



Communications Committee



Ashley Bonen *she/her*

Public Programs Manager

Roosevelt Park Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Pokémon
2. Sensory learning backpacks
3. Video games



Brent Weston *he/him*

Education/Volunteer Coordinator

Dakota Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Archery
2. Off-site animal programs
3. Lord of the Rings



Cher Vatalaro *she/her*

Director of Conservation Education

Lehigh Valley Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Polymer clay
2. Our training videos
3. The TV show I am on!



Delanie Jellison *she/her*

**Education Supervisor:
Outreach and After Hours Programs**

Santa Barbara Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Riding horses
2. The Network resource on Examining Empathy in Social Media Posts
3. Why pigeons are so great



Helena Echenique *she/her*

Ambassador Animal Programs Coordinator

Conservation Society of California Oakland Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. My favorite raptors
2. How box turtle target training is going
3. This season of Dancing with the Stars!



Jenna Brown *she/her*

Connections Program Specialist

Seattle Aquarium

[ask me about...](#)

1. Hockey
2. How we implemented empathy into our inaugural summer of public programming
3. Why the smell of Arizona rain is the best smelling rain



Leanne Schuh *she/her*

Community Engagement Coordinator

Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center

[ask me about...](#)

1. Birding
2. Empathy use in our symbolic Animal Adoption program
3. Why Night at the Museum 2: Battle of the Smithsonian is a work of comedic and cinematic art



Liz Hines

Community Engagement Coordinator

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium



Lucas Novello *he/him*

**Development Officer,
Grants**

Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. My book!
2. How I've integrated empathy into my different roles at the zoo
3. My love of popcorn



Mandy *she/her*

Kirchgessner

Executive Director

Nonprofit Growth Gen LLC

[ask me about...](#)

1. Nonprofit fundraising strategies
2. The impact of animal encounters during ZooMobile outreach visits to schools
3. Favorite cake recipes for special occasions



Allison Kaufman *she/her*
Research Scientist

Virginia Living Museums

[ask me about...](#)

1. Enrichment for invertebrates
2. Publishing zookeeper or zoo educator research
3. Girl Scouting



Bethanie West
Curator of Education

Idaho Falls Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Books
2. How Idaho Falls Zoo evaluates empathy
3. My ever growing collection of half-learned instruments



Brooke Randak *she/her*
Education & Conservation Director

ZooMontana

[ask me about...](#)

1. My four cats
2. Our animal biography signs
3. Why all sandwiches should be toasted



Ellie Cherry *she/her*
Experiences Coordinator, Conservation Education

Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Trail running/hiking with ambition
2. How to weave empathy into your organization
3. Why baked beans is THE BEST comfort food



Erica Carnes *she/her*
Volunteer and Conservation Engagement Manager

Blank Park Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Knitting
2. Incorporating empathy into conservation work
3. The weather (midwest pride!)



Erin Tone *she/her*
Conservation Education Manager

Lake Superior Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. The best hikes along Minnesota's North Shore
2. Lake Superior Zoo's new Conservation Quest program
3. Why I think winter is the best season of all



Kelsey Raffel *she/her*
Interpretive Content Manager

Zoological Society of Milwaukee

[ask me about...](#)

1. Collecting new and expensive hobbies
2. Infusing empathy into interpretive signs and programs
3. Why every zoo needs capybaras



Meagan Ashton *she/her*
Grant and Admin Specialist

Seattle Aquarium

[ask me about...](#)

1. Mountain biking in the PNW
2. Coordinating our Empathy Workshop program
3. Which Washington species are the most fun to rehab and release



Rachael Robinson *she/her*
Director of Education

Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden

[ask me about...](#)

1. All things Harry Potter or Naked Mole Rats
2. Starting new empathy focused projects
3. Being a new mom



Toby Seegert *he/him*
Regional Conservation Specialist

Zoological Society of Milwaukee

[ask me about...](#)

1. Birds
2. The Network's Pollinator Action Toolkit
3. Arcades



Abigail Flores *she/her*
**Conservation Education
Manager**

Racine Zoological Society

[ask me about...](#)

1. Birding!
2. Our guest sourced ethograms
3. My weird bird stuff collection



Abigayle Lista *she/her*
**Interpretive Program
Specialist**

Audubon Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. My favorite crime/thriller books and U.K. shows
2. How we bridge our ambassador animals' personal stories with our messaging on conservation for that species
3. Which videogames are the best stress relievers!



Alejandra Medina *she/her*
**Community Engagement
and Partnerships Specialist**

Minnesota Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Community engagement
2. Connecting animals to culture
3. Why I love planning a big party



Allison Menelli *she/her*
**Learning and Engagement
Specialist II, On-Grounds**

Conservation Society of
California Oakland Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Wildlife photography
2. Improving appreciation & empathy for commonly feared animals
3. My love for Dungeons and Dragons



Crystal Fox *she/her*
Bookkeeper/Office Manager

Lake Superior Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Backpacking
2. The intersection of empathy and DEAI
3. The science fiction books I am writing



Erin Shofstall *she/her*
**Behavior Change, Evaluation
& Learning Research
Coordinator**

Lincoln Park Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Nature photography
2. Building empathy to drive conservation action
3. My obsession with frogs



Jessica Ryans *she/her*
Education Specialist

Red River Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Lego building/collecting
2. Implementing sensory-friendly initiatives into program development
3. Anything related to Bob's Burgers



Julie Pickard *she/her*
Assistant Program Manager

Zoological Society of
Milwaukee

[ask me about...](#)

1. My love for cooking
2. My work with my community
3. My trip to Easter Island



Kirinne Slaughter *she/her*
Project Coordinator

Visitor Studies Association

[ask me about...](#)

1. Scuba diving
2. The ACE for Wildlife Network Implementation of Empathy Practices Report
3. Staying involved in the Network from a non-zoo/aquarium organization



Sharon Spencer *she/her*
**Adult Education Specialist,
Community Engagement
Team**

Jacksonville Zoo and
Botanical Gardens

[ask me about...](#)

1. Studying to be an astronaut!
2. Empathy and manatees
3. Feeling the song of humpbacks



Membership Committee



Autumn Russell

Senior Director of Education and Communication

Akron Zoo



Isabelle Bieser

Manager of Innovation and Community Engagement

Zoological Society of Milwaukee

[ask me about...](#)

1. Birding
2. Empathy for wildlife training & cross-departmental resources
3. Pregnancy and infant loss



Jennifer Drayna she/her

Conservation Education Director

International Crane Foundation

[ask me about...](#)

1. Swimming
2. Our curriculum trunks
3. Recent travels



Kent Chapple he/him

Manager, Teen and Adult Programs

Woodland Park Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Airplanes and/or boats
2. How to foster empathy for overlooked or misunderstood organisms
3. My piping hot takes on why Science Fiction and Fantasy should be considered completely different genres



Nicole Hodur she/her

Manager, Children & Family Learning

Lincoln Park Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Learning Irish
2. Building empathy through imaginative play
3. Early 2000s emo music



Sarah Winch she/her

Guest Experience Manager

Red River Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. My favorite hiking spot
 2. How we incorporate empathy into our guest services training
 3. One of my go-to songs on the dance floor!
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Steering Committee



Austin Reich *he/him*
Interpretation Coordinator
Zoo Boise

[ask me about...](#)

1. Interpretive planning with an empathy focus
2. My full house
3. The tough and tender concept of masculinity in JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings



Brian Priesman *he/him*
Outreach Coordinator
Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium

[ask me about...](#)

1. The years I spent working as a professional action/writer/director/ education with professional children's theaters
2. How we use children's literature and folklore to build empathy in children and their adult caregivers
3. Why I believe STEM education is dying and what I believe needs to happen to change/improve it!



Courtney Cordova *she/her*
Interpretation Coordinator
Henry Vilas Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Seasonal decorative felt birds
2. Interpretive master planning with an empathy framework
3. My favorite karaoke song



Courtney McNulty *she/her*
Zoological Animal Manager II - Bird Show
Fresno Chaffee Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Hiking
2. Transitioning to empathy-based messaging in show settings and outreach programs
3. Baking the perfect apple pie



Kathy Kiser *she/her*
Manager of Evaluation and Learning Research
Lincoln Park Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Adopted cat who came with a rap sheet and big attitude
2. Adapting the MECAP observation tool for evaluation a "care for the animal" program
3. My kindred spirit animal



Liz Gilles *she/her*
Education Curator
Minnesota Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Native freshwater mussels and why you should love them!
2. Evaluation of empathy using speaking and non-speaking cues
3. Why the ACE for Wildlife Network means so much to me personally and professionally



Natalie Stier *she/her*
School Outreach Coordinator
Utah's Hogle Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Dungeons and Dragons
2. Empathy for creepy-crawlies
3. My puppy, Binks!



Philina Richardson *she/her*
Volunteer Engagement Specialist
Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

[ask me about...](#)

1. Knitting, yarn, or spinning!
2. Critical anthropomorphism and why it's an important storytelling device
3. Sleeper sharks!



Randy Mosley *they/them, xe/xem*
Coordinator, School & Community Programs
Conservation Society of California Oakland Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Vampire (or other monster) lore or my Halloween schedule
2. Building empathy for less charismatic fauna (especially herps and bats) in informal programs!
3. The best practices to rile up a dog



Shana Kent *she/her*
Learning Engagement & CORal Project Manager
Alaska SeaLife Center

[ask me about...](#)

1. Scuba diving or the adventures of learning to forage in Alaska
2. Building empathy for less charismatic animals or experiential programming as a way for building empathy
3. My dog Hippo and her elaborate outfits and costumes



Avrille Aiello *she/her*
**Internal Education
Coordinator**

Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Beginner gardening
2. Infusing empathy practices into biofact training
3. Travelling and exploring the world through food



Bryan Nichols *he/him*
**Associate Professor Science
& Environmental Education**

Florida Atlantic University

[ask me about...](#)

1. Florida kayaking
2. Defining interspecies empathy
3. Character education for environmentally-inclined students



Cameron Whitley
**Associate Professor,
Department of Sociology**

Western Washington University

[ask me about...](#)

1. LEGO collecting
2. How animal imagery can be used to foster empathy for non-human animals
3. How representations of animals with disabilities can promote greater acceptance of both people and animals



Chris Schmitz *she/her*
Director of Education

Utah's Hogle Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. The Indigo Girls
2. Empathy related work in Wild Utah
3. My foster dog who isn't a foster anymore



Dani Ford
Educator

ZooMontana



Jaimee Lafleur *she/her*
**Senior Wildlife Care
Specialist**

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance

[ask me about...](#)

1. Favorite baking recipes
2. Empathy based ambassador animal presentations
3. My favorite animals



Jennifer Gauble *she/her*
**Conservation Audience
Research & Evaluation (CARE)
Associate**

Saint Louis Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Where I've traveled lately
2. How we're incorporating empathy best practices into our new experience for children and families, Destination Discovery!
3. Mammal goals



Jessica Schellhorn
Education Manager

Blank Park Zoo

[ask me about...](#)

1. Board games
2. Using the Empathy Training Toolkit
3. Why life can and should be run through Excel spreadsheets



Randolph Oudemans
**Director of Empathy-
Informed Conservation**

Taman Safari International



Sam Bellis *she/her*
Education Manager

Zoo Boise

[ask me about...](#)

1. My current knitting projects
2. Empathy evaluations for Zoo Boise's education programs
3. My perfect plate of nachos