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SPEAKERS

Sunny Katseanes, Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo)

All right,

let me just share my screen really quick. Alrighty, does everybody see a blue PowerPoint screen with some white text on it incredible. I see some nods, so I'm assuming that's a yes. Welcome everybody to today's learning group on infusing empathy into early childhood programs. I'm Emily Bernhardt. I am the empathy network specialist over at Woodland Park Zoo. So I oversee the day to day operations of the advancing conservation through empathy for wildlife network, and I use sheher pronouns. Welcome to our event today. If this is your first time attending a learning group for the ACE for wildlife network, I just want to give you a little bit of background on who we are. So the advancing conservation through empathy for wildlife or ACE for wildlife network is a network that facilitates the sharing of knowledge, experiences and data to drive conservation change through fostering empathy for animals in the environment that sustains them. And we're currently made up of 26 AZA accredited zoos and aquariums, and have about 250 individuals at those zoos and aquariums that are active in the network. We also have over 200 individual affiliates who are not at those zoos and aquariums engaged in the network, as well as a network. We define empathy as a stimulated emotional state that relies on the ability to perceive, understand and care about the perspectives of another person or animal. Now if you're interested, in attending future events that we are hosting this fall, we have a handful of those coming down the pipeline. Our conservation action committee, of which one of the speakers is a part of Bethany West, is on this committee. They are going to be hosting two listening sessions on a toolkit that they're hoping to create for the network. And those are those two time slots for that on the screen. Here. We also have our all network October meeting, and that's a great chance to kind of learn about projects that are happening in the network, as well as ways to get involved and just meet other members and affiliates. And then we also have a four part webinar series with native governance center on how to work with Native nations that we have coming up. So three of those four events are on our calendar. The fourth one is yet to be scheduled, but you can find all of these events in our events calendar on our website, and I'll go ahead and drop that link in the chat as soon as I'm done sharing my screen, but if you would like to get to it now, it's www.aceforwildlife.org forward slash events calendar. Now here is our rough outline for today. So after I'm done speaking, I'm going to turn it over to Bethany at Idaho Falls Zoo, and then we're going to also hear from Tara

Herman at Woodland Park and Travis hieal from Roosevelt Park, talking about their respective early childhood empathy programming. After we hear from every presenter, we're going to do a group Q and A so if you have questions for anybody, I ask that you save them until that point, feel free to drop them in the chat. Feel free to raise your hand and come off mute once we get to that portion of today's meeting. If you do drop them in the chat, I'll make sure to keep a list on my end, so that way they don't get forgotten later on in today's event. You can also turn on closed captioning for this meeting, if that is helpful for you during the presentations, but for now, I'm going to go ahead and stop sharing my screen, and I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Bethany to talk to us about the zoo Tots program over at Idaho Falls Zoo.

All right, can everybody hear and see my screen? Yes. All right, awesome. So, hi everybody. My name is Bethany West. I am the Education curator here at Idaho Falls Zoo. And I am just going to talk a little bit about our Tots program, some program details, basic stuff. This is a pretty typical toddler program. We have two to five year olds come with a an adult caregiver, and they get to do crafts activities. Our goal with this program, though, has changed since becoming a part of the ACE network, and so our focus with this program has gone from teaching basic science lessons to just getting kids excited about meeting animals and go home thinking, wow, armadillo is the coolest animal on the planet, you know. So that's really our main goal with this which is really fun when you've got a room full of two to five year olds. I did a Tots program. And we had quite a few cancelations, so I ended up with one two year old in the room with their parents, and all the two year old would say was uh huh throughout the entire program. And it's fun, you know, you they get excited, they get really wide eyes, and all they'll say is Uh huh. So it's a fun program to do, but we do a lot of different activities during it. So when we're planning these programs, um, we try to come up with at least one of each of these different activities. So we've got story time, crafts, games and animal encounters. So usually we introduce our topic, or, uh, our theme for the day with a story. So we, once the kids show up, we'll start reading a story to them, and it's usually about the animal. We're going to be meeting later on that day. And then any games and activities we do are our goal is to get a role playing. So as you can see here, we've got, obviously, a program about penguins, where we read a little storybook about penguins, we played some games pretending to be penguins, and then we got to meet one of the African black footed penguins at the zip so story time can be difficult. Sometimes it's hard to find the right book. One of the things that I found difficult with choosing books that we use in our program is finding a book that's not too anthropomorphic, right? We want to have a book that's about the animal we're going to be meeting. However, there are a lot of really cute books out there that just aren't fitting for a zoo, so I think like Peter Rabbit's a great example of that. Peter Rabbit's super cute, but he's wearing clothes his mom makes medicine and soup for his sisters when they get sick. And so my rule of thumb for anthropomorphism is, would this book is asking myself the question, would this book make sense if the characters were human, if I can just replace all the animal characters with human versions of that character, and the book still tells the same story, and it still makes sense, then my answer is, probably I shouldn't use this book for this program. My goal of choosing books is, I do want to show real animal adaptations, tell stories about animals that help them connect to the real life version of the animal and not think that rabbits like eating soup kind of thing. So these are a couple books that we have used in this program this year, and they were fun, very hungry caterpillar and house for hermit crab were super easy books for us to use, because the story, there's obviously a little bit of anthropomorphism in there, but it does talk about some real life animal adaptations, and it's simple enough for the two to five year old audience to understand. The pierre the penguin story was a little bit more complicated. There's a lot more words. It's a longer book to read. And two to five year olds, believe it or not, have an attention span of about 30 seconds. So if you're not turning the pages often enough, if you're not getting them involved with the story, time, they lose attention pretty quick. So so for this one, we actually kind of wrote our own dialog. We read

the story, and then we use the pictures to keep the kids interested, but then we we told a very abridged version of this story, and we've done that with other books. This is a really cool pop up book that we have the kids really love all the different pull tabs and pop ups that are in this book, but obviously you can tell the text is not meant for two to five year olds. So again, we we do improvise a bit. We have written our own books and made them out of construction paper before, and they're they're pretty fun. It's a lot of work to do that, though, so we try to find books as much as possible. And then our goal with the books too is to get the kids involved. We don't just want to sit down and read a book to the kids. So for example, one activity I did when I read the very hunger caterpillar book, I actually had them make this craft as they as I read. So when I got to the page where they're the egg patch, I handed them all easter eggs and told them to open it, and they found a little pipe cleaner with a pom pom head on it. And then, as the caterpillar ate food and got fatter and fatter, we added beads to make their caterpillars fatter. And then at the end, when he became a butterfly, we had them color the butterfly wings and glued them onto their whole Caterpillar, so they got to raise their own Caterpillar as we went along with the story. So as much as possible, we get them involved, to act out the story, copy what the animals are doing, or, in this case, do a craft that kind of helped out. So after we read the story, we've introduced the topic. This is the animal, or the type of animal we're going to be. Talking about today. Our next goal is to solidify that concept of like, okay, we did a fun little story time. Now, let's really get the kids excited about the animals, and we can do that with crafts and games. So here's a couple of crafts that I've used this one here. This was I made a bunch of origami hermit crabs before class, and then after reading the house for hermit crab, which, if you haven't read that book, it's cute, the hermit crab decorates his shell to help him camouflage and stuff. And so at the end of reading the story, I gave him all hermit crabs, and they got to decorate it with stickers, and I asked them what their stickers represented. So they show their sea stars and their anemones that they were putting on the shell. So again, kind of that role play, copying what happened in the book. And this was a paper puppet that we made. They got to draw the stripes onto the zebra, and they glued on the face shapes, and then, and they each made two of them because the book we read was about how animals greet each other, and it talked about how zebras will approach and greet each other when they first knew each other. So I had them use their paper puppets to copy what they learned in the book. And then games kind of the same thing. We really tried to go with role playing games. Have them circle around the stuffed animal like a vulture, or we made these little tails and we put them on, had them swing their tail like a zebra to switch off the flies, or use their tail to show that they were happy like a dog, or just do the different things that we saw in the book. Here we've got, we have a bunch of these little hats with animal faces on them. So I use those a lot too, depending on the program, to get the kids pretending to be the animals. Another thing that we like to do with the games and activities is getting the parents involved, or the parents and guardians involved. So I'll put two hats out, and the parent or guardian that came with their toddler has to pretend to be an elephant, while their toddler has to pretend to be an elephant. And that really is something that parents appreciate when they come to these programs. We're trying to make this a positive experience for both the toddler and the adults, and getting them to play with their kids is a fun way to do that. So then we top all this off with an animal encounter. This is obviously the highlight of the program, but again, toddlers have an attention span of like, 30 seconds. So if we just pull out an animal and say, here's an armadillo, touch the armadillo, then they're done. So we try to involve enrichment and different activities as much as possible into our animal encounters. Here's a cute little video of our armadillo pickles, just this is his favorite enrichment item, and he'll just wrestle this forever. And kids really enjoy watching him play with that so. So with this, we've done different hives. We have a tenrec and one time I did a program where I had them put in different things that the tenrec could hide in, so crumpled up paper and leaves and logs that she could hide under. And they got to design the enrichment space. And then when we put the tenrec in, they were a lot more invested in watching her interact with it, because they were excited to see her

interact with something that they prepared for her and then, and that's pretty much it. That's our Tots program. So yeah, again, our program, our goal, is to create excitement for the animals and the toddlers.

Thanks so much. Bethany, that was awesome to hear. Tara, let's turn it over to you.

Oh, all right, hi

everybody. Can you all see and hear me as I navigate through zoom? Yes, excellent. And are you looking at that first slide of my PowerPoint? Yes, awesome. Cool. Well, I'm also going to talk about some of our early childhood programs here at Woodland Park Zoo, and specifically through the lens of how we prime empathy for our early childhood audiences, prior to spaces where they might be sharing space with an animal or meeting them directly. I'm going to begin with by getting my computer to cooperate. I'm going to begin with our land acknowledgement. So I'm going to read this aloud for us. These are the lands of the tribal signatories of the Treaty of Point Elliot 1855 whose stewardship for the waters, plants, land and animal relatives in the Northwest has continued since time immemorial. Woodland Park Zoo acknowledges the stewardship the sovereign rights of the tribal signatories, and our responsibility to join with these tribes to inspire and advance the restoration of relationships between humans and the living world around us. And I think that is really a big part of our work, especially in early childhood. In that spirit, we try to connect children to wildlife from very early ages, so that they can see themselves as part of the world, living world around us. So I'm going to highlight two programs today that are public programs that happen at the zoo just with our general audience. We have Creature Feature, which happens indoors in Zoomarium, and we have Look, Listen and Feel Story Time, which is a program that has seasonality. We choose a different story each season, but I'm going to focus on our summertime story, which is about butterflies. Both of these programs have a target audience of ages zero to five, so when I'm talking about early childhood in this presentation, that's kind of the age group that we're going to be talking about, and we will start with an overview of Look, Listen and Feel Story Time. I really resonated with what Bethany was saying about choosing books. So we choose one book for the season. Our summer book is *Waiting for Wings*, which is about butterflies and the general structure is that it's a drop-in program, like I mentioned, public programs for our general zoo guests. There's a about a 10 minute story time at the beginning. I like to use as my rule of thumb for choosing the length and complexity of the book. If I can read it to myself in like, three to five minutes, but if I'm able to stretch it out to about 10 minutes by making it interactive. For me, that's kind of the sweet spot for this age range. And then after reading the story, we have some activities that I will get into in a moment. And then, since it is a public program with drop-in, we read the story a second time, because a lot of people do walk up while we're doing the activities, and we want to give just that, since it's pretty short, we do read it a second time and then repeat the activities. And this age group really does benefit from repetition. So we do often get guests who stay for both readings because their kid just wants to hear the story again. And I have step five here is visit the butterfly garden. This is optional. So we do this program outdoors in Broadleaf Theater, which is a short walk from our butterfly garden, where people can enter and share space with butterflies. They're asked not to touch the butterflies in that space, but they are in. You know, butterflies may land on them, and I have the arrows going from each of those steps to the butterfly, because as a drop-in program, guests can come and go as they please, and we do encourage them to go check out the butterfly garden after they visit story time. So the activities that I mentioned our book is *Waiting for Wings* by Lois Eiler, which is a great, simple read, gets into the life cycle of

butterflies. And then we have some activities that go along with that, we have a felt board that we've titled grow a garden for pollinators, and we always talk about it as a garden that kids can help us grow to really get them involved in that conservation mindset of how they can help animals. And we also have drawing pads to open up to whatever type of creative interactivity the kids want to have with the story. And then, of course, we have our butterfly wings. And when we open up the activities portion, the kids are encouraged to come up on this stage, wear their wings, and we also play music for them as well, which matches the music that plays in our butterfly garden. Oh, and bubbles. I cannot forget the bubbles. They're very popular. So it's a lovely time with kids, you know, dancing on the stage. And the caregivers are involved, because they love to see their kids wearing those wings. I've heard a lot of caregivers afterwards say, oh, we'll have to get you wings so you can be a butterfly at home, which is really excellent for our goals of empathy. So here's just a list of kind of the strategies that have been baked into what I've been describing. I'm just going to call them out directly here. We encourage consideration of animals needs. So we do that through the garden building. We talk about where the butterflies might like to hide, or where they might like to find food, or what their favorite flower might be, and then the role play. Of course, the kids take on the roles of butterflies. They may go over to the felt board garden and pick a flower to drink from. And just during that dance, they are there. They're taking on that direct connection with what type of butterfly they are during the story, when the butterflies. Merge from their cocoons. We always act that out with the kids as well. So they really are getting into that. What is it like to be a butterfly mindset throughout the experience and then tying directly to the experience of animals in our care? That really was why we picked the music that we did for the butterfly dance. We directly say, you know, these are the song, is one of the songs that our butterflies get to listen to in the butterfly garden. So if you want to be just like the butterflies here, then you can, you can join us in a butterfly dance. And so then when they go later and visit the butterfly garden, they may make that connection between when they were a butterfly and now they're sharing space with those butterflies. I'm going to move on to Creature Feature now, which is an indoor program which takes place in zoomazium, which is our early childhood indoor learning play space. And I want to frame the structure of the program in terms of empathy strategies and early childhood strategies. You may already do a lot of this intuitively when you're doing your programs, but I wanted to call attention to the elements of the structure that lead to successful empathy and behavioral regulation in our programs, when the child is in a positive state of mind, and in that yes, environment, they are much there are a lot more opportunities to express empathy, and this is the structure that's been successful in creating that kind of environment for us. So I've broken it up into before the animal is visible, before the animal experience, but after they can see the animal, and then during an animal touch experience. And we're going to start at the top here with expectations incredibly important for well, any age group, really, but especially with the toddler age group, we set expectations for the general flow of what's about to happen. There will be a puppet story, and then afterwards we'll get to meet an animal. So we introduce that from the top. Then we have our puppet story, which is again fairly short, straightforward stories, 10 to 15 minutes maximum for our audience's attention span. After the puppet story, we do a mindfulness and body awareness activity that can be really simple. Often it's just all right, everybody can stand up and get out your Wiggles. We all shake our bodies. We do. We practice little self control by doing like big wiggles and then little wiggles. There's lots of opportunities there. And then we take a few deep breaths together to practice mindfulness and tie that into how that will affect the animal's experience when they come to visit us. Then we set expectations again, before the animal is visible, to say, All right, we're about to meet an animal. This is how it's going to go. Then we introduce the animal. So at this point, we have them visible, but we're not starting the touch experience yet. And I think this is a really crucial point for empathy, because it gives us the chance to introduce them as an individual, talk about their choice and control in a lot of detail, and really get the kids into that mindset before they meet them, especially for choice and control. Taking the animal out of whatever carrying tank that they're in is, I think, a really great opportunity to talk about choice and control, about asking whether the animal wants to come out and how, and getting the kids involved in understanding how we can watch and

listen for those cues, so that they really have a deeper understanding of how we communicate with our animals and how they communicate to us. Which, oops, sorry. Let me go back just a second, which is a great way to get them ready to have those positive interactions

when they're coming up to meet the animal. Getting them involved in making observations is huge. That continues from those observations about choice and control and then moves into what the child is most interested in exploring in their observations, really following their lead lets them have that positive experience and, of course, encouraging perspective, taking always and then don't forget to give kids choice and control too. That helps to, again, create that, yes, environment we were talking about. Always give little kids two good choices so that whatever they're doing, they're still following your instructions, but they feel like they're in control. One strategy we use is to offer the would you like to touch with one finger or two fingers, but anywhere that you can work in those two good choices for for an early childhood audience, really can impact with that behavioral regulation. It'll really help kids have that positive experience. A couple of examples of stories that we use in creature features sometimes, and some of our lovely puppets. A couple examples, Henry the blue tongue Skink learns how to catch bugs. Bonita the spider learns how her friends locomote with different numbers of limbs. And one of my favorites is the zoo animals have a picnic, and Sebastian the cockroach saves the day by eating all the leftovers. So fairly straightforward, simple stories. Um. And we also, just as a note, make sure never to villainize any animals our stories should never have a bad guy, even if they are a predator. We always try to put that in a light that does not create an antagonist. In our stories, we also have some structural, like physical, structural things that help us out to have that positive empathy experience. So in this picture on the left, you can see one in the carpet square, and our Plexi glass corral. The carpet squares extend beyond the edge of that picture. We make a line with them, so that gives that physical cue to kids that they should be lining up for a one at a time experience. Anytime we do animal experiences in zoomazium, we use this carpet square technique. It's very helpful in if kids have not been here for all of the lead up, they see the line, and it helps them to not run up and crowd. And then that plexiglass corral helps with choice and control for our smaller animals who use it, we will put a log in there, and it will be the log that they can retreat to. And we'll talk about how the animal can choose to go in the log if they don't want to be interacting with any strangers today. And then we also have the branch for our snakes, which you can see on the right, which is a really cool opportunity to showcase how our snakes move, but still have them be at that eye height for kids to get up close and personal without being in the hands of a staff member. We also close the climbing tree. This is the slide that is on the stage screen as throughout the entirety of creature feature that calls attention to the fact that our climbing tree is closed. We do that for the comfort of our animals. It just gets really loud in there sometimes. And so we want to create a space that is, you know, comfortable to our animals and not overwhelming. And we are very transparent about that with our guests, and we like to call attention to it as much as we can, so that that also is just in their heads, and that helps with the caregivers as well. And just explaining that to the kids about why, why the slide is closed for a little bit. So those are some of the changes that we make in the room that are physical things that help us to prime for empathy. Another really important thing to consider throughout your program is intentional language choices. So especially in Creature Feature, there are some little, little language things that can make a really big difference. So I always try to avoid control based language. It's really easy to just say, I'm going to put them back, but that gives that takes away so much agency from the animal. It puts all the power in your hands. Even though you are, of course, in control of the animal, you still want to express the control that they have and highlight that. So it's okay to explain if you are doing something that is clearly not what the animal wants to be doing, because clearly, if a snake wants to slither down onto the ground, you need to intervene for their safety. But just using language that explains that to the kids, without saying, I'm going to stop this from happening, just saying I'm going to help them do this. You know, they're

making a choice that's not safe, so I'm going to help them come over here, make a better choice. Whatever language that is, is helpful when you do have to intervene. And then it is, of course, always best to give the animals agency by asking them. I'll ask them if they want to do this. I'll find out if we want to do this. And then that also opens up that, again, that really important conversation around, how do we listen to animals when they can't actually talk to us with words that we understand, which I think kids are very interested in finding out. So then, just to focus a little bit on the touch experience portion, this is probably all fairly familiar to you with the empathy wheel, but literature on the subject of children's relationships to animals indicates that children are capable of seeing animals as their peers or their acquaintances, more than adults are typically likely to do, and friendship is an important concept at this age, so it's okay to have a little more leniency with the your friends with this animal, or, you know, a little a little more anthropomorphism in the emotional sense than we might with an older audience, just because that is the way that these kids are going to connect the best, that they're going to see them as equals, which is really what we're aiming for. So praising their kind actions, you know, like we we praise kids for sharing with each other. We praise them for being gentle with the animals um, and kind to them, even if their kindness is not always what the animal necessarily wants, if they're taking that gesture just complimenting them on on thinking of what the animal might want, even if it is not factually true every time um. Um, and then emphasizing their connection to the animal, again, cementing that, like we are peers, the the sameness between the child and the animal. They're curious about you. Curiosity is a recognizable emotion, so they're sticking their tongue out to smell you. What do you think you smell like today? That really connects the child and the animal and gives them that that interaction. And then blue appreciates how gently you touched. Do you see how he's still really calm and relaxed? And of course, he made friends with Tet the tortoise today, and then tying animal actions to familiar motivations when the animal is doing something, explaining it in terms of emotions that the child is familiar with. Again, even if it may be a little bit more of a stretch than we would typically use when we're judging how much anthropomorphism to inject into our programs. All right, so add, just to review, really quickly, the empathy wheel is infused into all of these practices, and today, I hope that I've highlighted some specific strategies that are effective with a young audience of ages zero to five. You can have physical structures in your space that help with that, that help promote the animal's agency and care and welfare. You can structure your program with expectations and introduction and scaffolding of how the touch experience or animal meeting experience goes and the empathy wheel should be throughout all your programs, and then you can also structure your language to help promote the agency and individuality of every animal, all right, and that is all that I have on Our programs today, but please email me with any questions, or if you would like to know more about the other programs that we do with early childhood. And next we are going to hear from Travis from Roosevelt Park Zoo. So I will stop sharing my screen and pass it on over to Travis. You

all right, hello, everyone. Can you see my screen? Yes, we

can, excellent. Well, my

name is Travis Heil, so I'm the educator with the Roosevelt Park Zoo, and mainly here today, I'm just talking about one of our programs that we did when it was actually originally a grant funded program from the ACE network. So it was the development of our home suite habitat lesson at the zoo. So it was actually developed by the previous educator before me, Nicole. So she actually developed the program. But here today, I mainly just want to talk about, you know, what happens when that person

leaves and then a new educator kind of comes in and essentially has to fill in that role, just kind of get to learn the program and essentially kind of make it their, their own, and especially for me, even though I was from another AZA facility, I was also new to the network as well. So also having to learn some of the empathy practices, and I'm still learning all those practices as I go along. But just for the presentation, mainly, I'm just going to do an overview of the original kind of sweet home Habitat program that Nicole had. And then in the second half, I'll just kind of share how I kind of made it my own and what changes I made to it. So with the original program, first they would go to the school, so there would be, like a post, a pre and post survey, and also doing surveys during the program. So the first part was just showing a slideshow of different habitats. So I got some examples of the pictures of the different habitats that Nicole showed. Rather, it's the rainforests, the rainforest, or even just a house, like showing different pictures of either a clean house or a dirty house, or house being destroyed, or one that looks nice and pristine, and kind of doing the same thing for different habitats, like the rainforest in the ocean, and just kind of getting their feedback on how it made them feel. So they used as I got them right up on the screen, so they have circled like when they looked at that picture, didn't make them happy? Did they love it? Were they neutral? Were they kind of sad or upset about it? So that was the first part of the program, was going through that PowerPoint. And then after that, they would interact with the animals. That's where we would bring out the animal. Now this grant did happen during covid, during the pandemic. So at first it was going to the programs all the first grade classes in the Minot public area. But then it ended up starting to be more virtual programs, just because of the. Pandemic. So kind of use Zoom, and you can see down in one of the pictures, doing that virtual program with the classes. And then once they interacted with the animal, then they would build their habitat. So we would actually provide the schools with the supplies. So you can see, it's like the bin, rocks, leaves, toy animals, fake water, fake grass, fake trees, all different kinds of plants that they could use to build their habitat. Now for me, I did keep some of the similar things for the program, such as meeting the animal or even building the habitats. I just added a few more things to it. Just a more go over and review what a habitat is, as well as the four basic needs of all living things, and especially animals. And I did expand the age range that this program could be used for. So I've done the program with two year olds all the way up to second grade. Of course, with two year olds, it would be more of a 20 minute program, versus with second grade, it could be a 45 minute program. But essentially, you see on this slide, you know that, essentially, you know, review what it is, go for basic needs, meet the animal and identify their needs, and then get into building habitats. So if I do have time, I just wanted to briefly kind of go over the slideshow that I made. It could be done with or without the slideshow for the program, but when they're at least here at the zoo, sometimes it's a little easier to use the slideshow with the program. So it's just a fun little one for the kids. And you know, I always start first of asking, you know, what is a habitat? Just to see if they know what a habitat is or not, and kind of the way, how I define it for them, it's a home for living things. So that could be like the rainforest the desert go over like different examples of habitats. And then after that, I tell them that all animals and all living things have four basic needs in their habitats. I'll say. Does anyone want to type in the comment section? So guess what the four basic needs are?

Yeah. So essentially, for the basin agency, it's just food, water, air and shelter. And then if I have a PowerPoint, I do have the person that I may come up on the screen. But if I don't have the PowerPoint, I could always use myself or the teacher as an example, or even a volunteer, and just ask, like, what we would need, what would be our food, our water, our air and our shelter. So a lot of times, I usually say, No, I like pizza. Like pepperoni pizza. We go for water, no fresh water, versus salt water. And I ask if they've been to the ocean or not. For us humans, we like fresh water. And then going to air the fact that we have lungs, versus some other animals have gills that help them get oxygen from the water. And then finally, with shelter, a lot of times, they usually say a house. So a house or an apartment. So essentially, it's shelter. And if I am using the PowerPoint, usually I ask

them to give the person a name too. So they might say like Mr. Bob or Mr. Rick or Mr. Doug. And then after that, I kind of introduced the animal. So I'll bring out the animal, and could be any of our ambassador animals for this PowerPoint. Today, I just brought up Helen to do the two Toed, our two toed sloth. So essentially, we kind of do the same thing, where we go over food, water, air and shelter as well, and we just go over all their habitat needs and share fun facts about the animal, depending on the animal may talk about with conservation messages, making sure you're being a responsible pet owner and getting everything they need for a habitat that you might make for them at home, or ways how we can help protect their habitats, such as picking up trash or litter or even using reusable bags or trying to recycle your cell phones to protect habitats as well. So it just kind of depends on the animal that you use. But just for the soft for example, going through here, I always say, you know, they're plant eaters. So you know, they eat leaves, the different kinds of fruits, buds. On sticks. You know, they get most of the water from the food that they eat. Essentially, sometimes we might eat like little dew or rain droplets on the leaves, but they get most of the water from the food they eat. And they like fresh water, and they have lungs just like us. And then they like to live in the trees in the rainforest. So yes, for the older kids, I usually get into the living and the non living. So again, I might use myself or a teacher or even the animal, just as an example to ask this questions like, Is it something that's living or non living? And then, normally, I would bring a rock and say it's my pet rock, Rocky. But no for today, I say I brought my quarter Quinn, my pet quarter Quinn. And just ask the same questions too, and ask, you know, does it need to eat and drink water in order to survive? Does it grow and develop over time, can it reproduce? Can they quarter make more quarters by themselves? And then can it respond to changes around it? And usually, depending if it's yes or no, to determine if it's living or non living, but usually if the younger kids, I wouldn't do this section with them, and then after that, we get into using those same materials that was originally purchased with the grant, just to have them build the habitat for that animal, just to make sure that that animal has air, food, water and shelter, and then sometimes encouraging them To build multiple different habitats, because not every house looks the same. Even amongst people, you know, houses can look different, so have them make multiple different looking kind of houses. And then after that, I usually just end with the habitat song. So usually it's just a fun like air food water and shelter, air, food, water and shelter, air, food, water and shelter, things I need in my habit, and it's fun too. I like doing the song because usually I have the kids pick out different dance moves. Rather, if they choose what's air, what's food, no water or shelter while they're doing the song. And then, depending on how much time you have, you can always have fun, you know, going faster and faster, or going, like, super fast or super slow, and doing slow mo too. So it's a pretty fun program that I do for Home Sweet habitat, that I pretty much do with pre K all the way through second graders here at the zoo. But otherwise I got all my contact information here on the screen, both on the starting and the stopping screen. So if anyone has any questions just about the Home Sweet Habitat program or any programs that I do at the zoo, I'd be always happy to talk with you and answer any of your questions. So thanks for having us, and I'll turn it back over to Emily.

Awesome. Thank you so much to all of our presenters for sharing about their programs. Now, if you have questions for any or all of the presenters, you can either put them in the chat and I can read them off, or you can come off mute and ask them directly you and while folks are thinking or typing in the chat, I do have one question, and Bethany, it's for you. I thought your anthropomorphism note with the books was really interesting. And I actually like I'd never thought about that for early childhood program before, when you were kind of applying that lens to the books at Idaho Falls zoo for those programs, did you find that you ended up having get rid of books and buy new ones? Or what was that like? Process like? Yeah,

so, so this year we kind of, because I started in my position here at the zoo in September, so I kind of had to hit the ground running with tots, because they weren't planned at all for the year. And so I had to plan 12 programs. So I found 12 books really quick, based off of what we had in our library that I was like, can't comfortable reading these. I definitely found a few books that I was not comfortable reading here at the zoo that I just sent to DI so I did clear out some of our books I haven't read all of ours yet. One thing I did find, though, is. Is another thing that I didn't really talk about, but basing our programs off of the books rather than off of the animals, did become difficult, for example, like The Very Hungry Caterpillar, the activities and the book worked really great, and people loved that portion, but I don't have caterpillars or butterflies, so I showed a millipede, you know. And it was like, this one doesn't grow wings, you know. And so we have found that rather than looking for the perfect book, we're looking for books about the animals we have. And if we can't find a book, then that's where kind of that improvising, coming up with our own text, and maybe even writing our own book, is what we're leaning towards, just to make sure that it is meeting the criteria that we want.

Awesome. Thank you. There are a couple of questions hopping up in the chat, but if anybody wants to come off mute, I'll do one of those before I read through the chat.

I have a question about participation. So like, what are the programs? Was a drop in program? And Bethany, does yours require, like,

pre registration, yeah. So ours is capped at 10 registrants, so it's a small, intimate group. Um, unfortunately, we haven't been advertising it super well, so we haven't been booking out, but we do it two days in a row, so a Friday, Saturday, once a month, and so, so, yeah, ours is pre registered, and then they get to explore the zoo after the program.

I'm curious about, like, your decision for pre registration versus a drop in program, or in an even Tara, like yours as a drop in the decision. Of like, we're also thinking about which way to go. So I'm curious to hear, like, how you came to whichever side. Yeah, I

can, I can speak to that a little bit. So Creature Feature was a long running program that started, I think, about 10 years ago. And I do have to start with the disclaimer that we've had a recent change to our policies at Woodland Park Zoo that is causing us to sunset Creature Feature due to some new regulations around our animal touch policies. But it had been a very long running program. So I don't know how that decision was initially made, but with the space we have, which is indoors, and typically there are anywhere from, you know, 20 to 50 people in the room on like an average at an average moment where it's just a free play area for the most part. Um, that audience, 10:30 is prime toddler time. So we, we scheduled it in our children's space at toddler time, and we'd have attendance. A slow day would be like 25 to 30 people coming up and watching the puppet show and or interacting. And a busy day could be up to like 150 people for about a half hour program, look, listen and feel. Our goal was to have stories about the animals in in the zoo, read in proximity to those animals. So we have one called turtle splash that we read at our base camp building, which has Western pond turtles in it. And then we also read the mitten in winter near our northern trail animals, because that has a

lot of, you know, bear and all those, all those great local animals and for look, listen, feel, attendance definitely varies based on season. A slow one could be anywhere around 10 to 15 people across the 45 minutes. And then a very busy one in summer could be also around like 50 or 60 people.

For us, the register, I think the registration, it was a pre registered program before I started here. But for us, we only have three full time educators, and one of those from volunteer programs. So really, there's me and one other educator who does programs like this, and so I believe that's heavily the reason why we have it as a pre registered program, just so that we can plan ahead with, you know, canceling if we need to and whatnot. So I think that's kind of where that decision comes from.

All right, we have a question in the chat that I think is relevant to everybody. It's from Lindsay. Do you have recommendations on how to incorporate animals when Ambassador animals are not available and the activity area is a significant walk away from viewable habitats? I.

I think, look, listen, feel, in summer, sort of fits that description. I mentioned that it was done in our theater, which is a short walk away from the butterfly garden. I think we benefit from the fact that we're outdoors for that program, and we have actually occasionally had wild butterflies flying through the area, so we can kind of play on that connection to nature in general, like with if there's flowers in the story that the that the butterflies are interacting with, there's sometimes also flowers outdoors. And so we can, we can interact with the natural features of our environment, even if it's not the exact animal that we're talking about, there's still a lot of other habitat features and things that we can play off of to make that connection until they get to the animal later.

Yeah, and then for Home Sweet habitat, I mean, of all our ambassador animals, we don't have toys for all the investor animals. So in some cases, when we do the build the habitat, we just end up building a habitat just for a different animal. But also at our zoo, we also do zoo tots as well. And sometimes when that happens, when I can't get the exact right animal, you know, due to maybe their shedding or their sort of temperature restrictions, or maybe I don't have that animal in the ambassador animal collection at the moment, then I might find a way where I can kind of make it fit rather if it's maybe something that the animal would eat or interact with or maybe live in the same or similar habitat. So it kind of still kind of fits with the theme, but it's a little different than what you might originally plan for.

I'll admit that's a issue that I've run into too some of the books we chose this year, like the penguin one, for example, super fun, but the interactions, I found it's a lot easier to do classroom activities with this age group than it is to walk around the zoo with them. So a lot of the time I'll give them invitations of what to do when they leave the program, because they do have the opportunity to walk around the zoo after class, and so we'll meet an animal in class, and then I'll say, okay, when you go out into the zoo, look for this. And then they can go, and we met the hawk, but go look for the turkey vultures and the Golden Eagle as well, kind of thing. And then that's something the parents can or the guardians can do in addition to the class, but it's not part of our curriculum.

And then Tara, it looks like we have a question specifically for you in the chat from Claudia for the look, listen and feel and future feature, what is the typical attendance?

Yeah, so they're in different spaces, and they get different types of audience but, but generally, as people wander up with the toddler audience, they're not always all there from the beginning. That's one thing that we've built into the structure of these programs as well, with repeating the story at look, listen, feel, and with kind of having the longer program for Creature Feature, even though most kids won't stay from beginning to end, that gives a little bit more opportunities for interaction from our drop in audience. But yeah, look, listen, feel, can be anywhere between like 10 on a slow winter day to like 60 or so on a on a busy summer day, and then Creature Feature typically is around 50. I think a slow day would be 30, and a really busy day would be like 150. I'm also about to type a response into the chat, but I will also say it aloud. We've had some talk about books, and I do curate the book collection in zoomasium as well, and we have a good reads page. We're hoping to share it out a little more widely at some point, but I'm going to attempt to share it with you, and you all can let me know if that link works for you. Sometimes it's a little hard to tell how it's going to look to someone who's not logged into our account, but if you're able to access it, that has all of the books that we currently have in our collection, as well as a retired list. Things on the retired list, some of them fall into the category of, yeah, we don't really need that in our space, and some of them were just retired because we didn't have space for them. So if you have any questions about the books on those lists, I am a big fan of critical thinking about children's books, so I'm happy to chat with anyone about that, anytime, if you shoot me an email, speaking

of critical thinking about children's books, there's a handful of comments in the chat and a question about this. So Michelle asked Bethany, if you. List of books by age range and animal that you'd be willing to share with the network. I think that would be super awesome.

I have, like six books that I liked from this year, and we'll keep reading through library. I could share the six books I've got. Yeah, that'd be fantastic.

Yeah, that'd be great. And then Theo popped a comment in the chat as well as a link. They said, just wanted to share another benefit of the way that Bethany talked about selecting appropriate animal books. Children's Books are much more likely to feature animals as main characters than people of color color, which presents some real issues in identity development and avoids fully addressing important dei topics. Filtering out animal books where the character could be replaced by a person, seems like would also reduce some of these issues and then include a link to a Guardian article. Does anybody have any other questions, comments that they want to add in the last couple minutes of our meeting today?

All right, if that's the case, then thank you all for coming and thank you very much to Tara and Travis and Bethany for presenting. It was so awesome to hear about your programs, and it really got me thinking just about how all of the zoos that we visited on our site visits last year, and the programs

that we observed and things that have changed since I entered the zoo field a couple years ago, and it's really fun to listen and hear about everybody who attended today. Thank you so much for coming. I dropped a survey link in the chat earlier. I'm going to go ahead and copy it again in case you want to provide feedback on this event. Your feedback is all anonymous and really helps us make sure that we continue to host relevant and helpful events for folks in the network, and I'll also include that in an email as well this event recording and any resources should be shared with the network within a week or so of the event. There may be a slight delay, since AZA is next week, but once that event is posted and on our website, I'll make sure that you are all emailed that link and able to access that but otherwise, thank you so much for coming, and I will see you all later. Thank you, everybody.