

2024 Virtual Summit_ Day One

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SPEAKERS

unknown, Kelsey Fairhurst, Theo Bamberger (WPZ), Sydney Dratel, Marta Burnet, Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo), Shanna Hillard, Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo), Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo), Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo), Meagan Ashton (Seattle Aquarium)

- A** Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 00:14
Good morning, everyone. We're gonna get started here in just a few minutes. If you want to go ahead and put your name organization and maybe your favorite underappreciated animal in the chat, we'll get started just in a few minutes as the rest of the attendees come rolling in. And if you have any questions just feel free to put them in the chat and one of us will help you out. See, Benny, I don't know I know that I know what that looks like. Oh, yeah, axolotl is our great one. Lake Superior zoo Eugene. Shout out to Eugene the Axolotl. Definitely among the cutest of Axolotl I've ever seen. Oh, yes, Kelsey. I know you love your tarantulas. Elk Oh Amber also tarantulas we got two votes for tarantulas. Oh, Emily, you need to show everybody your turkey vulture.
- i** 02:40
I'll wear it tomorrow
- S** Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 02:48
banana slugs?
- A** Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 03:09
Those are you sculpin Oh, yes. all the time. We have one right now. His name is Senator fancy pants. We have our cockroach is coming out.

 Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 03:42
bats.

 03:45
Horseshoe crabs good

 Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 03:47
again, good variety of land and sea animals. Okay. So we are gonna go ahead and get started here in a sec. If you haven't already, please put your name and your organization in the chat. And if you'd like to add your favorite underappreciated animal, we would love to see that as well.

 Marta Burnet 04:18
And then, let's, let's let's get started here. I'm not seeing the PowerPoint. Is it up there? There it is. Okay. Great. So, um, good morning, everyone. Welcome to the empathy Summit. We're so glad you've taken time out of your busy schedule to join us over the next two days to share and learn from each other and just enjoy. Excuse me enjoy being together. A special welcome to our seven new partner organizations. Akron zoo Alexandria zoo, Blank Park Zoo, Hogle zoo, Jacksonville Zoo, Oakland, zoo and San Diego Zoo. We're thrilled to be expanding the work and to have an infusion of additional perspectives. And now for those of you I haven't yet had the chance to meet I am Marta Burnett, and she her pronouns and I'm the director of advancing empathy at Woodland Park Zoo. Next slide. So I'd like to start with our land acknowledgement across the region of the network, we recognize that we are on the lands of tribal people, we acknowledge their stewardship on these places continues to this day, and that it is our responsibility to join them to restore the relationship with the living world around us. And we also want to acknowledge that empathy for wildlife isn't a new idea. While the field of conservation as many of us know it stems from Eurocentric ideologies, empathic mindsets for living with wildlife life have existed for millennia around the globe, both as a worldview, and a method of coexistence. We hope to incorporate more of these ways of thinking about our animal relatives as we move forward with this work. Okay, next slide. And just to make sure you're in the right place, this is a gathering of the advancing conservation through empathy for wildlife or ACE for Wildlife network, which is a learning network that creates and shares effective practices to foster empathy for animals and people leading to conservation actions. The ACE for Wildlife network has developed practices, materials and resources vetted by dozens of Zoos and Aquariums of different sizes and across multiple states that make it easy to add empathy practices into your toolkit for visitor experiences. We currently have 27 AZA accredited Zoo and Aquarium partners with about 250 registered members. We also have an affiliate status for those who work elsewhere. And we have over 100 affiliates at 70 Plus organizations around the world. And then finally, when Woodland Park Zoo in partnership with Seattle Aquarium and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium started this research, we felt like there really wasn't a definition out there that suited our needs. So we came up with the one you see here on the screen in the circle. Empathy is a simulated emotional state that relies on the ability to perceive, understand and care about the experiences or perspectives of another

person or animal. Zoos and Aquariums care for animals and create experiences that meet our visitors needs for connection in a way that few other organizations can. Research has shown that empathy can drive conservation action by prompting people to connect their concerns to the well being of animals, to the importance of preserving an environment where they can survive. When we're consistent and intentional about combining knowledge and emotion during a visitor experience, we can more effectively inspire our guests to change their beliefs and behaviors to benefit animals in care and in the wild. Next slide. So for those of you who have been here since the beginning, happy fifth anniversary. This is the fifth anniversary of our first gathering and 2019. And it's amazing to see how far we've come. The typical anniversary for five years is wood, which symbolizes strength, stability, and a union growing stronger over time. That feels like a good theme for us as conservationists. And I can honestly say that I feel like that description fits our network very well. So at the summit, you're going to hear from partners new and old and have a chance to talk about issues that matter to you and help us plan for the future. So this can be the first milestone of many to come next. So you should have received an agenda over email. But just a quick overview. We're going to start with an icebreaker move into our network showcase of four different partners and we'll have a little break for you to get some refreshments. Then we'll hear from Theo about our site visits data share out followed by Dakota Zoo. We'll be hearing up out about some of the work they've been doing and we'll have another break and And then Lake Superior zoo will share their grant presentation and we'll end the day with DEAL at your level breakout. So thanks for being here and I will turn it over now to Amber for icebreaker Amber



10:19

Hello alright so we are going to put up some breakout rooms for our icebreakers and you can choose so it will be using the whiteboard feature on the Zoom screen and there will be I think four or five games that you can choose from and you'll just pick whichever game looks the best to you and the rules will be on the whiteboard for you to follow and play at your will. I think we have about 25 minutes 20 to 25?



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 12:04

The folks in here so I need to be assigned to a room



12:31

hey, Emily. Hi there. I had to



Kelsey Fairhurst 12:34

join in a different link. So anything free did I'm not gonna be



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 12:41

all good. I'm just moving people to rooms. All right, welcome back to our main space, everybody. I hope you at least had a chance to talk with some of the other folks in your

everybody, I hope you at least had a chance to talk with some of the other folks in your breakout rooms and get to know everybody a little bit more. We are about to transition to our next part of our day, which is our network showcase. And this is the opportunity for us to hear in kind of these bite sized presentations, and projects that are happening throughout the network. After all of the presenters have gone, we will open it up to a q&a about all presentations afterwards, during which you can ask your question either in the chat or come off mute of any and all of the presenters. But I'm gonna go ahead and transition it over to Leanne from the grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center. And then I'll go ahead and keep control of the slides. So whenever you want me to just transition over to the next one. Let me know and I'm happy to do so.



14:21

Awesome. Thank you so much, Emily. I'm going first. All right. Well, how are you guys? So my name is Leanne. I work at the grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, Montana. So a pretty small facility. And the kind of presentation I wanted to do today was inspired by a few different things. One of which was at this year's annual AZA conference. One of the presentations was about branding and it was a very interesting presentation and a question was brought up during it by one of the presenters about Whether or not everyone was in the room kind of thinks the word zoo is going to be a problem in the future. And it was actually pretty fascinating with how the room was kind of divided. It wasn't like a unanimous, yes, no, or whatever is going on. So I kinda wanted to share a little bit about kind of what we do here, because as you might notice, our name does not have the word zoo in it. And next slide. Historically, that was a little intentional. So this admit one ticket, I can see actually just found it, someone just turned it in the other day, and use it and it's from 1996. And it's when our tagline was Baron wolf Preserve. So these days, we have used kind of a couple of different ways to describe ourselves. And, you know, there's a reason that in the past, that was not really part of what we wanted to do by recently, things have kind of been changing, because we are part of a couple different organizations. And we really do want to kind of lay the groundwork for why people should trust us. So kind of how this gets people kind of relating to what's going on and kind of opens the door for that empathy, that connection is kind of trusting what's going on what we do. So in the past, you know, our name has also meant people assume certain things about us that are not true. So this is a screen capture of a social media thing we did when our four wolf pups were born. And for most zoos out there, that is a pretty normal thing to happen and cause for celebration and excitement. And we were very excited about this, it was kind of, from my perspective, just a really great educational and kind of animal welfare tool to have a group that was being able to be raised by their parents here. And kind of keep that education going about gray wolves and their kind of impact out in the wild. So a lot of feedback that we got, I mean, a lot of it was positive. But you know, you always saw on the other part. And we had a lot of people who were confused about why we'd had animals be born here, why they were under the impression versus different labels, they wanted to give us that we were a place that wouldn't do breeding. And this was actually the first time we'd ever had wolves born here. But again, we kind of saw that that came from kind of the labels and what people assume with them. So that was something we kind of wanted to start talking about more internally. Next slide. So for the first time, that I know of we did in all department training here. So it's probably a little less impressive than at some facilities that have a lot more employees. But for us kind of getting everyone to beat each other. On one of these three days, we had different sessions that were run by different one of us, but the presentation and kind of program was the same. And we wanted everyone there to kind of know what we talked about in our department, the Education Department, and you know why they should all be kind of ready with these ideas,

because the average guest does not know who they should be asking questions to who they're talking to. And most questions people have come before they even come in with our frontline staff at the admissions and gift shop. So we wanted to kind of address that and show Hey, as people come in, you know, obviously, we have a couple questions that are you know, easier to answer. And once they kind of get settled in, usually the next thing that happens is they start thinking about where am I? Sometimes literally, but usually, why? Why are these animals here? That's a huge question we get asked, and how do I feel about being here, because that's usually something they have to kind of connect with before they're ready to take that next step of learning a bit more. Next slide. So what we kind of did was we facilitated some frequently asked questions from guests that admissions get, so we kind of had our own set that we get outside once people have kind of stepped in through the door. But we were really interested in seeing what are the questions they get before they even come in. And so we started sorting these questions into kind of different categories. So of course, there's some that are very easy to answer like, yes, no, three o'clock. But there are some that were a little bit more complex. So the ones that are highlighted in this case, are ones that can have a yes or no answer. Very simple one. But we do want to kind of explain a bit more. So the idea of Do you have shows? Because everyone has this idea of what a show is, and we've had the animals? Do you have clubs, thinking we might consistently have baby animals there. So that was kind of one grouping. Next slide. And there was another grouping that, you know, we definitely let everyone on the staff know if they were not comfortable answering these. That's certainly something that we can either come up and do because these are all questions that require more of an interface with a guest because As they come from a place of a level of understanding that we do want to hit we want to talk about, we want the these questions can either be a barrier to what people want to understand or think of and or that can be kind of a gateway an opportunity to, again, get them a little further and kind of think of things from animals perspective or perspective, what goes on out in the wild how it translates here. So these are ones that again, require a lot more of an explanation. And again, that's something that, you know, not every staff member is ready to sit and have a 10 minute conversation about this. So that was a little bit more where they were sorted into that next slide. So, again, those first set of questions kind of came from the idea of what's zookeeper what the zoo mean this was just from a search engine, where we just generated, what comes up when you type it in. And, again, this is what a lot of people's perspective is a lot of visitors and guess that's what they think of, and we do kind of wanna emphasize in our training that we don't do any of these things. And honestly, most places don't. So to kind of combat what people are coming in with what they expect, and how to move from their next slide. So we really wanted to emphasize with our staff, you know, why is for us zoo, not a bad word. And again, for most people that come in, we do understand that a lot come in, and they know, we're called the grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center they come in, and a comment I hear kind of frequently is, I love this place. I hate zoos. And so we do want to kind of step in and have them understand more about why, again, certain words don't mean good, don't mean bad. And we are connected with other facilities that are zoos, we ourselves are a zoo, and kind of why that is something where we all have a common goal. So we kind of emphasize that to our staff, or you don't have to avoid this word, we do want to identify as this and have everyone be a bit more comfortable with it. Next slide. And so again, with talking with that, we were able to have every staff member get a little bit more comfortable understanding how to talk to guests about things, just at a minimum, be accurate. So if you ever don't know, that's fine, come find one of us. And then we were able to again, kind of broach people into more of that idea of empathy and connect with what we're doing here with this organization. And how again, it's something that they're already doing and how it's really something people are ready to do once they're kind of comfortable with where

they are. So this is just the start of this conversation. We it's a very complex issue. We are very interested to see where it goes. And we kind of just wanted to share a little bit about what we're doing here. So thank you.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 22:36

Awesome. Thanks, Leanne. I'm gonna transition over to Erica and Jessica.



22:46

You can go first. All right. Hello, everyone. My name is Erica, you she her pronouns. And I am the volunteer and conservation Engagement Manager here at Blank Park Zoo. We are located in Des Moines, Iowa. I have been here for just over six years. And during that time, my main focus has been working with our teen volunteer program Zoo Crew. And just recently I've expanded to working with our conservation programming.



23:10

And I'm Jessica shell horn. I'm the Education Manager here at Blank Park Zoo and I have been here for 10 years in various capacities. I started out as a seasonal educator, and then took some time as the office coordinator, and then jumped back into our education department primarily working with early childhood classes, and then just worked my way up from there.



23:37

Perfect. So we are going to talk about engagement and empathy. Thank you today. And so we are a part of the engagement team. And it is our job to take the mission of the zoo and make it come alive. The team is made up of three sub team conservation, education and volunteers. And we all work together to develop messaging that will effectively resonate with our audience. And then through our programs, we want to provide guests the opportunity to discover, connect and take action for wildlife and wild places. Ideally, our guests will discover something new, they'll make that empathetic connection, and then take action to benefit their new discovery. Today the two of us are going to quickly discuss two ways that we have incorporated empathy into our seasonal educator and volunteer trainings.



24:33

Thank you, um, with our education department, we've been incorporating empathy into our education messaging, and so we wanted to focus on the resources we were providing to our seasonal staff. In the past, we've provided our seasonal staff with your standard back sheets that focus more on natural history information and if we go to the Next slide, you can kind of see an example of our old. Sorry, next slide,



25:05

11 25:05

I forgot that slide was there.

25:06

So this is an example of our old fact sheet. So it had natural history information about each of our ambassador species. And over the years, we've tried to shift from facts to stories. But we still needed to provide some of those basics facts for our educators, because we have nearly 50 Different species that they're responsible for educating our guests about. So you can see on our old spec sheet, there's a lot of information here. And it's not actually that helpful in regards to programs. So instead, in 2022, we started infusing our fact sheets with stories and information that focus more on empathy and conservation than they do natural history. And so an example of one of our what our new facts slide, or next slide, sorry, our new messaging document is so here's an example of we have our messaging. Book, I guess, is what you can say it broken up into classifications. So we have all of our birds together. And before we get into the individual bird species, we talk about, what are the some of the natural history information like what are some of the things that define birds, then we have like on the right hand side, we have an example page from like our invertebrate group. So we talked about the three basic familiar groups of invertebrates. These are also what are represented in our ambassador department, which is why we focus on these three groups of invertebrates. And then we have some information about why are they important. If you go to the next slide. Here again, I have birds again on the left hand side. So we talked about some of the important messages about birds in general. And we chose those messages based off of the AZA hot topics. If you ever have to fill in the information on Ed arcs AZA every year, you're familiar with these hot topics, because you have to label all of the hot topics all of your programs covers. So that's where I chose those important messages. On the right hand side is from our amphibian section where it talks about, you know, the differences between frogs and toads. And then it also focuses on amphibians and Iowa, and wanting to let people know what how many amphibians are in Iowa, which ones are threatened, endangered, some key words, and then conservation practices. So these like kind of headings like amphibians, and Iowa keywords, conservation actions, those are all common throughout each of these like class sections that we have here. If you go to the next slide. This is an actual species page. And it didn't know I had a split between two slides because it doesn't all fit on one. So here before we had our blue and yellow Macaw and it was all natural history information. And now we have it turned into more more information that you can turn into a story instead of just dealing facts out. One thing that I like to point out is, especially coming from the early childhood world, I can say that a bird weighs two to four pounds. That doesn't mean anything to a three year old. So I tried to connect it to something that they may be more familiar with. So we compare all of our animals to fruits that kids would be more familiar with. So things like cantaloupes, bananas, strawberries, grapes, pumpkins, things that our audience are more familiar with when it comes to weights. And then we serve a pretty diverse audience when we go into our schools. And so we made sure to call out specific countries when we talk about where animals are from, I'm not expecting all of our staff to memorize every single country. But if they can try to remember at least one when they're talking about an animal they're likely to meet have someone from in their audience that is from one of those range countries so that way they can build that connection of oh, these animals are found in my home, maybe they can come up with some they can think of some memories like if they were if they have memories of being in that country, or maybe their parents do. And then we talked about important messaging. Again, a lot of these tie into some hot topics with AZA, but also other things like the not a pet campaign and talking about how macaws are not good pets. roles in their ecosystems. If there's programs within animal programs within AZA or

conservation programs like safe programs, we'd like to talk about that on our next slide. You can see here is where we have some empathy buildings. So planting connections and I want to make sure that I give credit to Henry Vilas Zoo because I took a lot of inspiration from their fact sheets. Are a lot prettier than mine mine are not fancy. But since their for staff I didn't want a lot of visual clutter, the content and categories developed was like planting connections especially I got from several ace partners, but specifically Henry Vilas Zoo gave me their The idea for this. And then of course, I like to make sure I reference all of the facilities or all of the organizations that I got all of our information from. And then Erica is going to talk about our volunteer programs.

A

Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 30:30

All right. So teen and adult volunteers have the opportunity to serve as interpretive guides, or as we call them discovery guide, and they go out on zoo grounds and educates you get about the animals at the zoo. We're talking today I'll be focusing specifically on our teen volunteer programs, Zoo Crew training, but it's pretty similar for adults as well. You can go to the next slide. So the first part of their training includes storytelling, we asked the question of how are we leaving a lasting impact on zoo visitors. And we know that personal connections and stories are easier to remember than a laundry list of facts. We borrowed this training from Dallas zoo, so shout out to Dallas Zoo. And during this training, we discussed what makes a good story. So the main character of the conflict and that resolution, and then we generally together will workshop, a children's folk tale like Little Red Riding Hood or three little pigs. And then we identify the elements within that story that make it compelling and interesting. We then ask the question of how do you connect individual animal behaviors, their personality quirks adaptations, to facts about the species that are memorable. And then as we compare that to, the volunteers start to develop and workshop their own stories about individual animals at the zoo. During that training, we also go through what we call a guest interaction guide training, which was borrowed from the Denver Zoo, to shout out to them as well. And within this training, we discussed the sixth strategy that helps staff and volunteers connect guests to the zoo and the animals here. For example, one of the strategies is connect to the guest. And the example that we give is that lions live in family units called prides just like us. So drawing that connection from our own family to the lion pride really helps to draw those empathy connections between the visitor and volunteer an animal. And then outside of our training of volunteers. And to kind of support the volunteers while they're on site, they have access to discovery guidebooks for a range of animals, I think you can go to the next slide. So mine is not as clean as Jessica's because that's something that I'm working on taking inspiration from her. But within these books, we have storytelling example, animal facts, and then specific information about the individual animals. So their date of birth, interesting characteristic, defining features to help tell the animals apart from one another, that's something that the teens are really good at. And really like sharing with guests, any favorite food or favorite enrichment items that those animals have, may have. And then again, information, that's all to help the volunteers connect with that individual animal, and then share those empathy based connections with our zoo guests. And you can flip over to the next slide. So then we've got individual animal information there on the left hand side, and then on the right hand side, we have that natural history of the animal. And just to wrap it up, we also so the volunteers have a handful of animals that they can and that they can pick from that then we also provide them with an animal guide that includes all of the animals at the zoo, but with very basic information. So just that name, date of birth, and One fun fact. So that kind of helps them if they have a favorite animal or they're walking around the zoo and someone asked them that gives them the information that they need to be able to share that with a guest. And I just want to wrap it

up. I think since joining the network, we it's really allowed us to be more become more intentional with our use of empathy, and the connection that it encourages between staff, volunteers and guests. And looking towards the future. We really are using that empathy lens and in everything that we do, to making making sure that we use empathy as much as possible. Thank you.

 Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 34:43

So thank you, Erica and Jessica. Go ahead and transitioning over to Nicole.

 34:51

All right. Hello, and thank you so much for having me. My name is Nicole. I use she her pronouns and I am a naturalist at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park in Eatonville, Washington. And my job is to coordinate our online wildlife Academy which is our name for our virtual programs. Our programs cover many different topics from species specific topics like the wonders of Wolverines to generalize topics like our animal neighbors, all of our programs are developed through the lens of inspiring empathy for animals. And Northwest Trek is special in that all of the animals that are Park are native to the Pacific Northwest. So this gives us the opportunity with our programming to really focus on fostering empathy for native species, including ones that many of our guests are already familiar with. Next. Our involvement in virtual programming started all the way back in 2016. And at that time, I was a part time animal ambassador keeper. So my role in the programs was being handed a tablet, and being told to walk around and go talk about animals. And the programs were great when they worked. Our biggest issue at that point was trying to get Wi Fi in the middle of the forest. So due to connectivity issues, the program's transitioned to being held indoors. And at that point, it was in an unused corner of the office, we kind of tied up a green screen, we put up a camera, we'd have to scoot your way around all the desks. It wasn't great, but at least we had working Wi Fi all the time. Next. And then through grant funding, we were able to complete construction on the online wildlife Academy studio in 2021. So the building itself was purchased as a shed, and then all of the interior insulation, the flooring, the paint, and the technology installation was all done in house by our own staff. So now we have a dedicated space for high quality virtual programming. Next we host our OWI programming through different avenues which allows us to reach diverse audiences. We partner with streamable learning where we can give programs to both homeschool and traditional classroom students throughout the United States and Canada, we partner with we thrive together an organization based out of Columbus, Ohio that provides a virtual hangout space for adults to help combat social isolation and loneliness. Our programs can be booked as field trip add ons, which I find is very helpful in helping students set expectations. They kind of know what to expect when they come out here before they get to come visit us in port in person. And then of course, our programs can be booked by teachers or librarians who are looking to add a little extra engagement to their science lessons.

 37:35

Next.



37:38

With our programming, we aim to give that same North Northwest Trek experience virtually as we can in person. But how can we translate that positive emotional responsible location known as a sense of place when it's over a screen? Using empathy techniques, we draw on students experiences to make the connections that the wild animals in the wild places here at Northwest track are the same ones that they can find in their own areas. When looking at wetland habitats, we can compare the glacier created ponds here at track to those human made retention ponds that they can find in their own neighborhoods, and are the animals found in our wetlands really all that different from the animals in the species that they can find near their own homes. Next. In our programs, we combine engaging discussion pictures and videos of our animals at the park to help foster that empathy for wildlife. These slides are taken from the program wild survivors, where we compare the adaptations of different species and we see how these adaptations allow them to survive in Washington State. And we look at how humans can impact the animal survival. The students often come into the programs with background knowledge, they know that Cougars have claws, they know that skunk spray, but during our programs, we aim to develop the connections about why the animals have these adaptations, and what our adaptations are as humans, so we can develop that sense of place for both Northwest Trek and their own local areas by creating those empathetic connections between students and their native wildlife. And one of the most impactful moment in our programs is when we share videos of animals at the park. We are very fortunate that our nature engagement department has a very strong close relationship with our animal care department. Whenever we need a video highlighting a specific animal or a specific behavior, they are always willing to work with us. The keepers will also regularly share their favorite videos and their favorite pictures with us, hoping that we can then use them as inspiration and share them in our programs. So having that close relationship between our departments does elevate the content and elevates the impact in our virtual programs. Next. So where do we go from here? We are looking to expand our audiences both locally and nationally with the goal being to reach audiences that may not otherwise be able to access Northwest Trek. Whether there is a cost barrier in visiting geographic barriers or even barriers to attending in person events and a not quite post pandemic world, we still see the value in continuing to offer high quality virtual programming as another avenue for helping students develop that sense of place for both our park and within their own backyards. Thank you.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 40:29

Thanks so much, Nicole. And last but not least, Kelsey.

K

Kelsey Fairhurst 40:34

Hi. So my name is Kelsey. I'm the Education Coordinator at PAWS or progressive Animal Welfare Society. And if you want to go to the next slide, just to give a little intro to what paws is because we're not a zoo or aquarium. We are a both an domestic animal shelter for dogs and cats and also a wildlife rehabilitation hospital here in Washington State just north of Seattle. So we focus on rescuing rehabbing and releasing of native species and then also teaching the community about responsible pet ownership and adopting out dogs and cats. So I'm part of a three person education team. And most of what we do at this time is going out into the community, whether it's like outreaches at community events, or classroom programs in schools to teach about responsible pet ownership and wildlife conservation. And then we also

do some in house programs as well. But one of our main programs that we do in Washington state is called Kids Who Care. It is a six week long, once a week in individual classrooms program. And one of the really cool things about what I'm able to do as an educator at PAWS is that we get to work with the same students over a period of time. So whether that is you know, for at least two or three hours, which is longer than a typical guest interaction in a zoo, or aquarium, or over the course of a six week Classroom program. So it's really interesting for us to see how the students opinions and views can change from start to beginning. So before I kind of delve into this new program that I wanted to develop, I just wanted to share a little bit about what made me curious about trying wanting to try a new way of teaching. So if you go to the next slide, I've just got some results from a typical school year program that we do. So during the course of the six weeks, we talk about half about responsible pet ownership and half about wildlife conservation. So these are the results from about 900 students in last full year. So 2022 and 2023. So before the program will, you know, ask them a series of questions. And then after six weeks, we'll ask them again. So like focusing on wildlife conservation issues, we can see that we made a pretty big difference in helping students realize that the outdoors is not safe for cats, or that it's okay for cats to harm wildlife. So if they the goal answer was no, it's not okay for cats to harm wildlife. We went from 45% of the students agreeing with that to 72% at a big thing that we talked about as well as coexisting with native species. So helping students to realize that there are wild animals in our backyard is a really big thing for us. And looking at these results, I was thinking, Is there a way for us to achieve similar results as we would in this long Classroom program by using a different method of teaching something that was more play based and storytelling. And one thing that I have a huge interest in personally is tabletop role playing games like Dungeons and Dragons, which has been used a lot more lately in an academic setting, specifically with students because of its ability to help kids build those like social and emotional skills through storytelling. And we all know that one of the best ways to promote empathy for animals is through storytelling. So I was wondering if I could come up with a way to use participant led storytelling to help achieve similar results as we would in a traditional classroom setting. So if you go to the next slide, I want I developed a Dungeons and Dragons or tabletop role playing game workshop. The goal is for it to be four sessions long, so a little bit shorter than our typical six week classroom. And that it would be for sessions about four hours long where the students can really immerse themselves in the story that they're telling. And I wanted to find a way for that story that we would be telling together to be about wildlife conservation. When you're in a typical classroom setting, we're typically using like bio facts and hands on activities. But it's still a teacher standing up at the front of the classroom, guiding the students through the activity. And I'm hoping that through this role playing style of teaching, we can really have the participants lead the learning. So instead of me being up at the front of the classroom, telling them like, hey, we have wild animals in their backyard, the students would be able to roleplay and experience that instead, to really build that empathy connection through firsthand experience. So when it comes to this, I can't fully explain tabletop role playing games in five minutes, if you're not familiar with it. But a big part of developing this program is making some sort of structured outline for how the campaign would be, because when you are leading a campaign in this type of game, the whole idea is that it is player led. So you, the players need to come to their own conclusions, and kind of guide the story on their own. Because the players choices can change the trajectory of the game. So when we're trying to have some sort of academic goals and learning outcomes, there needs to be a way to guide that while still letting the players feel like they, you know, have ownership of the plot, which involves a lot of pivoting and improvising for the educator leading the program. So when designing this campaign, I wanted to focus on two key conservation topics that we use a lot in our educational programs already, which is coexisting with carnivores and the impact of wildfires on native wildlife. Both of these topics can be used as plot hooks in the game, to encourage the players to explore the perspective of the in game towns, people and animals

being affected by these issues, and put themselves in the shoes of the real life first responders that would be responding to these situations. So for example, the call to adventure in this game that they would be playing, you know, it would be that maybe there's a legal trapping of wolves in the town that are getting too close to people's homes. And the players themselves have to go investigate this find twos trapping the animals, talk to the townspeople figure out why they're uncomfortable with these wild animals getting too close to their homes, and really problem solve on their own through role playing. For the wildfires, it's the same kind of thing where they would have to be role playing as the people who are out there trying to rescue these animals from the wildfires. And by making their own decisions, they're being encouraged to solve these problems without me the educator telling them exactly what they're supposed to do. And I'm really excited to see how this turns out. As many of you know, in the education field programs do not always go as planned. And we have had to push back this program actually running. So I've been spending most of my time developing the program, writing the campaign and the outline. And, you know, practicing it a little bit with people that I know that play the game to see how it plays out. And then hopefully, during the summer, I'll have the results where we can actually see how the students reacted to this type of teaching. And whether it effectively helped change their opinions on some of these conservation issues in Washington, so I'd be happy to share that out after the program runs. I'd also be happy to share the actual campaign outline, if anyone is interested to see what that looks like. Thank you.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 49:13

Awesome, thank you so much kelsey and all of the rest of our presenters, we have until 10:15. If anybody would like to ask any questions of any of the folks who presented if you would like to drop them in the chat, I can go ahead and read them off. Otherwise, feel free to use a little zoom, raise hand feature. And I can just call down the line that way. Oh, Kelsey, Isabelle is asking if you can share your email again. I have a lot of people who want to see the results of your campaign

K

Kelsey Fairhurst 49:48

You said share my email. Like okay, cool. Yeah. Trying to keep up with looking at the chat. I'll put it in the chat.



50:07

Yes, just an immediate question that I had about the campaign was, Are you worried about people dropping in or out? And does that affect a game? Like a role playing game like that?

K

Kelsey Fairhurst 50:22

Oh, great question that I didn't have time to cover. So it will be the same group of students and in the four week workshop, so it'll be about seven students, because any more than seven players is really hard to manage as the person running the game. But I'm hoping that eventually, this could be used, as you know, providing the campaign outline to educators that are interested so it can be used at more than just

 Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 50:49
PAWS.

 Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 50:55
We have a question for Nicole from Suzanne, in the chat. She's asking what is the cost of the OWI program to guests?

 51:02
Yes, our programs are \$75. So on our website, we have 12, different program options, three that are kind of geared toward K through second six for three through sixth grade, and then three that are for above sixth grade level, and any of those can be customized, we can absolutely play around and kind of make things fit for grade level. So \$75 for a program, typically 45 minutes can be up to an hour, we also have the option of building a custom program for \$200, where I work with the clients, and we build something together. I'm a little bit of a softy, though, and usually when people come to me with an idea, I'm like, Oh, we already have that. Let me just not charge you 200 and modify this a little bit and make it good.

 Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 52:03
All right. Well, yeah, there's a question for you in the chat from Ellie, are you considering changing your name to include the word Zoo?

 52:15
Yes, that's a great question. At the moment, I've just gone through like a couple different rebrand. And even right now, you know, we have historically been grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center. Now we have like, a couple other species. So at the moment, that's not kind of in our plans. And kind of from what we've seen, just again, with like, kind of the current atmosphere, which again, is just so changing and everything. What we kind of think is, it kind of helps people take a first step that they might have not otherwise been comfortable with. Because, again, it is just perception. So even though again, we do not necessarily agree with what they initially think it provides kind of a bridge that, again, might have not been there. It was actually really interesting, because like I mentioned at the beginning, the presenter, who was talking about the word zoo, that one possible thing that it was actually the Oregon Zoo is really, really interesting talk. But they were not one idea they had was the Oregon wildlife , or wildlife Discovery Center. And I was like, Oh, that's funny, because that's right, we went so yeah, at the moment. And again, perhaps know more about this than I do, but not in our plan. Again, as an education, we kind of see the value in having people not have assumptions right off the bat and being able to talk more about them. One on one.





53:38

Question for the Blank Park Zoo, folks who were doing the storytelling training for their interpreters. When focusing on the individual animals versus the Natural History facts, did they have trouble keeping? Or do they have trouble keeping up with individual animals that maybe have very short lifespans? Like say, praying mantis, or opossums? Are you constantly updating or do you not have a very large collection for those individuals?



54:11

So for like, possums as an example, we've had two possums. And so when one passes away, the information is pretty much the same, like the important messaging that we want to give is the same for both possums and then we just tweak the personalized stories. A lot of times the personalized stories for most of our individuals are pretty similar. amongst individuals, we try to make it so it can live across individuals, but yet be personalized to if that makes sense. And so it hasn't been a problem so far. I wrote these this last year. So we will find out if that becomes a problem. Because these are very new. But so far, it hasn't been a problem. The seasonal staff that are using them only here for about six months anyways. So when the the next group of seasonals come if we lose an animal and it'll probably be okay. Does that answer your question? Okay.



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 55:17

And, Kelsey, we have a question for you from Jennifer in the chat, and your development of the tabletop role playing game. I'm assuming that's TTRPG. If my memory serves me correctly, did you do any research about existing board games that use wildlife for animals like wingspan? ARC nova or earth, and see if they promote empathy? or encourage conservation? Or do you know if that research has been done?



Kelsey Fairhurst 55:40

Yeah, I know, like, in my research, to see if something like this had been done in the past, I don't know if specific I couldn't find any specific research on like TTRPGs, or board games specifically about wildlife conservation. I know that board games, you know, have been used in an educational setting in general. I know there's one that specifically about like animal adoptions and a shelter that's been used before that's been kind of pretty effective. I don't know if specific research has been done. I know just from like, my personal experience of playing wingspan with friends. I've definitely seen it turn people who know nothing about birds to being like full on birdwatchers and just from playing one game. So I think that says a lot about the power of games in general.



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 56:37

We have an all caps message in the chat I love wing span and it's being frantically like hearted by many people

K

Kelsey Fairhurst 56:44

Game and the new one just came out this week.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 56:47

I guess. I did play the card game ecologies the other day, which was very, very fun. You basically did get to build food webs. It was like the nerdiest game I think I've ever played, but it was really fun. Alright, we've got three minutes left in this session. Before we transition to our break. Does anybody else have any questions for any of our presenters? Have a message from Katherine in the chat that says you guys are amazing. Okay, if we have no more questions, we will go ahead and transition into our break. We'll be at a break until 10:20am Pacific Standard Time. So I have 10:13. So it'll be about a seven minute break. Feel free to use this time to refreshment clear your mind. Go to the restroom. And after we returned, we're going to hear from Theo Bamberger. I'm sharing out their site visit data presentation. If you have any questions in the meantime, feel free to drop them in the chat. And one of the facilitators will be able to get back to you as soon as possible. See you in about seven minutes. All right, everybody, welcome back. Hope you had a restful break there. I am very excited to turn it over to my colleague Theo over at Woodland Park Zoo, as they present on the findings from the site visits that we conducted to 20 of our network partners in 2022, and 2023. So Theo, I'm gonna go ahead and kick it over to you.

T

Theo Bamberger (WPZ) 59:02

All right, give me one second to get all set up. All right. I'm gonna give me a thumbs up if you can see my screen. Perfect. All right. So hi, everyone. As Emily mentioned, my name is Theo Bamberger. I use they he pronouns and I am an evaluation specialist at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. And specifically, I provide evaluation support to the ACE for Wildlife network as well as the capacity building granting program. So I might be a familiar face or familiar name and your email inbox for that reason. And today, I'm going to go over some of the findings from the advancing empathy initiative teams visits to all of the 20 original ACE for Wildlife network partner organizations. So as a little bit of context between April 2022, and May 2023, the advancing empathy initiative staff from Woodland Park Zoo visited the 20, initial ACE for Wildlife, network partner organizations. And those those visits had a number of purposes, one to get to meet folks and to get to kind of start building those relationships with everybody. To get a chance to meet with the staff so that these organizations and understand what kinds of resources and support folks might need to check in on grant projects that were going on. And then the focus of what of my work, and what I'm going to share with you today was to conduct observations in support of our larger evaluation plan. So the underlying purpose of our evaluation is sort of twofold. One part of it was we wanted to establish a baseline understanding of how what we call effective empathy practices are being used at network partner organizations. And then we also wanted to be able to expand our understanding of how visitors at zoos and aquariums express empathy towards animals. And within that, we wanted to be able to start to identify some of the strengths and the opportunities for growth across the network and how empathy practices are being utilized to get some guidance for ourselves, and how we could provide resources and support and to be able to start monitoring change in how empathy practices are being used over time. So our observations consisted of four different parts. We observed the use of empathy practices in Exhibit signage, and when I say exhibit, I refer to be interpretive elements and all of the signage and interactive elements around an

animal's habitat. Then the use of empathy practices, by program presenters in both formal and informal programs, how visitors at exhibits are expressing empathy toward animals, and how audiences at those programs are expressing empathy towards animals. And we did these observations using the measuring Empathy Collaborative assessment project observation framework, which will be linked in the chat. And I know many of you all have used it or use versions of it in your own organizations as well. So take just a quick step backwards. I know the terms empathy, practices, empathy, best practices, empathy, effective practices, they can mean many different things. And I want to clarify that. For our purposes. For the purpose of this talk. Specifically, I'm when I say empathy related practices, empathy practices, or expressions of empathy, empathy behaviors, I'm referring to the categories that are included on that MECAP observation framework. So there are nine categories of empathy related practices, that that framework measures and then there are 11 categories of empathy related behaviors, that that framework measures and within each of those categories, there are a number of specific practices and specific behaviors. Then because we know that how empathy is used and how empathy is expressed towards animals can vary based on a number of different factors. We conducted observations at exhibits and in programs featuring all different types of animals, so mammals, birds, reptiles, marine invertebrates, insects, you name it. We also intentionally observed at some exhibits with animals that are present at many sites, so things like bears big cats, tortoises, so that we could do direct comparison between different organizations. We also conducted observations of a variety of different programs targeted different audiences. So they were in grade school programs, field trips, like amphitheater programs for preschool programs, and a couple of private programs for individual visitor groups. And then we observed three different types of exhibit visitors, people visiting alone, people visiting in groups of only adults, and people visiting in mixed age or family groups. And then lastly, we conducted a set of observations at each site can see this thing of where possible, eight exhibits worth of signage, visitors at four different exhibits and then at least one program presenter and audience. Altogether And we collected a lot of data, we observed 25 program audiences, 59 program presenters, 552 individual exhibit visitors, and 166 exhibits. So that is a lot of information. And a lot could be learned from it. For the purpose of the next 20 minutes or so I'm just going to go over kind of a high level summary of some of the findings, focusing first on the use of empathy practices at all these organizations. So the first thing that we saw that was really interesting to me was that program presenters tended to utilize more empathy related practices than were used in Exhibit signage. And you can see that really well in this figure. So in this, each point represents either on the top one program observation or on the bottom one exhibit. So all of the signs in one exhibit. And we saw that the median number of practices used in programs was 13, whereas it was seven in exhibits. There are a number of different reasons that that might be. But I think one of the things that it does really highlight is, that is the importance of programs, whether they're formal or informal, regardless of length, just these interactions that we get to have as zoo and aquarium staff with visitors that can be so impactful. I kind of alluded to this, but even brief programs incorporated a wide variety of empathy related practices. And more specifically, what I mean by that is that the number of categories covered so types of empathy practices used in used in programs didn't depend at all on the length of the program. So short programs and long programs, really structured and formal programs, and really brief in less formal keeper talks and things like that all used a range of different kinds of strategies for inspiring empathy. As for which practices we saw used most frequently, in both exhibits and programs in forming about animals needs was the most frequently used practice. Go over very briefly, this is the breakdown of all of the frequencies of each type of empathy related practice and used in both exhibits and in programs. You can see there some key differences just to highlight programs are really strong. And a lot of these categories in particular, informing about animals needs, reinforcing the animals or individuals, which includes things like using the names and using non objectifying language about animals telling their

eating stories, reinforcing the animals have their own agency by allowing animals to make choices. And then one thing that I want to highlight is this difference in inviting perspective taking that's a real strength in in programs as compared to exhibits. And it's something that will come up later. Something that I think is interesting about one of these categories to highlight is that although exhibit signage was really strong in highlighting conflict between or in what looks like including appropriate conservation actions, that category of behavior actually includes both including conservation action and highlighting conflict between people and wildlife. And more often, exhibit signage across organizations is highlighting that there are conflicts between people in wildlife but not necessarily drawing our attention to actions that visitors can take. So I think that's, that was an interesting disparity that we saw in this data, I think 72% of exhibits highlighted human wildlife conflict, conflict, only 53% included conservation and caring action. So if our goals are to be conservation organizations, I think that's an important area for growth for all of us. We also saw that empathy related practices were not being consistently utilized for all types of animals, specifically marine invertebrates. And you can see that breakdown here. So in this middle, light blue, we have marine invertebrates, which for many of the categories, we're not having as many empathy practices used for them, although One thing that is interesting about this is that we don't see a strong bias toward mammals, which I think is a strength of all of ours. And then finally, we saw that partner organizations varied both in the number and the type of empathy practices being implemented. And I think that's a huge strength for us as a network of organizations working on this shared mission, that we all have different strengths in what what practices we are using, and we can learn from each other on how to expand our use of empathy for wildlife. And moving on to the expressions of empathy we observed. We saw just as program presenters utilized more empathy practices than exhibit signage, program, audiences, engage in more outward expressions of empathy and related emotions than exhibit visitors. We also saw that most frequently both exhibit visitors and program audiences demonstrated interest or curiosity towards animals or recognize the animals are individuals and have their own agency, which are two really fundamental attitudes towards animals to have when our goal is to kind of take folks further and empathizing with them. And you can see the rest of this breakdown, where on top we have program audiences. And in the lighter blue below, we have exhibit visitors, you can see, I think here are some of its some of the real strengths of programs in inspiring empathy for animals comes across here where program audiences are really frequently engaging in perspective taking, demonstrating interest and curiosity, showing appreciation and respect, understanding the needs of animals. And again, this is a real strength of programs, it's not to say that it is in any way a failure of exhibits. And in fact, some of this is due to the observation tool that we are using specifically, which I will get into later in this presentation. Another finding that is perhaps unsurprising is the number of expressions of empathy that we observed increased both with exhibit state time and with the length of programs. So this is not to say that our goal should be to maximize the length of programs and maximize how long people stay in exhibits, because there are, of course, trade offs for that, but that the longer that we have people's attention, the more empathy that they're engaging in. Then we looked at the relationship between the use of practices and expressions of empathy that we observed. And we saw that a couple of empathy related practices specifically inviting perspective taking and including expectations for audience behavior, were linked to increases in several different expressions of empathy, including understanding animals needs, the ability to take animals perspectives, showing interest or curiosity towards animals and expressing a desire to help animals. So this is where that inviting perspective taking comes, that I mentioned earlier comes back where that being a strength in programs is something that we want to highlight and keep going with, because we see that it is linked to some of these expressions of empathy. Finally, somewhat surprisingly, we saw that expressions of empathy were not dependent on the type of animal being observed or on the type of visitor group. But touch opportunities were important. So when people had the

opportunity to touch animals, in things like domestic barns, and touch pools, they expressed more empathy. Again, some of that has to do with what expressions were able to observe. But it is worthwhile to, to note that, in particular, we didn't see any strong bias towards mammals or towards primates, which we might expect from literature in the past that has established that people are more likely to express empathy towards animals that are more similar to us. But we did not see that at least in this day. Lastly, it's not directly related to empathy for animals. But we did observe the state of time for each exhibit for each visitor that we observed. And we saw that the median state time was two minutes and 13 seconds. And the vast majority of visitors were spending about three minutes or less at an exhibit. That's something that is interesting to keep in mind. And I will say that these trailing points out towards the 16 minute range. About half of them are also touch opportunities. So those touch opportunities are the types of things that are drawing visitors in for longer and holding their attention, which, again, is a potential way to inspire more empathy. So I've alluded to them a little bit already. But some of the limitations to keep in mind with all of these results are that the observation framework that we used, isn't tailored to capturing nonverbal expressions of empathy. I'm really excited that some folks at Minnesota zoo and other institutions have worked on developing tools for observing nonverbal expressions of empathy, that I think will be great to incorporate in future observations like this and future evaluation projects like this. We also tailored our visits to avoid the busy summer season, so we didn't overwhelm our partners. But that meant that at some sites, there were fewer program offerings or fewer people visiting while we were there. So that limited the number of observations we could, we could do at some sites. These observations also happened over a year long period, while many people are really quickly developing their use of empathy. So some of the exhibits that we observed have already changed and have all new signage that incorporates empathy practices, which is great to see. But that doesn't mean that you have to hold the fact that some of some of these observations are now already outdated in mind. There are also differences in what exhibits and programs were available to observe at each site. So we couldn't do a direct comparison truly of each site. Because each site has its own set of animals in their care. Each set has its own set of program priorities that introduce some potentially confounding variables to these observations. We also did not assess our interrater agreement, which means how we are coding and using that observation tool, we didn't reassess that throughout the project. So it's possible that at some point, folks differed and how they were highlighting certain behaviors or certain practices being used. And then finally, all of this data was collected on paper by hand and entered by hand. And so there's some potential for human error. With all of that said, there are still some key recommendations to take away from this study. The most important and, again, perhaps some surprising is that, we would like to see the incorporation of additional empathy related practices into exhibits and programs with Priority toward reinforcing the animals or individuals by doing things like including their names, and including other unique information because those are things that exhibit visitors have been shown to be the most interested in. And, and also a focus on inviting perspective taking is that was one of the practices that were most strongly linked to increases in certain empathy behaviors. And as as additional practices are incorporated, we're going to still see a focus on the quality of practice of exhibits and the quality of programs, as opposed to just shocking them full of empathy practices, because you could deliver a program that uses all 30 Different empathy practices, and have it not be an engaging program, you could write a sign that is 1000 words long, but uses every empathy practice. And those might not be as effective as doing a really excellent program or designing a really excellent exhibit that only uses a couple of practices. So that's something to keep in mind with all of this. We also recommend focusing some of our staff and volunteer empathy trainings that organizations are providing on practices that are not being used as frequently. So we know that there was a real strength in informing about the animals in our care. But things like inviting perspective taking that are more challenging to do we require more attention in

these trainings. And then finally, because of the real strength that we saw in programs, both in incorporating empathy practices and inspiring empathy in audiences, we would recommend increasing opportunities for visitors to engage with zoo and aquarium staff and with volunteers through programs and through informal interactions. My last piece is we came to a number of further questions, that this is a really, this is really, as I mentioned at the beginning, a baseline evaluation. And that left us with a lot of questions that I hope that people will explore with me as the network continues to grow. So those are what feelings of empathy beyond those that are verbalized or indicated through behavior, if any, are being elicited by exhibits and visit and programs in zoos and aquariums, and to what extent if at all, are these affected by the intentional use of empathy practices? To what extent if at all, does the use of empathetic practices affect the efficacy of existing conservation messaging? Is there a significant difference in how exhibits and programs impact expressions or feelings of empathy for animals when potential those potentially confounding variables are controlled? To what extent if at all the type of animal featured in an exhibit or program impact visitors and audiences and empathetic response? And then what factors influence how zoos and aquariums incorporate empathy practices? And finally, I want to leave you with a little plug for the future. Which is that because we want to answer some of those questions, and we want to answer some of those questions collaboratively as a network, I developing some digital observation tools to distribute to everyone via tablets that everyone every network partner organization will receive as part of our fresh network outcome map. So we will be making digital observation tools accessible to everyone on these tablets, that will enable us to collaboratively collect some of this data so that we don't have some of the obstacles that we had in the past that we can learn together. And that is something you should stay tuned for. For more information coming at you quite soon. was a lot of information. So we'll take some questions. I know, a little bit of limited time.

E Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 1:22:17

There is one in the chat from Andrea. She said are we able to see any data specifically related to our site from this study?

T Theo Bamberger (WPZ) 1:22:26

Yes, so that's also a reminder to click on the link, which is that link in the chat will be the full site visit report. From that this, this presentation draws from and in that report, there is an individual page for each organization. And then if you reach out to me over email, I can walk through some of it in more detail.

E Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 1:23:07

We probably have time for one more question. There's one from Bridget in the chat. Did your evaluation look at alternative tactile experiences such as the use of bio facts in programming?

T Theo Bamberger (WPZ) 1:23:18

That isn't something that we specifically included in our observation we included for programs whether or not there were animals present, but not if things were like biotechs were being used. And I think that is a really great example of something that would be excellent to

used. And I think that is a really great example of something that would be excellent to evaluate and test going forward in more specifics about how programs, incorporate empathy and inspire empathy when animals aren't present.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 1:24:13

Right, if you have any further questions for Theo, theo, can you drop your email in the chat and they can either answer them in the chat or via email later on. But we're gonna go ahead and transition over to our next presenter, which is Brent and Alison over at the. Dakota Zoo to talk about their instilling empathy through a unique encounter the North American river otter



1:24:51

right hearing us well seen everything.

A

Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:24:55

All right, great. So I'm Allison malkowski. I'm the assistant director We're here at the Dakota Zoo.



1:25:01

And I'm Brent West. I'm that education and volunteer coordinator here at Dakota Zoo.

A

Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:25:06

And our presentation is about unique encounter that we developed here over the last six months to a year. And this is a subset of what we've been working on with our grant. We wanted to expand guest experiences. And that included adding a behind the scenes tour. And this was just a project that started off as like a little seed of an idea. We knew we wanted to do something dynamic, and we're just really proud of how it turned out. And it turned into a really unique situations, we wanted to share that with you. And it focuses on our North American



1:25:39

river otters. Yep. So before we get too far and telling you what we came up with, just wanted to give a little background on how we ended up where we are. Because it really was a case of every a lot of things coming together perfectly to end up with this really cool final product. It's important to know that the river otter here at Dakota Zoo is one of one of the most popular, it's a fan favorite for sure. It's been around for around 35 years. So one of our more historical species. So then around people love it. So it's always in the public eye always been thought about a little more than other animals as far as the public goes. That also means that the exhibit that it had was a little older started to become noticeably outdated. From a safety standpoint, as far as I guessed, it had the old style, the pit style, where we sorted out and we're

wondering how we could change that. And it came down to do we want to make keep spending money and improving this older exhibit? Or would we rather come up with something brand new, and that thought sort of coincided with a donor, a very generous donor came to us with a thought that they would be willing to fund a new exhibit for our river otters. So that was, like I said, very generous of them. It coincided with some of the thinking that we had. And again, like I said, things coming together perfectly. Around the same time, we also were able to get some grant money through the ACE network. That to help us improve our guest engagement, different programs, we call them our wild programs, it's wild happenings, wild encounters and wild expeditions, just ways to engage with the public a little more to build empathy, and sort of ended up with us being able to come up with this new exhibit. At the same time, we are planning on building these new programs, which I'll talk about. Sure,

A

Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:27:37

yeah. So when we were first looking at the new habitat that we were building, we had been doing public trainings before with the auditors, but it was very limited due to the pit style. And so we were already thinking ahead when we were building this new exhibit of how we can engage the public. So in that diagram there, people would stand at the glass and we had a side chain like area that we could just plan on doing training, to more personal view, do a lot more with the otters and engage the public from the outside of the exhibit. However, we also had an opportunity of a very large holding space significantly larger than we had before and an opportunity for people to come behind the scene. So whether they got to see the Otters just living quarters or whatever, we were excited about that possibility. In order to move the otters from the old exhibit to the new exhibit, we were very limited because of the size of the space we couldn't like. Like efficiently put a crate anywhere to train the otters to shift out of that area. And we didn't want to immobilize them. And so we came up with this PVC system, a lot of people use PVC in a certain way to train their otters for behaviors. But we made a double tube, it wasn't even a long enough space to train to have one otter go in straight and lock them in. So we had to do the stack method with a hole in the otter had to come in and loop around. And then we trained them to let us close the door so we could move them to the new facility. So it was a lot of out of the box thinking because of that old style habitat to come up with this concept of how can we move the Otters safely. And so we created this weird PVC stacked pipe situation. But that had sparked an idea going forward, which is what we ended up coming up with. And we're the the ACE for Wildlife, it had funded the whole formatting of the experience and like kind of what we've been planning as far as consulting. But the donor ended up putting forth the money to the project that we ended up implementing.

o

1:29:34

So we had a couple of different goals here in mind when we were creating this new program. First one is that we wanted it to be unique and engaging obviously for both the guest and the otters. We wanted to create these defining moments. So as far as that goes, that's, that's not too tricky. I mean, they're going behind the scenes there. Like I said, seeing these fan favorite animals in a way they've never been able to before, in a way that now Not many people are going to be able to. So that was that was relatively, we thought that would take care of itself, basically, if we were able to implement it in the way we wanted it to. But we also wanted to have this local conservation tie. So for those of you and it's probably most of you that have never been to North Dakota, believe it or not, is big on basically, life on the water. In the

summer, there's people boating, fishing, just spending time kayaking, floating along the rivers. Now there's tons of wetlands in North Dakota that people like to recreate on. So we wanted to bring that into our messaging a little bit more in a way to help connect with guests as they participated in this program. So we wanted to keep that in mind. We just have some things here on our screen that show, you know, reporting a river out or something you can do on our game and fishes website just because they are. And like I said earlier in the public's eye, in their mind quite a bit. We also included our trading cards, which we held, or we developed with the help of the network as well. So that sort of engages the guests a little bit more. So we had a lot of different things in mind. But ultimately, we wanted to reach these goals of engagement and connecting with North Dakotans in a way that they aren't familiar with.

A

Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:31:16

So when we came to designing, like I said, we had come up with a unique idea when we were using the idea of shifting them with the PVC, we wanted to essentially come up with something to expand that. So we wanted to build essentially a larger version of the PVC tunnel system to help engage the public. So when we were building the inside, holding area, we had an opportunity then to decide what we wanted to do for access for the otters and for future just general training for medical behaviors. And so we had the foresight to put in some of these panels, which you'll see in the next slide. So we had drawn out some panels to give us access out into the keeper area for nest boxes, as well as potentially other training things, for example, like having a squeeze tube and all of this other stuff. So we were thinking about training when we were first doing this, but it opened the door to this opportunity. So actually go back when per second. We had to we were like how can we make a pipe system that's engaging with the guests that uses kind of what we're already looking at, to create these unique opportunities for the otters to to kind of demonstrate their natural abilities kind of demonstrate how playful they are and create a defining moment. And so it went into a lot of research of looking at is this possible? Are there PVC options for the authors that are bigger? How do we let the public see them working through a course? And how can we kind of do this blueprint idea where the guests can also build and be a part of the auto experience. So the doors are the picture on the right is the original doors that came with the building. And then on the left is how we modified it to have chute access for PVC. So we can attach a nest box we can attach a training device where we can attach our PVC plans that we're having for our guest experiences. So there was a lot of just pre planning and kind of just like dreaming of what this would look like. But when it came to actually developing something, it was a whole process. So we did find a supplier that could supply us with eight inch clear PVC, which is not that cheap thing. And I was looking doing a lot of research online, but we're able to work with a local supplier who was able to get us a lot of this for just cost and ship it to us. And so we spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to create three courses was the plan to have the Otters run through these court obstacle courses essentially that people could help construct and demonstrate different adaptations of the otter. So whether it be swimming, climbing, or nesting, were kind of the three things that we wanted to try to highlight with this behind the scenes program. So we bought this PVC with kind of a rough estimate of what we want to do. But when you get into the real life moments, you know that things don't quite go. As you planned. The PVC was really heavy. We had a lot of components. And I luckily, we had Dave here who's one of our maintenance guys, and staff supervisors. And I'm like, Okay, here's my dream on paper now helped me figure out how to put it into real life. And because the PVC was expensive, we didn't want to be cutting things and running into problems with now we messed up and we didn't have things divvied out. So there's a lot of math and angles, and we ended up being able to work things out. Really quickly. I thought this would take us a long time to figure

out the pieces and the components, but we're able to create some standard sizes that helped us build the three courses for the otters. So we just worked through it in the building. You saw that picture where I had chalk drawings on the floor. The pieces were heavy, and we didn't want to move them back and forth. And so we were trying to just draw it out before we did some cutting. But once we got the pieces figured out, we ended up constructing three obstacle courses and being able to keep everything over there. So the final courses, we have three courses. So the one on the way, right top is our nesting track where the Otters go through. And there's a nesting box, where we're kind of talking about what they're doing as far as nesting and habitat that way, the one in the middle is a water track where we can fill the box is flipped upside down, it can be full of water and demonstrate their adaptations like their webbed feet, how they eat and water, how they move in water. And then the other one was about climbing and just other locomotion is kind of the point that we're going through. And we actually had to modify that because we were taking into account safety of the otters and how we could get them through the course effectively, and we ended up modifying that one. But then all ended up turning out really well. And we were able to get that figured out. So with that was this blueprint idea, we wanted to have the guests get a blueprint, or choose a blueprint, and then assemble this for the otter, so they're not just coming in and seeing the show. They're partaking in this interaction with the authors, and they get to choose what the authors are running, and they get to help set it up. And so they pick a blueprint, we were able to make these in house on the if you're familiar with Canva. We did these on our own and then printed them. And it teaches them what they need to acquire and then how to set it up with the help of staff and then kind of the focus of each one. So then it went came to the Training, we started with some modify short courses for the auditors to just get them comfortable with the PVC. They obviously already had some history for when we moved them to the new building. But we set up all this space, and just started doing short courses to get them working through it. And then we kept doing variations and changing so that they were used to a different course. But repetition builds confidence. And they were comfortable in no time going through the course and they were choosing to go in it on their own, often even without prompts. So the first video on the left, was just getting them acclimated to going in the tubes, which they did great.

H

Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:37:12

The second one is we were working on the certain kinds of cues. So we also wanted to be able to cue the otters to go in the courses both forward and backwards based on the signal we gave them. And so we have specific cues for which door we want them to enter in. And then also leaving certain areas of the course. So the guests can also kind of learn a little bit about training, it's not the main focus, but it is just an added bonus. And they help boost otters and horses. We also just had to dispense them to just different things. So this was the first day on the watercourse. We just let the Otters play through the course we reinforced them kind of got them used to it. And just kind of were playful with it just like otters are and so it was a learning curve for our staff as well. So these are the courses just more pictures of us working through the courses we add multiple trainers to because when it comes to actually putting this in practice, we need to have multiple people to be able to do the tours. And in order to do the tour, you need to be familiar with the training. And so he had to pass along the cues and the information for that. So this is the nesting track and the full behavior. That blue box was a good one go ahead and play it was a box from wildlife toy box I think is the company and we just got it specked out. And then we made the modifications with the plexi window so that people can have this unique interaction spot. We're doing training with our hands. And with tongs, there's an opportunity for the guests to feed with tongs to put food in the course we don't let them put in their hands nation. But we had to do a lot of communication between trainers to teach the

cues. So the authors knew which way to go. But they can go all which way it's not just a one run through and flow, they look to the trainers for their cues of which door to enter and exit. And then the guests get to help direct them along the path. If there's a stop or an interaction, they can then carry on to retreat back to the main trainer. The other part about this is we had to use a lot of guinea pigs. And so as trainers, we had a system that otters had a system but we needed to see what that was like. So of course our first guinea pig was the donors themselves that bought the PVC. They were the ones that funded the whole exhibit. And so they were there to do the first kind of trial run and it gave us a lot of feedback about what we need to focus on. We also did it with the whole staff. So we have different areas people don't go in Otter often so it was great to have the whole team come and try it out the experience. Make sure our Blueprints work that people were able to understand the blueprints and how to set up the courses. And then also I had my family but we're voluntold I'm sure it was very difficult for them to come and see the otters but see what it would be like with kids and families and how do different people look at this. You know, we had to make some edits to the blueprints. But all in all, it was a lot of good feedback and kind of back and forth.



1:40:04

So we wanted to include this slide as well. You can not read out through all this, you know, it's a big block of text. But just to include all the behind the scenes logistical things we had to think about when implementing this. On the surface, it's a really fun idea, a lot of cool things will come out of it. But as we went along, we realized, oh, you know, what we have to come up with, you know, descriptions of the program, the pricing, we got to get something on our website, we need the staff, like Alison mentioned earlier, whoever is going to be running, it needs to be trained on how to train the animals. So just did want to include that there are a lot of things that went on behind the scenes, scheduling wise, making sure staff that we had the staff to even implement the program, and that the timing allowed it. So there were a lot of things that went on behind the scenes, if you have more questions about that you can reach out later, but didn't want to do that as well.



Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:40:58

So then to implementing it, we've only had it out, we were able to get it up on our website at the end of December, just with logistics of winter and getting the items we did use it our grant extension to help us finish up this project. There was a lot of things with the building that got delayed, but we have it on our website, we got it out. We've got our trainers, we've done to families already. And we have some that are starting to come in for booking we are in our offseason. So as word gets out, and we keep putting it on social media, I think it's going to be filling up pretty quickly. But it's been great to like get the feedback. One of the biggest things when we were doing the guinea pigs two was like, Okay, we want to talk about content, how they can it relates to them in their summer life, maybe it's time on the river, the lakes like Brent mentioned, but the second you're in there, and the otters are running the course, expect to have no ears on you because it is just so engaging. And so fun. People are like, checked out from listening. So we do a lot of like the communication, the safety talk as we're walking to the building, as we get in there. And then we let them just have that experience with the otters. It's not about the facts. It's about the defining moment. And so we make sure that we point things out like, isn't it cool how their feet are webbed when they're swimming around this and that and the other. But we really let them have that. And then at the end, we can tie back into our

message about what can you do you can report an otter sighting Did you know that our game and fish has an opportunity for you, it's really important that we all help contribute to that. And when you're, you know, Leave No Trace when you're out on the river, can you clean up after yourself and others. And yeah, it's been great to see that. And a lot of people have no idea that you could report an otter. And that's been a lot of good feedback for us.



1:42:45

So although we we have rolled the program out, we're taking reservations for the program, we do want to expand upon it further as we get rolling. And just listed off a few of the options that we have rolling through our head now is that we want to continue pushing that narrative about local conservation. Since it is so important here in Bismarck area in North Dakota in general, we thought we thought about potentially having a river cleanup day for anyone that's interested, whether you're a member or just someone in the community, we go over to the Missouri River, which is literally right next door to the zoo and do a river cleanup. We already talked about otter spotting and reporting on the website. We're going to implement some surveys just to get feedback on how the programs are I mean, we're not perfect, we know there's going to be things we can tweak. And getting those, those comments from our first participants will be really important. So we're going to do that. We also want to have options to keep the courses new and new and exciting. So you know, potentially having the same people come back and do it again, because they know there's something new they can learn something new and exciting for their kids to do that's going to keep them coming back and learning more about otters and the local conservation. And I didn't listed here, but we also are looking at ways to include other animals, whether it's our African penguins, or some of our North American native species and similar programs that are we're able to get some behind the scenes, engaging encounters for the guests.



Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:44:11

Great, do you have any questions for us?



Sydney Dratel 1:44:23

So it looks like there's a question in the chat asking how many guests participate in this program at a time.



Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:44:30

So this one allows for eight, six people to be in this tour. And then some of the other ones have different but we had to go through that we wanted to keep it a reasonable amount of group and then just with the size of the inside. We didn't want to be too crowded but six has so far been the sweet spot for that. So



Sydney Dratel 1:44:50

there's another question that looks like someone else answered. But just to get confirmation

there's another question that looks like someone else answered. But just to get confirmation. How much does the program cost per participant?

A Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:44:57

So yeah, \$80 per member 90 For non member, we kind of were looking at a lot of our neighboring zoos in the tri state area to see what behind the scenes counters are running. And that's kind of where we drew our price point from. And then one thing we really liked about the fact that we have three courses is hopefully it's not a one and done. Hopefully it encourages people to want to come and do it again, because they can try different parts of the orders.

S Sydney Dratel 1:45:22

And another question in the chat is if you sell individual tickets, or if it's for one group session altogether,

A Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:45:29

so they can, it fills up to six of your group of two, you can reserve that slot, but then another group of two or four can take on. Or if you're a group of six, you can just reserve all the slots.

S Sydney Dratel 1:45:42

Seems like a fun way to make some friends bond over otters. Does anyone else have any questions can feel free to either come off mute or type it in the chat?

1:46:06

I know you guys said you haven't been doing it for a long time yet. But do you? Have you yet seen? Or do you anticipate issues with like if the you know, every group request one course like if the Otters kind of get done with that, or like kind of give like a plan for like, for people to you know, say like, Hey, the Otters don't want to do this, they want to do this? Or what kinda like your recommendation for that goes

A Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:46:31

on? Um, I think it was kind of hard to hear some of that question. But it was talking about like, what if the Otters don't want to do a course we haven't run into that yet. They don't really know, the differences of the courses until they're in them. They just see the tubes and they're so excited we have in no training session have they not been interested, oftentimes, they just want to run through the course even without the cues, which we allow them to to just enjoy it because it is very enriching for them. And it's such like a good environmental change and sensory change and everything. And so we haven't run into that we can also like right now our otters are separated due to breeding strategies. And so we just evaluate, like, is it going to be

one otter running through the course or both. But both have been so eager to do it. And we're also incorporating, it's just like their middle of the day diet. So it's pretty, you know, if they're not being trained in other ways, they're just, like, ready to go and used to it. And they know what's what part of one of their meals most days, so

 1:47:29

like Allison and say I kind of cut out. So maybe I heard different parts of the question there. But I think part of it too, is if guests keep selecting the same one over and over. It might get them used to one, but we're also continuing to train each course, in between sessions. Allison sort of alluded to it that the actual public sessions probably aren't going to be great for training anyways, because there's gonna be so much going on, and we're just meaning we're gonna let the public feed the otter when they're there, even if the otter doesn't necessarily do the exact behavior we want. So we're gonna, we would keep them up with all three courses throughout the season. Yeah.

 Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:48:05

And so, you know, if I know that they've had two water tracks, and we might do the climbing or the nesting track throughout the week when we're doing training, and so, yeah.

 Sydney Dratel 1:48:21

Looks like there are a couple more questions in the chat. The first is what is the Program length?

 Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:48:28

Um, it's about we have on the website, 40 minutes, but I think we need to change it because it's usually about 45 or 50 minutes by the time we get over there, because we walked into the building, and we use that time to talk about otters, we show the otter pelts. We talked about, you know, lots of different things. And then by the time they get things assembled, then we do the running the run through with the otters and they also help take it down. And then we do like Final thoughts and stuff before they get sent out. So it's about 45 to 50 minutes, really. And then I see someone's asking about who does the tours. So we have our there's a couple of keepers from that section that are trained to do it right now. Eventually, all of them will learn and be passed off on those skills. So we have two keepers right now, myself can do the tour or senior keeper can do the tour. Bretton can technically, technically do the tour as well. And so we're a small staff. So it's kind of all hands on deck for a lot of things. And so far it's been working well. But we were very careful about how often can tours be and at what time so that way it was within our capacity as a staff to handle as well because we are going to be bringing other behind the scenes tours online as well.

 Sydney Dratel 1:49:39

And there is a question from Liz regarding what was the process through an animal wellbeing

And there is a question from Liz, regarding what was the process through an animal wellbeing committee or vet staff and any concerns over COVID?

A Allison Malkowski (Dakota Zoo) 1:49:49

We haven't had any concerns with COVID from our vet staff. But it certainly if there was it's certainly something that's always going to be open to discussion right. We always reevaluate every So right now that's not a concern on the biggest well being is like one where they engaged in the training was there any safety concerns with the courses we did modify that one because I was worried that if the Otters weren't able to work their way down vertical track and one of them it was like vertical up and over and I didn't it was a one way in that one and so I didn't want an otter to get sucks we ended up modifying things and looking through a safety lens early on. And then just overall like well being like I said, we're taking into account like our breeding separation strategy and kind of where our females at and so we assess on the daily of the tours, we also have the right to cancel a tour at any time if there's something going on whether it is medical or something like COVID is going on we have the ability to just make that decision and reschedule or reimburse what we need to or guests but yeah and then we do a lot of safety checks with the PVC we have to make sure it's overlapping a certain amount so there's no possibility of any compromise to the track when they're in it

S Sydney Dratel 1:51:08

and then time for one more question anyone has any burning thoughts all right, if not, I will transition us to our next break. So we will all rejoin at 1120 pacific time so whatever 20 Your time so we will see you that? So hello, everyone. Welcome back. Now we will be transitioning to a another presentation. As Allison and Brent mentioned in their presentation, their project was part of our grant program. So I just wanted to introduce that for people who don't know about that or would like a little more information. So the building organizational capacity to foster empathy for wildlife granting program is supported by a private funder and helps increase the capacity of AZA accredited zoos and aquariums in a seven state region to develop and deliver effective programming aimed at advancing empathy for animals and wildlife. So I'm about to pass it off to Haley Hedstrom and Sarah Wilcox at Lake Superior zoo will be presenting on their round two grant immersive nature experiences at the Lake Superior Zoo. So as with the prior presentations, if you have questions, you can either type them into the chat or you can wait until the end and come off mute when we do our q&a. So I will pass it off to Haley and Sarah

H Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:55:14

who's so much Sydney can everybody let me know if can you give me a thumbs up if it sure doesn't work bandwidth

E Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 1:55:26

we can see a message that says you've started screen sharing but we can't actually see the presentation screen

S

Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:55:37

okay hold on what happened? I can also screen Sit looks like we can see it now. Haley. Okay,

H

Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:55:53

perfect. It does.

S

Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:55:55

Let's see. Okay,

H

Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:55:56

thank you. Alright, so thank you, Sydney. Thanks for everyone for bearing with me. We're so excited and grateful to be here today to talk about this important project that without the ACE for Wildlife network and Woodland Park Zoo grant would not have been possible. As a brief introduction, the Lake Superior zoo is located in Duluth, Minnesota, on an approximately 16 acres of beautiful green space with Kingsbury Creek, flowing right through the middle of our grounds. We were founded in 1923, and just celebrated our 100th anniversary last year. We welcome over 100,000 guests annually and have a membership base of over 2200 households representing over 12,000 people. Our mission is to provide close up animal experiences that inspire connections with wildlife and action towards conservation in our region and around the world. For a bit of background, I will review the previous space layout collaborations and partnerships as well as the goals that were the framework for this project. As I mentioned before, Kingsbury Creek runs through the zoo and also the trail that we built. This historic photo on the right here is from the Works Progress Administration era in the 1920s. From when the original blue stone bridge that is still existence is in existence and part of the trail was built. The topography of the area varies greatly, so accounting for that part in the design of the trail was a large part of the process. This trail had been used by guests for decades prior to its closure several years ago. Over time, and after the flood of 2012. It experienced significant erosion that led to it being unsafe for visitors. Without the trail, people had to backtrack down the same path that they visited other areas of the zoo, such as our Australia building, which is right at the entrance of the existing and now new trail. Not only did this detract from their experience, but it also left out a great opportunity for guests to interact with nature right at the zoo. Fast forward to 2021, we made the decision that it was time to redevelop the trail so that it would be accessible to visitors. We knew this project would help us provide an immersive experience for guests, zoo school students and education program attendees that would help foster empathy for all of nature, flora and fauna with a focus on native species and regional conservation efforts. In order to accomplish our objectives, we would collaborate with different teams including contractors, staff, and stakeholders to develop a design that would incorporate natural surfaces as well as nature play elements. From there, we plan to partner with another firm to build a seasonal pavilion along the trail, which will be a new place for education programs and various events. In addition, we would develop empathy driven signage that would highlight local flora and fauna, nature play benefits and conservation topics that are relevant to Minnesota. The project kicked off with a focus on stakeholder engagement, we sent out digital surveys to our staff, board members, zoo members and the overall community that

asked questions related to the trail its use and so on. We also collaborated very closely with our partners at the city of Duluth to ensure all elements of the trail design and construction were within code and permitting standards. Additionally, the city helped us with the development of a detailed request for proposal to seek bids for interested firms. We hold on site pre bid meetings to give potential partners a chance to see the trail in person, learn about the project and ask questions. We found this portion of the project to be extremely helpful in securing the right partner. We received the submissions for the project and selected elemental Industries, a local design and build firm as our project team. They had done work with the city of Duluth as well as other regional outdoor recreational facilities and the plan that they presented was in lockstep with what we envisioned for the future trail. I'll pass it over to Sarah for the signage portion.

S

Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 1:59:52

Can you hear me okay? Yes. Okay. Thanks. So the next step was over the summer. We He hired a college student named Luke to help us with our signage content. First, we wanted to learn how familiar our visitors were with various native plant and animal species. Luke chose 44 species and categorize them in groups. For example, he chose seven bird species, five insect species, five tree species, at cetera. He made cards featuring each of the 44 species. And on each card, the visitors could circle their familiarity and their interest in that planner animal. Here you can see he's asking visitors about bird species, so you can see three of the seven bird cards down there. Once he had 30 responses for each group, he scored the responses and determined which ones people were most interested in. He pulled the top three from each group and then research those 24 species to learn what environmental conditions have a significant impact on them. From there, we chose five environmental topics to focus on and three animals or plants that were impacted by each topic. I then created a template for our signs that would feature the environmental topics. So here it's the forest floor, and three species that were impacted by that topic that were in our top 24. And so here it's broadleaf, plantain red bellied snake and Firefly. We then thought about how we could incorporate our learning objectives while writing the text for all five signs. Our first objective was to teach visitors about local flora, fauna and conservation issues. So this sign for example, leaves snags standing define snags and the important role they play for three local animals that our visitors wanted to learn more about Northern longer bats, northern solid owls, and pine Martens. Then it also teaches some interesting facts about each animal to the right of each photo. Our second objective for our science was to frame the human impacts in a positive way. For example, on this sine slowdown for slow animals, we encourage people to keep an eye out for turtles and salamanders when they're crossing the roads in spring. Our third objective was to introduce the species using empathy practices. So we use the first person for example here on the bottom right, you probably can't see what it says but it says Hi, I'm a Tamarack tree. And we also incorporated some perspective taking and compare their needs and roles to those of humans where possible. Our fourth objective was to incorporate indigenous perspectives. And Ojibwe language specialist with the Fond du Lac tribe taught us the Ojibwe translation for all the species names, and reviewed the land acknowledgement we wrote for the trail entrance science. Finally, we wanted to help visitors understand the value of allowing children to play in nature and how to do so safely and respectfully. So in the main nature trail area off off the trail, we have these two signs, the benefits of nature play, and tips for finding places to play in your community, as well as what to say instead of be careful when supervising play around natural objects. Once we opened the trail in late summer, we wanted to know if people were reading the signs and what impact they were having. Between October and November, we collected survey responses by posting this simple sign at the trail exits letting visitors know they will get

a free red panda sticker if they completed it. We had also just opened our our new red panda exhibit this past summer. So everyone was really excited about that as well. We found that 51 People read at least one sign and 30 to read at least three signs between 80 and 90% said their interest in and appreciation for local plants and animals increased and they cared more about the needs of local wildlife after reading the signs. At least 80% also felt more informed of Regional Conservation topics and actions they could take to help local species. We have a licensed preschool on site and our preschool class uses the trail daily. We asked our preschool teachers about the impact the trail is having on empathy and they had a lot to share. So here are a few quotes from our teachers. The children asked to stop along the trail to read the signs often they enjoy learning about the animals and looking for animal prints. After watching a child hit a tree with a stick another child said that might hurt the tree and make it sad After identifying mushrooms and other fungus in the fall, students were excited to show each other the fungus they found and reminded each other to not step on or hurt the fungus. And this quote is longer I'm going to read the entire thing. The Nature Trail has created many access points for children to engage in nature play. Each place where the children play has become a small world that the children are getting to know intimately. We play, eat, explore and relax among the wild flora and fauna of the forest and Creek. Children have named favorite play spaces along the trail with names such as the boulders, apple falls, the house and Fern forest. Each time we visit these natural spaces, the children make new discoveries like green moss and winter salamanders under a log and chewed apples on the ground. repeated visits to these special places allow the children to form a deep connection with the land, which helps these children build empathy. This is the boulders here in this picture. And finally, a quote from our assistant preschool director, our learning about nature has become so much more rich and authentic and the opportunities to foster empathy now happen daily.

H

Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:06:18

So as you probably caught on, we previously mentioned a seasonal pavilion and for all of you that have been a part of a construction project, you're gonna get this, there were many variances, permitting and unfortunately, being in northern Minnesota weather impacts that delayed this portion, we're happy to say that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel and anticipate the pavilion being open and ready for education programs later this spring. We have worked very closely with the city of Duluth, and they have provided invaluable insights and resources along the way for not only building this but for the trail. The specific person that we worked with at the city, I would say this is one thing that really made a difference. He understood trail building. That's what he does a lot of landscaping, he does that for mountain biking paths walking paths in the city of Duluth, we have a lot of parks. So this individual really helped provide insight and experience from a project management side of things, as well as permitting and variances as we completed the trail construction, which took roughly eight weeks and happened in late June to August of last year. So that was really valuable for us to have a partner like that, because it's not something that we had experience with on our staff. One expected unexpected outcome of this project was the ability to tie it in with a brand new exhibit on 2023, we were awarded funding from the state of Minnesota to renovate an existing exhibit that is currently empty and transform it into a home for caribou. The trail is directly adjacent to the new habitat and will provide an even more immersive experience for our guests. As at certain times they will be able to see the herd right from the trail, we plan to build a log cabin at the peak of the exhibit that connects to the trail and will function as a resting place for guests and also provide a beautiful immersive Outlook or overlook of the caribou exhibit and how some interpretive and dynamic educational elements as well. We look forward to this new development and finding ways we can build empathy driven experiences around

the synergies of these two projects. And with that, I just want to thank everyone and open it up to questions. I also want to give a shout out to Sarah and our education intern, Luke for the amazing work they did on the signage and interpretive elements because the trail would not be the same without those important pieces.

S

Sydney Dratel 2:09:02

Anyone have any questions?

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:09:04

I have one. What was your favorite part of this project for both of you are each of your favorite parts?

H

Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:09:14

Not construction. I would say I think finding seeing the outcomes and all of the survey results from the you know, the the survey that we did all of those results, and then also hearing the impact that it had on the preschoolers. This project started just as the redevelopment of the trail and then it turned into so much more and that's so exciting. So I would say that the outcomes, the positive outcomes and we look to you know, continue hearing more about those.

S

Sydney Dratel 2:09:48

Um, we have a couple questions in the chat. So the first one is from Bridget and it says what was the most surprising challenge you encountered with this project?

H

Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:10:02

I'll say again, the construction, I thought it was going to be very easy just to redevelop the trail. And I learned a great amount of information about nature trails, accessibility, things like that. So, from my point of view, the most challenging part, but I look at as an opportunity, you know, we were able to learn more. And if we ever do another project like this, I think we will be that much.

S

Sydney Dratel 2:10:36

Sara, do you have a particular surprising challenge working on this project?

S

Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:10:44

Not Not really. I do. I did. Really I echo what Haley said about the impact it's had I mean, we had a trail there before. And this one is just beautiful. I mean, you actually feel like you're out in

the North Woods. Walking around, you don't even know you're in the zoo anymore. It's really amazing that way. Also, I'm just so grateful to our intern, Luke, for helping me with all that research. He did. I mean, he did 95% of it. So that was a great, positive thing that we couldn't have anticipated was finding someone a student who was only a sophomore. He's only a sophomore in college who is so passionate about helping us.

U unknown 2:11:33
Right. There

S Sydney Dratel 2:11:34
are two questions that are related. So I'm just going to combine these. One is if the trail is open year round, and the other is how involved trail maintenance is after winter.

H Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:11:48
So the trail is technically open year round. This year, we've had more cold than snow and now warmer temps. So it's been more accessible, I imagine than it would be if it was last year, which we had record snowfalls. So I think that part we'll learn a little bit more we do plan on hopefully at some point offering some snowshoeing experiences there, again, this year, not so much. It's very brown. At The Zoo, it's a lie, it looks very fall. But in terms of trail maintenance, that's something that we have kind of learned from the city of Duluth, we still have all of the erosion guards there. So we'll kind of learn more about that as we trek through spring. And then probably next year, as well as we have hopefully more of a normal winter next year. We'll learn the maintenance of it then and how much how involved it is we do have a team that can help out with that. But we're really leaning in on the city of Duluth for that element. They do own the grounds where the nonprofit, the Lake Superior Zoological Society that manages and operates the zoo. But additionally, there was a lot of pieces in the design elements that would help us avoid that constant need for trail maintenance. They built a lot of culverts, there was specific ways that we were going to have erosion control and mitigation. So again, shout out to them and the trail builders, elemental industries, they know their stuff. If you're in this kind of tri state in the Midwest, they're willing to travel, I'll give them recommendations all day. But hopefully, we'll learn more about trail maintenance as we kind of move into the future.

S Sydney Dratel 2:13:29
Great. And Tut has a question, given that one of the identified outcomes was the sort of user defined by the kids play spaces? Is there anything looking back that you might have incorporated, or looking forward anything that you might add to enhance that kind of self developing play experience? And that reminds me of another one of your grants?

S Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:13:50
Well, there's I think there's another question that this might answer as well about if people can go off trail to play and wash the welcome sign does talk about how you know this even though

go on trail to play and yeah, the welcome sign does talk about how you know this, even though this is a pristine, beautiful area you're hiking in, we do welcome you to interact with it. And so there are spots along the trail where all of a sudden, there's like fun little stepping stones to step across or a big giant log that you can instead of on the trail, you can walk on the log instead. And then I think you might have saw one of the pictures of some like, like a teepee looking and structure, that there's logs there and natural items there for children to interact with and build, build with and that's the more defined area where written when you first enter the trail that your children are kind of encouraged to play there. But they can also continue playing as they as you go. They go on their walk. There are like the boulders and apple falls, those areas are off the trail and you wouldn't really know they exist unless you're in our preschool. Because we start we go off trail to the fern forest those those spots are kind of more hidden off trail. And to answer another question in there, yes, you do have to, you do have to visit the zoo to access the trail. But the superior hiking trail runs right behind the zoo. So there's a gorgeous other free hiking opportunity that goes across those same bridges that you see in that waterfall picture at the end of our slideshow, you can walk across that bridge on the superior hiking trail.

S

Sydney Dratel 2:15:29

If you haven't been to Duluth, you should go maybe in June, we visited in June and it was amazing. So

H

Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:15:36

definitely June, completely agree, although it's like almost 40 here today. That's I do want to kind of piggyback off of that just briefly. That was part of it, too, was to kind of hit our secondary target market, which is kind of the local Duluthian younger parents or younger non professionals. Without kiddos, it feels very Duluthy. That's a word that we use a lot here in the tourism. So trying to bring in that experience for other guests who might not otherwise visit the zoo. Bring them out and give them a true, authentic Duluth experience.

S

Sydney Dratel 2:16:16

Jennifer Yeah, and you can come off mute.

U

2:16:21

It just kind of occurred to me that is your nature play. signage, like the Be careful sort of things really geared toward children and parents with children because I we find at our nature museum that you need to give adults permission to play as well. And if you do it with fully like, Kid color signage, they sometimes think it's not for them. I'm interested in that, you know, your, like, ongoing experience with that. But was there any consideration given to that? No, I've

S

Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:16:56

never thought I never thought of that, about adults wanting to play I mean, obviously, they can

walk along the logs and, and that kind of thing. But as far as stopping to, you know, build a fort or something. I haven't thought about that. Love it.

H Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:17:13

We'll tie that in with the caribou exhibit. Well.

S Sydney Dratel 2:17:15

I have an unrelated question. I'm just very curious. Ever since I saw this slide, I can't stop thinking about it. What was your first animal? Open with one animal

 2:17:34

it was a white tailed deer. Believe the deer

S Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:17:41

Yeah, I don't know if you guys noticed in that picture or Haley showed sorry Haley that there's like a zookeeper feeding the sea lion that or maybe it was a seal like in the creek like they actually housed the seals in unbelievable.

S Sydney Dratel 2:18:03

Now Angela from new zoo says that there's you also started with whitetail deer.

H Haley Cope (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:18:09

We should connect on that. I think there's a social media opportunity there.

S Sarah Wilcox (Lake Superior Zoo) 2:18:15

Classic Wisconsin slash Minnesota, right. Exactly.

S Sydney Dratel 2:18:22

Oh, and Como Park. Very interesting. I didn't know either of those. So I'm really excited to hear all right. Alright, so if there aren't any more questions, I will hand it off to Emily, our network specialist, who will continue on. Thanks again. Thanks to everyone who's presented I realized I didn't say thank you after Alison and Brent. And I'm sorry. Thank you.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:18:53

Okay, thank you, Sydney. Can everybody see my screen? Thumbs up. Looks amazing. Awesome. All right, we are about to move into our next portion of our day, which is going to be facilitated by some folks on our DEAI committee. So it'll be further facilitated excuse me, by Camoya Evans at Woodland Park Zoo, Fernando Mora at Zoo Montana, and Shanna Hillard as the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. So, Shadow, I'll go ahead and turn it over to you to give us the instructions for what we'll be doing in our breakout rooms. And then we can take it from there.

S

Shanna Hillard 2:19:37

Hi, good afternoon, everybody. Can everyone hear me okay? Perfect. Yeah. Okay. So this session is going to be primarily in breakout rooms. We are going to start by going into the breakout rooms and then we're going to come together to discuss what we all talked about individually. So in the notes that Emily sent out, you should have a link to a A board where we are going to be taking meetings or taking notes, so you can click on that link. But we will also screen share as well so that you can see it in the individual breakout rooms. So for the first one, I will be the facilitator. And this is a breakout room for if you or your organization is just starting on dei work, you want to learn more about how to start where to start. That's the room for you. Breakout Room two is with Fernanda and that's if you've already started and you're looking to grow, to do a little more training webinars, and you have some some things to share. And then breakout room three is with Camoya and that is if you have intentionally been engaging in DEAI work for some time now and looking to look for areas of further improvement. So there's a place for everybody we're going to come back at about 12:20 pacific time and kind of share out what we have we have learned does anyone have any questions about the rooms or anything before we we start breaking people up perfect.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:21:13

Okay all right. I have created the rooms I will open them in just a second. Shanna Fernando and Camoya you guys should already be pre assigned. Everybody else should be able to self select the rooms as of right



2:21:26

now.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:21:29

If you have any questions or in the breakout rooms feel free to hit that ask for help button and myself and another facilitator can pop in otherwise we'll see you at about 1215 1220 Suzanne I see your message I do not see an invite if you want to message me what room you want to go to I can pop you in there if that same thing is happening for other folks to let me know and I should be able to move you. I'm not sure why you're not seeing one. That's odd. Okay, sounds

good. I will pop you in there all right. Yeah. If anybody else would like to get popped into a room and for some reason isn't seeing the ability to join one. If you want to come off mute or put in the chat which room you'd like to go to let me know. All right Awesome.



2:23:18

Hey folks, welcome back



2:23:27

everybody, welcome back



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:23:36

Hi, everybody. Welcome back to the main space. Hope you had some good conversations and connections in your individual rooms. We did want to allocate a little bit of time for like some cross pollination if there were things that came up in the rooms that people wanted to talk about or share out. Whether that's a facilitator from the room, so either Shana Fernanda or Kamala, if you want to share some key takeaways, or questions and comments that came up, or if you were in any one of those rooms and wanted to share, we have a couple minutes to do that now. So if Shanna or anybody from room one wants to share anything, we can start there and then go to them two and then three



Shanna Hillard 2:24:23

Yeah, so we, we kind of had a general conversation about starting DEAI work and maybe what some of the barriers were to beginning that work. And one of the things I'll just highlight is that we, a lot of people talked about language barriers and access to things like reading signage or in interpretive programming. And one of the suggestions that that we received, which was really good I thought and we I would like to look into for our programming is that for programs for people who are deaf and hard of hearing knowing that rather than having someone on staff who needs to interpret those programs, that someone would pre record the program, and so that it is accessible to everyone. And you can play the program in conjunction with using interpretive such as bio facts. But it is a way to reach a much larger audience without having someone on staff that needs to be there for interpreting at all times. And I thought that was really interesting because we also struggle with language as being something we can't translate every single one of our programs. We don't have fluent speakers for every single language that like the top three languages spoken in Milwaukee, outside of English. But that might be one way to lower that barrier of access for our programming specifically.



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:25:48

Thank you for sharing, and Jennifer just dropped in the chat. There's a webinar from NAI that was a great introduction to evaluating spaces for accessibility. So the Fort Collins is willing to share their resulting rubrics to evaluate spaces for accessibility, which were developed by

recruited community members who have accessibility needs and are paid for their contributions, and then drop the link in the chat. So that's great, thank you for sharing and refer. And we can add that into that links document that we have for each day that you all received in your emails prior to this event, so we'll send the updated version with those new links out after the event. And that will go in there as well. Anybody from room to want to share?

 unknown 2:26:43

I'll go ahead and share something that I thought was a good tip. So we talked about money and resource allocation as a constraint. And I think a lot of organizations feel that that is one of their barriers to getting involved in the I work in something that someone suggested was building community partnerships. So then they are providing the money. And then sometimes they can even provide like things like people or materials to also get those like programs on the ground.

 Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:27:20

I see Marta shared a link in the chat that was shared in room two as well. And bridgette popped in the chat for language barriers, we give our volunteers language buttons to wear on their uniform vests, so they get to speak different languages can identify it, and I didn't know that. It's awesome. Anybody from room three want to share out?

 2:27:46

So we discussed kind of mostly like, what What does the DEAI look like in practice? A lot of the things that we kind of labeled as barriers are as challenging is just how do we incorporate other departments into doing the DEAI work? Because we pretty much identified the most people in our session who worked in education department. And so just bringing in everyone, I'm a part of the journey. And also, what does it look like when you maybe are starting like a council group, or don't have like one specific person whose role it is to focus on the DEAI. So working your regular full time job, while still also trying to think about all these elements and break down these barriers is really difficult and kind of time constraining. So we just kind of had a conversation just about those sorts of different things.

 Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:28:50

Thank you for sharing, and everything that was talked about in these rooms today, the DEAI Committee, which all of the facilitators are a part of, are going to kind of sit and ruminate on and see what they can work on in 2024 to address those questions and those needs that were brought up in the breakout rooms today. And if you have any questions about that, or if you want to contribute anything else to that conversation, feel free to reach out to us at empathy@zoo.org. And I can include that in our notes for when the committee both has their meeting this month, and then their longer, like more dedicated planning meeting, that's two hours long and March. And we can get the ball rolling on some initiatives for the network. But I'm gonna go ahead and pass the baton over to Megan from the Seattle Aquarium, who's on the

Communications Committee. To give you a little bit of a teaser about what we're going to be doing for one of our interactive sessions tomorrow to ensure that you have some mental time to kind of prepare yourself for the conversations

M

Meagan Ashton (Seattle Aquarium) 2:30:00

Thanks, Emily. It makes it sound a little bit daunting, but it's not I promise. So hey, everyone, I'm Megan Ashton, I use she her pronouns. I work at the Seattle Aquarium, and I'm also on the Communications Committee. And tomorrow, the Communications Committee has set aside time on the agenda for an unconference session. And you may have participated in one before, or maybe that is a new word for you. And that's totally fine. The basic idea is that usually at a conference, the most valuable experiences that we have are kind of the short side conversations that we have in hallway between sessions are on your lunch break, when you get to talk to your colleagues about the things that were most interesting to you or most relevant. So an unconference session opens up really specific time and space during the actual conference program, for participant led discussions that feature topics that are most important to you. So what we need you all to do is to just think about if there is a topic that you would like a chance to talk about with other conference participants, and it can really be anything. Maybe it was inspired by an earlier session, like you'd like to talk about what it would look like to utilize the tabletop role playing games and your programming. Or maybe it's specific to your context, something that's been on your mind, you'd like to talk to people out of their facilities that also use full carcass feeding? And how do you incorporate empathy framing into that, or does it not fit. So whatever it is, you just think about what you'd like to pitch. And what you need to come up with is a really short title and a short description, and add it to our list of topics. And Emily either has already or will put a link in the chat to Miro board where we'll be keeping track of all of the topics that will be available. And if you add your topic to the list, you're not saying that you're an expert on that, you're not saying you're gonna get a presentation on it, really, you're just committing to being there and to helping to facilitate the conversation in that breakout room. So we'll go into more detail about the session tomorrow. And we'll give you more time to think about topics and look at everything that is available for you to choose from. This is really just a teaser to start thinking about those topics, get the juices flowing. And if you already know you have one you want to pitch, you can add it to the list there. So I cover everything. Yeah, I

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 2:32:37

think so. I'm super excited to see what topics get pitched. Folks need the link, again, to edit the board there it is in the chat. And the instructions for the session as well are in your emails. So thanks, again, super excited for this tomorrow. I do have a couple announcements before we close. First of all, thank you all for just attending day one. And being here, whether you were here for the whole thing, or just some bits and pieces. And the unconference session is just kind of one of these two more interactive focused times that we have set aside for tomorrow. We're also going to be having a planning for the future session right afterwards for the network, facilitated by myself, the granting program facilitated by Sidney and Marta and then the evaluation. Folks facilitated by Theo we're going to have individual little breakout rooms to talk with you about the future of those three kinds of initiatives. I also do want to say that we didn't realize that Zoom had updated their policies for how many folks could be on a meeting with the current zoom plan that we had. So if you had people at your organization trying to join this

morning, or if it happened to you, and you hit a message saying that the meeting was at capacity. First of all, we greatly apologize. Second of all, it's been fixed. So for tomorrow, you should be able to join for the meeting, whether that's on your own device or with a shared device with other folks at your organization. But we did not realize it that updated how many folks could be in a meeting at a maximum on our plan. So that should not be an issue for tomorrow. But thank you to those of you who brought that to our attention, and allowed us to fix it in real time. If you have any other questions or comments about today's session, you can feel free to reach out to us at empathy@zoo.org. And I'm dropping that email in the chat there. And any of the links and resources shared today and tomorrow are going to be posted up in our resource library within a week after the event. So if you were able to only attend some sessions today but want to see what else happened, we'll be posting them shortly but otherwise If we are at time, thank you so much for attending today, and we hope to see you tomorrow morning at 9am Pacific. Have a wonderful rest of your day.