



AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION
of ZOO KEEPERS



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The mission of The American Association of Zoo Keepers is to advance excellence in the animal keeping profession, foster effective communication beneficial to animal care, support deserving conservation projects, and promote the preservation of our natural resources and animal life.

American Association of Zoo Keepers
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Dear Friends,

AAZK is sharing our annual report to provide members and the animal care community with our results for the 2023 calendar year. We are proud of our over 100 chapters that organized fundraising events, networking opportunities and fun ways to highlight many important causes within the United States and Canada.

We truly value the impact of our local chapter leaders and members who work tirelessly to support their local facilities while also serving AAZK and furthering their own educational endeavors to increase their skills and experience. Caring for, researching and understanding the world's animal populations is an important mission for our community of over 2,000 members and we commend their discretionary effort to make a difference!

With respect and appreciation,

Scott Soldat-Valenzuela

Executive Director

scott.soldat-valenzuela@aazk.org

From the President

The first fully in person Conference post pandemic was in Toronto, Canada in 2022. The 2023 Annual Conference was held in Akron, Ohio, which was the first fully in person Conference on US soil post pandemic. The Conference was well attended as it was centrally located that allowed representation from many zoos nearby.

Outside of the Conference, we had big changes in AAZK leadership in 2023. Not only did myself and Joseph Nappi assume the roles of President and Vice President, but the well deserved retirement of Ed Hansen gave the AAZK Board of Directors the opportunity to hire for a new Executive Director. Scott Soldat-Valenzuela was hired and went through a brief training period before assuming the full role after the Akron Conference.

One new and exciting project has been implemented, the customer relationship management tool (CRM). It was implemented to lead AAZK towards becoming more automated and running more efficiently. Another is on the horizon as we embark into the beginning stages of rebranding. Rebranding will give a fresh look and appeal to AAZK with a new website and easier access to member resources.

Nicole Pepo

President

nicole.pepo@azk.org



Professional Development & Conference Management

The 48th annual AAZK National Conference was hosted by the AAZK Akron Chapter. With a conference theme that incorporated a surprising amount of rubber ducks in a nod to Akron being known as the “rubber city”, Conference delegates easily broke the ice with friends and colleagues both old and new. We had a record number of first time attendees joining us in Akron.

Keynote speaker, Sabrina Brando from AnimalConcepts, began the conference with an inspirational message about respect and care for ourselves as well as for the animals in our lives. The annual AZA/AAZK panel discussion titled “Crisis Management: Empowering Keepers through Readiness, Response, and Recovery” featured engaging speakers from both AZA and AAZK. The conference program also offered papers, posters and workshops, plus 12-hour Professional Certificate Courses in waterfowl husbandry, geriatric animal care and keeper culture.

The professional Awards Ceremony, one of the evening events that takes place annually during the conference, celebrated the work of our partners, chapters and individual members through recognition with grants and awards. We also honored long time AAZK CEO, Ed Hansen, with a new award in his name – the Ed Hansen Conservation Initiative Chapter Award - as he planned to retire at the end of 2023.

The AAZK Akron Chapter members were excellent hosts for a week of networking, professional development, and fun with rubber ducks!

Bethany Bingham

AAZK Director Professional Development & Conference Management
bethany.bingham@azk.org





Letter from the Editor of *AKF*

The Animal Keepers' Forum continues to be the main communication tool for members, conservation partners and advertisers. The monthly journal shares quality articles submitted by our members and partners through Featured Articles, and regular columns such as Training Tales, Enrichment Options and Conservation Station. The AKF highlights best practices and innovations in animal care, conservation success stories, plus training and enrichment ideas. Animal care professionals learn and continually improve from experiences shared by their colleagues, and we are always interested in hearing from you. Encourage colleagues who deserve recognition for their great work to write an article. If you have comments for the Editor or would like to submit an article or cover photo— please e-mail Shane.Good@aazk.org.

- » **Shane Good**, Editor, shane.good@aazk.org
- » Elizabeth Thibodeaux, Graphic Designer
- » *Enrichment Options Column Coordinators*: Ana Frace, Stephanie Chandler, Beth Stark-Posta, Beth Ament-Briggs
- » *Training Tales Column Coordinators*: Kim Kezer, Jay Pratte, Angela Binney
- » *Conservation Station Column Coordinator*: Erica Royer
- » *Animal Welfare Column Coordinators*: Ana Frace, Stephanie Chandler, Beth Stark-Posta, Beth Ament-Briggs

THANK YOU Bowling for Rhinos

Contributors to the preservation
of all species in Asia and Africa

Sondaicus

\$50,000 and Up

Sumatrensis

\$15,000 to \$49,999

Greater Cincinnati AAZK Chapter
Indianapolis AAZK Chapter
Oklahoma City AAZK Chapter

Unicornis

\$5,000 – \$14,999

Jacksonville AAZK Chapter
Dallas Chapter
San Antonio Chapter Event
Phoenix AAZK Chapter
Mesker Park Zoo Chapter
Seiber Donation
Point Defiance AAZK Chapter
St. Louis AAZK Chapter
Greater Cleveland Event
Little Turtle Chapter
Portland Chapter Event
The Riverbanks Zoo & Garden
AAZK Chapter
Potter Park Zoo Chapter
Ferrell Gas

Bicornis

\$1000 - \$4999

Tucson AAZK Chapter
Tidewater AAZK Chapter
Toledo Event (2022)
New Orleans AAZK Chapter
Roger Williams Park Zoo Chapter
Brevard AAZK Chapter
Greater Vancouver Chapter
Milwaukee Chapter Event
Greater Houston AAZK Chapter
Greater Kansas City Chapter Event
Cape May AAZK Chapter
Seneca Park Zoo Event
Fort Worth AAZK Chapter
Patawatomni AAZK Chapter
Battle Creek AAZK Chapter
Ozarks - Dickerson Zoo
(Springfield, MO) Chapter
Lion Country Safari AAZK Chapter
Omaha Chapter
Tampa Bay Event

New Jersey AAZK Chapter
San Francisco Zoo Chapter
Brandywine Zoo Fundraiser
Fresno Event (2022)
Rocky Mountain Chapter
Baton Rouge Chapter Event
Greater Philadelphia AAZK Chapter
Greenville AAZK Chapter
Scovill Zoo Chapter
Toronto Zoo AAZK Chapter
Puget Sound AAZK Chapter
SFTZ Student Chapter
Terry Lutz
Santa Fe College Chapter
Utah Chapter
Connecticut Chapter
Little Rock Chapter
Southern Colorado Chapter
Galveston AAZK Chapter
Greater Sacramento AAZK Chapter

Simum

Up to \$999

Pittsburgh AAZK Chapter
New York City (Bronx Zoo) Chapter
Heart of Illinois AAZK Chapter
Greater Orlando AAZK Chapter
San Diego AAZK Chapter
Staten Island AAZK Chapter
Bay Area Chapter
National Capital AAZK Chapter
Melanie Currie
Dale Suter
Donna Ialiggio
Bill Peters
Iowa AAZK Chapter
Omaha AAZK Chapter
Midnight Sun
Laura Stolkey
Jan Bechtel
Kathy McDaniel
Maggie Walsh
Nancy Lutz
Julie Hartley
Cosley Zoo Event
Lake Erie Graphics
SACSO, Inc.
Cathy McGowan
Lyn Seiple
Demi Peterson

Bethany Bingham
Amy Bingham
Suzanne Lutz
Arlene Snyder
Laurie Adair Guillot
Simone Tobin
Llisa Wheeler
Rainier Chapter
Ali Woods
Lana McMains
Joy Kotheimer
Katherine Tanner
Chris Collins
Michelle Brown
Jonathan Martinez
Cara David



THANK YOU Chapters

AAZK recognizes our Chapter partners for their support of AAZK in 2023 via the 2023 Chapter Re-charter process and Committee/Program support.

Platinum

\$2000.00 and Above

Little Rock Chapter
Wildlife World Chapter

Gold

\$1000.00 - \$1999.99

Jacksonville Chapter
Lion Country Safari Chapter
Louisville Chapter
Detroit Chapter
North Carolina Chapter
Omaha Chapter
Cape May County Zoo Chapter
Greater Cleveland Area Chapter
Puget Sound Chapter

Silver

\$500.00 - \$999.99

Midnight Sun Chapter
Birmingham Zoo Chapter
Phoenix Chapter
Tucson Chapter
California Desert Chapter
Los Angeles Zoo Chapter
San Diego Chapter
Fresno Chaffee Zoo Chapter
San Francisco Zoo Chapter
Bay Area Chapter
Rocky Mountain Chapter
Connecticut's Chapter
Brandywine Chapter
Santa Fe Teaching College
Zoo Student Chapter
Georgia Chapter
Brookfield Chapter
Central Illinois Chapter

Lincoln Park Chapter
Indianapolis Chapter
Mesker Park Zoo Chapter
Topeka Zoo Chapter
Little Turtle Chapter
Potawatomi Zoo Chapter
New Orleans Chapter
Baton Rouge Chapter
New England Chapter
Chesapeake Chapter
Potter Park Chapter
Battle Creek Chapter
Minnesota Zoo Chapter
St. Louis Chapter
Kansas City Zoo Chapter
Ozarks Chapter
Greater New Jersey
Alliance Chapter
New York City Chapter
Rosamond Gifford Zoo Chapter
Seneca Park Zoo Chapter
Staten Island Zoo Chapter
Akron Zoo Chapter
Columbus Chapter
Glass City AAZK Chapter
Oklahoma City Zoo Chapter
Portland Chapter
Pittsburgh Chapter
Greater Philadelphia Chapter
Elmwood Park Zoo Chapter
Delaware Valley
University Chapter
Memphis Chapter
Nashville Chapter
Riverbanks Zoo and
Garden Chapter
Roger Williams Zoo Chapter
Dallas Zoo Chapter
Galveston Chapter
El Paso Del Norte Chapter
Fort Worth Chapter
Tidewater Chapter
Rainier Chapter
Point Defiance Chapter
Milwaukee Chapter
Badger Chapter
Toronto Zoo Chapter

Bronze

Up to \$499.99

America's Teaching Zoo
Student Chapter

Redwood Coast Chapter
Greater Sacramento Chapter
Brevard Chapter
Greater Orlando Chapter
South Florida Chapter
Tampa Bay Chapter
Treasure Coast Chapter
Scovill Zoo Chapter
Cosley Zoo Chapter
Quad City Chapter
Red River of Louisiana Chapter
Greater Baltimore Chapter
Greater Kansas City Chapter
JZ Keepers Chapter
North Carolina
Piedmont Chapter
Dakota Chapter
ABQ Chapter
Tulsa Zoo Chapter
Greater Cincinnati Chapter
Greenville Zoo AAZK Chapter
High Forest Chapter
Greater Houston Chapter
San Antonio Chapter
Utah Chapter
Roanoke Valley Chapter
Green Bay Chapter
Southern Colorado Chapter
Assiniboine Park Zoo Chapter

Annual Contribution to AAZK

\$1000.00 or greater

Little Rock Chapter
Wildlife World Chapter
Detroit Chapter
North Carolina Chapter
Omaha Chapter
Cape May County Zoo Chapter
Greater Cleveland Chapter
Puget Sound Chapter

AKF Sponsorship

\$500.00

Toronto Chapter
Milwaukee Chapter
Memphis Zoo Chapter
Roger Williams Park Zoo Chapter
Rosamond Gifford Zoo Chapter
Ozarks Chapter
Chesapeake Chapter
Indianapolis Chapter

Little Rock Chapter
Wildlife World Chapter
Lion Country Safari Chapter
Jacksonville Chapter

AAZK Trees for You and Me Program Support

\$250.00

Brookfield Zoo Chapter
Saint Louis Chapter
Riverbanks Zoo Chapter
Dallas Zoo Chapter
Southern Colorado Chapter

Conservation

\$250.00

Midnight Sun Chapter
Oklahoma City Chapter
Portland Chapter
Nashville Chapter
Columbus Chapter
Seneca Park Chapter
Greater Kansas City Chapter
Minnesota Zoo Chapter
Battle Creek Chapter
Potawatomi Chapter
Central Illinois Chapter
Lincoln Park Chapter
Connecticut Chapter
Rocky Mountain Chapter
Greater Sacramento Chapter
California Desert Chapter
Los Angeles Chapter
Fort Worth Chapter

International Outreach Committee

\$250.00

San Diego Zoo Chapter
Topeka Chapter
Baton Rouge Chapter
Kansas City Zoo Chapter
North Carolina Chapter
New York City Chapter
Pittsburgh Chapter
Elmwood Park Chapter

Animal Welfare

\$250.00

San Francisco Chapter
Brandywine Chapter

ABQ Chapter
Rainier Chapter
San Antonio Chapter

AAZK Resource Committee

\$250

Birmingham Zoo Chapter
Akron Zoo Chapter
Bay Area Chapter

Awards

\$250.00

New Orleans Chapter
Greater Baltimore Chapter

Grants

\$250.00

New England Chapter
Galveston Chapter
El Paso Del Norte Chapter

Communications/NZKW

\$250

Greater Houston Chapter
Phoenix Chapter
Greater Cincinnati Chapter
Tulsa Chapter
Greenville Zoo Chapter

Diversity

\$250

Georgia Chapter
Badger Chapter

Safety

\$250

Mesker Park Chapter
Potter Park Zoo Chapter

Undefined Committee/ Program Support

\$250

Point Defiance Chapter
South Florida Chapter



Financials

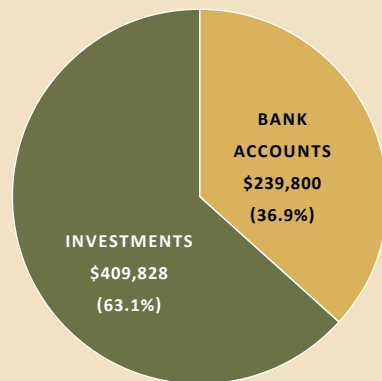
EXPENSES 2023

Bowling for Rhinos	\$	\$6,750
Board & Management	\$	\$10,845
Conference	\$	\$21,380
Grants	\$	\$25,279
Business Operations	\$	\$62,244
Management	\$	\$86,848
Animal Keepers' Forum	\$	\$85,702
Postage & Delivery		
BFR Program Expense		
- BFR Action for Cheetahs in Kenya	\$	25,040
- BFR International Rhino Foundation	\$	140,848
- BFR Lewa Wildlife Conservancy	\$	134,098
Total BFR Expense	\$	299,986
Technology	\$	6,762
Total Expense	\$	605,796

INCOME 2023

BFR Dedicated Program Income	\$	9,133
BFR Registration Fee		1,025
Conference Income	\$	19,543
Donation Income	\$	39,620
Job Posting Income	\$	2,698
Membership Income	\$	88,372
Product Income	\$	1,938
Recharter Fee & Duty Obligation	\$	64,665
AKF Advertising	\$	24,385
BFR Program Income	\$	315,733
Total Income	\$	567,111

Net Income	\$	-38,685
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TOTAL ASSETS \$649,628

MEMBERS

Category	Members
Professional	1196
Affiliate	301
Commercial Membership	14
Conservation Partner	18
Contributing	12
Emerging Nation	8
EN-Sponsored	269
Exchange	20
Institutional	105
International	13
Library	1
Lifetime Member	1
Student	69
Total:	2027

\$250K

the amount AAZK Chapters donated to 198 worldwide conservation projects, emergency relief, or other charitable venture

2027

AAZK Members



104

Duly chartered
AAZK Chapters



32 AAZK Chapters
donated **\$41,034**
directly back to
their Host Facilities



Top 2 charities to receive AAZK Chapter donations for conservation

2 Girded Conservation Foundation
and Turtle Survival Alliance

AAZK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nicole Pepo, President
North Carolina Zoo, Asheboro, NC

Joseph Nappi, Vice-Chair
Bronx Zoo/WCS, New York, NY

Paul Brandenburger
Baltimore Zoo, Baltimore, MD

Sara Bjerklie
Dallas Zoo, Dallas, TX

Russell Pharr,
Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium
Tacoma, WA

Erika Defer
Safari West, Santa Rosa, CA

Sarah Snider
Tulsa Zoo, Tulsa, OK

AAZK STAFF

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Conference Management, Salt Lake City, UT

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Animal Keepers' Forum, Valley City, OH

Elizabeth Thibodeaux,
Graphic Designer, Cleveland, OH



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