kinds of age ranges. And we just haven't had it this year because we just haven't had

the staff to do it. But we're really excited to be hiring this other person and kind of revamping it because it's been a year we didn't do really any programs with COVID. And this summer got a little crazy. We just didn't have the staff to do these Tots programs, but they are really popular. And I think we'll have a very busy season when this new person starts to do this Tots program because it is very popular and the families keep asking for it. So we're really excited to be bringing that back to our zoo. It's gonna be awesome. So it's cool to hear that other people are starting up their Tot programs and if you got more ideas or if anybody has great programs for that, I'd love to hear more and pass those along to our new educator. Because I am mostly working with older kids so younger kids are a little tougher for me.

D

Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 30:02

Yeah, Jeff, you want to jump in?

J

Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 30:04

I wonder if anyone can talk about their in person pre-K, or basically under 12 year old programming right now in person. Since those aren't those vaccines don't look like they're any coming anytime soon, especially for the under five crowd. What protocols or steps are you taking? We, we've cancelled all of our under five programming in person. For them, you know, until that vaccine is even on the horizon. As a father of three year olds, I'm always struggling looking for places to get my kids. And so that's why we're seeing kind of a rise in the virtual stuff here. But for the in person, what is everybody doing?

R

Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo) 30:43

Well, I know at the Racine Zoo, um, we're still doing our little explorers, which is targeting like two to six year olds. Um, and we really lowered attendance. So like, our room isn't very large to begin with. But we have like six to eight families at most now comparison to like, 14 to 15 families, so a lot lower. When it comes to that, um, and then a lot of it's outside, whenever we can be outside, we're trying to be outside, in a lot of the animals that we're visiting. Because each class is like focusing around a certain animal like right now we're doing burrowing animals. So we visited the meerkats, and we spent a lot of time outside speaking with the keeper, about those and trying to really, as much as we can do things outdoors, but of course, we're in Wisconsin here. So it's like weather's always a challenge when it comes to these too. Because unfortunately, sometimes we are limited in indoor spaces. So sometimes we do just have to do it inside. And we're very understanding with people who don't feel comfortable yet with that. Um, we have a lot of people who have credits for preschool that they're saving for when they feel more comfortable and ready to come back into the classroom. So we're trying to be as accommodating for where everybody's at with this as we can. But yeah, we're, we're still going and we fill up really quickly with our preschool classes still. So we're seeing the numbers still.

D

Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 32:16

Sarah, I see you dropped in the chat the small individual sensory tables. You want to think say some more about that?

some more about that.

S

Sarah Witt (Zoological Society of Milwaukee) 32:23

Yeah, so, um, Molly is our zero to five year program coordinator. And she has been doing little mini sensory tables. So she's getting ready for our caribou trek class. And it's like a little bit of snow, but they're in almost like shoe box size plastic containers. And so each kid gets their own. They can take home like that little bit of snow. This summer, they actually made one of the classes was penguins. And so they made icebergs and they went outside and played with big, big cubes of ice. So I think there's some really cool things that she's been innovating, that I would love to talk about more. She also does, she was the one that created our Stroller Safari class. So it's been going on now I think, three or four years, so we have a pretty well made cycle. Henry Vilas Zoo, I feel like you guys seem like you're really on top of it. But if you're looking for more topics, Molly might be a great person to reach out to. She also includes puppets. So we have with the Coldwell Theatre connection to the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. So we have lots of really cool puppetry songs and then walked around in their strollers. Yeah, but those have been super popular this summer. Those all filled up for us. But like, Jeff, you said, having those youngins we, we had everything outside, we did not go inside any of our buildings. And we included our nature play site a lot more into our programs. So the littles would go out and they'd look at sticks. And honestly, I think the parents were kind of like, "what are we going to do out here" but the kids were loving it. So that's kind of how we dealt with that.

D

Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 34:27

I know folks are still coming up with a lot of their programming and see a really good question that got dropped on the Jam Board switching just a little bit. The question I see is "does anyone have easy empathy activities that they like to include in all their programming?" So things that are versatile enough that they might translate virtually or in person or in different formats? I'd be curious if folks have what that looks like that might be a thing in their tool belt that they're able to pull out for empathy.

J

Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 35:06

So one of the things that we do with our, with our little ones, our under five crowd. One of the first steps in empathy is just awareness and being thankful. And so we always have thankful time. And so we want them to thank the ocean for something that they might not be aware of. Sometimes it's simple. You know, during salmon season, it's always thanks for the food. We just did photosynthesis. So we did thanks for the air we breathe, and we have them count their breaths. And so three out of every, in case you didn't know, three out of every five breaths for you is from the ocean. So thank you ocean. And so having a little thank you time that relates to the lesson that week. It's just an idea for them to just build kind of gratitude skills for themselves that they can thank things that they aren't usually normally thanking. And we've had really great success with that, like we've had super positive feedback. We can do an amazing 30 minute program, and we'll get all feedback it will be about "thanks for reminding my kid to say thank you." And so that's one of that's been one of our big success. And it's super simple. It's 30 seconds of reprogramming.

D

Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 36:14

And does anyone else have any kind of tool belt style, versatile empathy activities? Let's see, Katie you dropped one in the chat?

K

Katie Elam (ZooMontana) 36:35

I think I learned it from ACE network someone in the network, you know, the naming the cockroach or other weird slash scary slash gross animal activities, the unlovable animals that are always weird or something. I think I got that from here. But we did that over Zoom. So sometimes I'll do that with my student kids. And they, some of the kids really get into it. I tell the teacher I was like, "all right, you know, y'all get to name the cockroach." And so I give him like a minute. And then the teacher unmutes and says, "all right, they chose this name." And it's just so cute. And I say "okay, say goodbye to whatever their name is." And then it's cute, just a little connection fun.

C

Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) 37:17

Something that we do to help frame our any animal encounter that we do, I try to do as much like imagination, and perspective taking, because young learners really latch on to that immediately. So you know, if we're about to go into the aviary with a group of camp kids, "okay, friends, close your eyes. Imagine you're a little bird in the aviary. Imagine what that's like, think about your feathers. Think about doing that. Now a big group of kids come in, they're really really loud. How does that make you feel?" And just like walking them through that doubles as an empathy activity and just a helpful behavior guideline. So doing that as much as possible, even you're bringing out an empathy or bringing out an animal. Before I bring it on, I want to talk about empathy. So again, just putting them in that perspective, even having them close their eyes and just doing some of that imagination work with them. It's something that I tend to pepper into a lot of our animal encounters.

A

Augusta Grumdahl (Idaho Falls Zoo) 38:07

Yeah, I'll just add on to that, too. I love that. Connecting for like animal ambassadors, we do that as well. Talking about, oh, we don't touch this animal's head. Because if you had a stranger come up and try to touch your face, that'd be really scary too. And that is a really great connection, like empathy, but also helping out with a little bit of the behavior and making sure that the animal and the kids are safe. So we definitely do that as well. That's awesome.

D

Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 38:40

See a really, I don't know why, in my opinion, is a pretty big question on the right on the Jam Board of "what are ways that people are collecting community input around program planning?" I know that's something a lot of different folks want to do. I don't know if it's

something a lot of folks have success in doing but have people tried things found things that work found things that didn't work when it comes to collecting community input for program planning?

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 39:06

The way that we do here at the Sealife Center is I'll say this first, it's labor intensive. If you've got you've got to dedicate the time and the staff to do it, knowing that you might not get a result. So sometimes it can be hard to convince the upper management that you need to carve that time out of your schedule, or even better your practitioner schedule, whoever's doing the delivery actually I think gets more out of it, then management does. And so we've got two approaches that we take one here in Alaska, when it comes to reaching out to small villages or Native Alaskan communities is that we go and listen at tribal council meetings. And we're there to listen, we let them know we're just there to listen. We're not there to to ask questions, we're not there to offer anything. And we wait and listen to see if we hear of those needs, and then let them know that we're there to reach out. So that's a cultural competency that we're really trying to be better at at the Sealife Center, it's certainly something we can learn. And the other thing we do is for our Title One, inner city programs is going to the parent teacher meetings. So we'll of course talk to our teachers, and potentially the district and their curriculum coordinators. But also, if you have good relationships with the parent teacher association, a lot of times we can learn things from there. And so when it came to empathy programming, in general, that's where we really learned a good connection with their social emotional learning curriculum that they already had in place. It was a good way to reinforce that with the parents who might not have known about it. But also listen to what challenges that parents are having at home, and how our curriculum can potentially help the school districts already existing programs for that. So those are two organizations or things that we routinely try to carve time out to go and just be just be good listeners.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 41:20

Does anyone have anything to add on about ways they're collecting community input for program planning?

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 41:27

I will say one last thing, if you are going to carve the time out to do that, make sure you carve out enough time to go to two meetings in a row. Because the first meeting you show up, they'll be like, "Why are you here? Why? Why is the aquarium here?" And if you just let them know you're there to help and that you're a resource in the community, they might not have thought of, because you're the weekend place or whatever. But make sure you go to the next one, because that's when they'll actually engage.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 42:09

So we've got a solid, like 15 minutes-ish left, I see a lot of notes that I haven't said out loud. I want to make sure everyone gets out of this discussion what they're hoping to get out of it. So is there anything that folks have that's a burning question that they want to ask the group thing

is there anything that folks have that's a burning question that they want to ask the group thing that they're just wrestling with? And are just like we don't we there's not even a question really, but like a thing, we're just figuring out, or I think that they're hoping to share that they just want to tell everyone that that they're proud of because they it's cool, and they're excited for it?

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 42:58

If not, I'm happy to keep on asking the questions that you all put down already. Hopefully we'll get to some of the things that you were hoping to learn about. One of the ones I see on here is around teacher workshops. I'm sure those have been impacted by a lot of folks, but we're heading back into the school year. So teachers are actually in teacher mode again. Are folks running teacher workshops, what do they look like? Have they changed? Where does empathy show up in them? Have you decided just to cancel them altogether at the moment because it's not the top priority?

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 43:38

So I threw that question up there and I am curious if anyone's had a has a regular teacher workshop. We hold one annually here at the Aquarium we normally do it in October, we pick a usually an in service day which is on a Friday and hold it that Friday, Saturday, Sunday. And normally we get 30 to 45. We cap it at 30 to 45 participants depending on subject matter and whatever. And today's our go no go for a live in person one this year for October. And I'm leaning towards canceling it. We did it virtually last year. We really wanted to do it in person this year. We were going to require vaccinations masks of course, but I just spent three days at a professional senior level management workshop where we had to be vaccinated and wore masks for 10 hours a day for three days in a row and it was not pleasant as a participant. It made sense for the program I was in because it's an ongoing thing. It's a year long program and so we're gonna meet every month so but there's a one time teacher workshop. I just don't know that it's worth it for the participants but I wondered if anyone else had experience with either canceling that or holding one because today's the day I have to make that choice.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 45:10

This isn't a helpful answer, but it is useful context, which is that we're in the process of planning that February, early February ACE for Wildlife summit in Seattle. And I will tell you that we're figuring out the same thing. We haven't had our go no go date yet. But we're definitely also trying to figure out, like, how do we make sure that this has experience for you all? And does that mean that we have to pull it from being an in person event to being a virtual event? So stay tuned on that front, but it's February. So we've got a little bit longer before we have to, before our go no go day about that.

J Jeff Dillon (Alaska SeaLife Center) 45:46

Yeah, I talked to the organizers of the event I was in the last three days, and they're no go date, no, go no go date was about three weeks ago, four weeks ago. And in that time, our Delta cases have exploded in Alaska, where, like, the all the hospitals are rationing care now. And so

if you don't need it, you don't show up kind of thing. And that that letter to the editor just came out this week from all the hospital associations. And so they're they're kind of having second doubts that, you know, why did we do this, but they didn't know that at the time when they had to make the decision. So good luck.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 46:35

Yeah, I see. Ryan's dropped in the chat, that you normally do one in early November, but haven't talked about that about it much. They're probably leaning towards canceling.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 46:57

On the topic of COVID, related impacts, and I saw one that was like this in the sticky notes, I'm gonna paraphrase it into a version of question that I'm really interested in. I know, at Woodland Park Zoo, we have had a lot of volunteers last year, we had lots of them, stop volunteering with us, because we had them, we didn't have an opportunity for them. We said, because of COVID, we're going to minimize the number of people who are on site running programming. But we're now at a point where like, we kind of know enough what we're doing that we're bringing our volunteers back, which means that we get to rethink what some that looks like, we have to rethink what some of the training that they do looks like. Because even if they've been here a long time, some it's been a year since we've had contact point with some of them. Or other folks, similar point are folks, like bringing volunteers back? Redoing what training looks like changing what programs volunteers run? What do volunteer opportunities look like for this fall and spring program year?

S Sarah Witt (Zoological Society of Milwaukee) 48:02

So we had volunteers this summer, but it was only in the younger camps. So it was zero to five [years old] that they were in. In the older kids six and up we had interns. But we will be doing another training soon. I think in October, the beginning of October, we will be doing a volunteer training, and a little bit of everything COVID safety protocol, empathy, updates on education, general topics and our objectives and things like that. And we also have a new, we have a new director of programs so kind of like a meet and greet as well for our volunteers who maybe haven't been on site. But I'm kind of excited. I think this will be the first time that these volunteers will have an empathy training like a big empathy training. So I'm really excited to see how that goes and see how they react to it.

T Tierney Ball (ZooBoise) 48:59

At the ZooBoise site, we did a virtual training for all of our volunteers who came back in February and March and we were able to bring back the last of our programs just a couple months ago. So at this point, we're pretty much full capacity for volunteers [with] masks, all that good stuff. As far as programs go, we did have some of our teen volunteers helping out with summer camps. And we are kind of trying to restructure a little bit of our programming. So we are taking a break from volunteers with our fall programs for now. But I think we will have some that are available, primarily more of our older camps. So the ones that are for the seven

to 12 year olds and then our adult programs. Our younger programs, we do have one adult volunteer who's been happy with those but it's pretty limited at this time. What that looks like. But yeah, all of our training was offered for this year.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 49:54

I like your vote of confidence from behind you.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 50:02

Anyone else know what their volunteer engagement looks like this fall and winter? Ways it's changing or not changing as you include them in your programs?

H Heather Merewood (Henry Vilas Zoo) 50:17

We have. So we also had a number of volunteers this, really the spring and summer, volunteers doing gate greeting, we opened up goat feeding again for the public. Running our carousels, some of those those volunteer positions, we also have volunteers that do animal handling and handle some of our ambassador animals. And we haven't had a lot of, we also really haven't advertised it. But we did bring those volunteers back and went through a retraining with them because it had been a year since they picked up any animals. And then we were hoping to do a few programs over the summer. And we did just a few, just a small handful, now that it's getting colder or it will be getting colder. And those programs may not happen outdoors, I'm not not really sure what our animal handling, docents will be able to do over the, over the winter. So still something we're thinking about, it may just be that they come in and give the animals some practice and get some practice but then don't actually interact with the, with the public.

R Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo) 51:40

We have a new group, we're doing some more volunteer onboarding here in like a couple of weeks. And mainly that's for our light show that we're going to do we do a drive thru light show, which has been really popular during COVID, very safe. So we just have a lot of volunteers that are always willing to help out with that. So they're just they're still helping us out a lot of our volunteers but just just different things. We don't have as many school programs this winter as we might normally. We're not running our Wildlife Explorers program early in the fall here. So yeah, they're just helping us with different things this year.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 52:35

I'm gonna ask one final question before we wrap up that someone messaged in the chat which is kind of on the same topic about how things are changing but maybe a little bit more on the animal front? Do folks have additional precautions that they're taking in regard to animal

handling above pre COVID precautions? So with your programs we might be taking animals to Ambassador animal programs or other educational programs. Is the animal animal handling kind of component of that impacted?

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 53:13

By changes that you're continuing to make above pre-COVID precautions.

T Tierney Ball (ZooBoise) 53:20

From ZooBoise's side, partly because we lost a lot of our animal ambassador collection over the past couple of years and we still don't know exactly what direction we want to take it in. So we have a pretty small collection and most of them are older and so we pretty much just shut our program down. We did intake a couple of new snakes and a lizard recently. Our main staff and education have been trained on handling and we keep them handleable but we're pretty much not supposed to use them with programs. We're doing no-touch if we do present them it's behind Plexiglas, everyone has to have a medical grade mask. We're just really, really limited on what interactions we have there.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 54:03

No more cute seaotter babies in the in person programming

R Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo) 54:12

I think something that we're doing at the Racine Zoo is like a lot of our programs were really heavy on like "you get to touch our animals too during" and of course no one's been able to touch right now with COVID. But we really are kind of I don't know if we're gonna actually go fully back to touching animals again honestly after COVID I think we've really started to heavily rely on like different experiences with the animals and we're going to talk about this more at one of our upcoming meetings. But like like a Kenyan sand boa have them like actually like cruise around in the sand and kind of use their shovel like nose the dig in the sand people like really are enjoying these experiences right like a chinchilla taking a dust bath. So I think we're going to kind of start really leaning towards more of those type of experiences and less of the "oh, you're gonna get the touch four animals during our program. "

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 55:11

Yeah, I see that choice and control for ambassador animals sticky note in the Jam Board that sounds like that might be the vibe. That you're trying to hit, each of those animal ambassadors have that control and actual programming was a little bit different.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 55:34

So we're close to the top of the hour, feel free to continue to drop things into the chat. I have one last question for all of you, which is that we've had a whole bunch of different topics across this hour. I know some of those topics might be things that you're really excited about for this fall, or might be things that are kind of operational, like, "we don't know how we're handling this at the moment." My question to you all, and you're welcome to invite you on to drop this in the chat. What are you excited about about your programming this fall and spring? And that may be you're excited to try something new, that maybe you're excited to bring back old stuff, that may be a really specific thing, but end on the note of like, what are the things that you are really excited that are coming up for you this fall and spring?

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 56:18

And while you are thinking about that, and you are writing in the chat, I'm also going to just launch a quick poll. I'd love to know, for this discussion, we this is our third learning group discussion as the network, we've taken a slightly shift in each way that I've tried to facilitate that. And so I love to just get a quick poll from you all about how engaging your found this format to be so that I can compare that data to the other ones. And we'll know what types of formats use in the future. So the two questions are, what are you excited about to put in the chat? And how engaging will you find this format for the future?

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 57:07

See lots of things in the chat. Excited to continue in person programs opportunity to redefine that normal and back to normal. Excited about rural outreach programming. Having animal ambassadors showing more natural behaviors. New Skype programs.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 57:41

I want to end by just saying thank you everyone for joining for this conversation. I hope you found it valuable or got some fun nuggets out of it, or at least got to connect with some of your colleagues a little bit more. As always, we have the ACE for Wildlife discussion platform at discussion.aceforwildlife.org. And you're welcome to jump in there. If you're struck by something from this or anything else that you want to ask other folks or share. That's a great place to do it. And I also want to just make a quick plug that on October 7, we have a network meeting where we're going to be talking a little bit more on the administrative side about the network things that have happened over the last six months, what's coming up for the future. And we're going to have a great opportunity to kind of dive into a little bit of empathy content also so that we stay grounded in empathy work that we're doing. You can find more information on that at aceforwildlife.org. And I'm also going to drop that into the chat. So that is here. And you can log in and join the discussion for the discussion platform. There. And with that, thank you all so much for joining was great to see you all again as always, and I'm excited to see many of you October 7.

S Speaker 59:01

Thank you, Daniel.

A Augusta Grumdahl (Idaho Falls Zoo) 59:04
Thank you.

R Ryan Retzke (Racine Zoo) 59:07
Thank you.

D Daniel Rother (Woodland Park Zoo) 59:08
No problem. No problem, everyone.