



VISITOR SERVICES  
FOR CULTURAL  
ATTRACTIONS

# Wild Connections

Your connection to insights about Service Systems Associates and K-M Concessions

November 2009



## THANK YOU!

*At this year's Wild Affair, Sacramento Zoo staff honored SSA President Kevin McNicholas (left,) SSA Senior Vice President Tim Brantley (right,) and Service Systems Associates for their leadership and support over the past several years. Terry Kastanis, Sacramento Zoological Society Board President, and Mary Healy, Zoo Director/CEO, gave Tim and Kevin hand-painted ostrich eggs to recognize their dedication.*

## SSA at Dallas Zoo expands their efforts

We're all familiar with the excellent guest services support that K-M and SSA provides front house at more than 30 zoos, aquariums and museums. Now SSA coordinates the behind-the-scenes support at the Dallas Zoo.

With a 15-month contract, the Dallas Zoo SSA Operations team now provides janitorial services as well as trash removal and event set-

up for the entire zoo. In addition, the staff delivers bedding and hay for the zoo animals. The dedicated staff also does special projects, such as floor waxing, leaf raking, etc.

The Operations team is headed by Manager **Dan Wilson** and Assistant Manager **Chris Boatright**. Together they manage six - eight custodians and six - eight park service em-

ployees as well as 20 - 25 other staff members.

Dallas Zoo General Manager **Cheryl Cobb** said the zoo management staff approached the company about providing these services. "SSA has a good reputation, and this seemed to be a natural fit. We're getting rave reviews from zoo staff," she added.



## Words of Wisdom



Kevin McNicholas

### A few quotes:

*"Every child is born a naturalist. Their eyes are, by nature, open to the glories of the stars, the beauty of the flowers, and the great mystery of life."*

- Anonymous

*"If you think health care is expensive now, just wait until you see what it costs when it's free!"*

- P.J. O'Rourke

*"A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul."*

- George Bernard Shaw

## Retail and culinary staff keep busy

SSA staff at the **Tulsa Zoo** are collecting money at all points of sale to donate to *Operation Roadtrip: Giraffes*. This project is raising money to help with the costs of transporting two female giraffes to mate with the zoo's male. Retail staff also plan to offer an increased product mix of giraffe merchandise in 2010.

*Boo at the Zoo* is one of highest attendance days of the year at **Utah's Hogle Zoo**. SSA staff set up several \$1 food stations that offered muffins, fruit, cotton candy, chips, animal cookies, bottled water and hot chocolate. They also operated a retail cart by the exit where \$5 plush was offered. Staff are also making

## SSA steps up and supports galas

*Animal Affair*, the **Nashville Zoo's** annual fundraiser, was sponsored by SSA's "Taste of the Wild Catering." This year's events featured a high end plated meal rather than the standard vendor and booth format. The program included Ron McGill, from the Miami Metrozoo, who had the entire crowd

## eco connections

While the current craze in bottled water continues to be popular, the plastic bottle waste has not been popular. At the **Reid Park Zoo**, due to the extreme temperatures, SSA staff drank an average of three bottles of water per shift. SSA management implemented a plan to help reduce the amount of empty plastic bottles generated by its staff, including discontinuing the consumption of commercial bottled water by staff. Employees are asked to use refillable water bottles. A five-gallon water dispenser was placed at *Zoofari Market* and *Jaguar Junction* for use by employees.

plans for *Zoo Lights!*, the largest motion light display in Utah with over 1.5 million lights and a few hundred lighted sculptures. Guests will be able to purchase different lighted novelty items as well as 3-D glasses. The Culinary Department will offer hot gooey deep fried s'mores.

To promote retail sales at the **Tulsa Zoo's** five-day *Hallowzoo* event, SSA staff set up a gift tent to try to ex-

pand their presence in the zoo. The tent was lit with black lights and featured all sorts of glow in the dark merchandise and light up toys.

SSA staff at the **Monterey Bay Aquarium** joined in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration by offering gift and bookstore giveaways during the weekend's festivities. Also, they created special gifts for the attendees of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala.

laughing and learning about animal antics. Zoo supporters were highly impressed when introduced to the zoo's new *Jungle Terrace Pavilion*, a unique outdoor event space that SSA donated. Everyone enjoyed the evening, food and services that were provided by **Taste of the Wild Catering Nashville**.

At the recent *Zoocson 2009* gala, the **Reid Park Zoo SSA staff** managed all the bars and offered for the first time a mojito station. Also, SSA marketed their Culinary Department in a specialty tent displaying the essence of culinary theater.

## Employee promotions, new hires and honors

**Jake Crabtree**, the catering sales manager at the **Miami Metrozoo** was selected as employee of the quarter. He has done a great job with communication and just “being there” for the client. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in culinary arts management, Crabtree has worked for several restaurants, hotels and food service companies in Florida.

**Maura Rogers** and **Barbara Reuther** received the **Monterey Bay Aquarium Green Award** for October. This award recognizes employees and work groups who are committed to conservation efforts at work, in the community and in their personal lives. These are people who are making our planet a better place. Barbara and Maura were recognized for the eco-sensitive direction they have taken the store with the many products in their categories to be more green. The *Think Green* section as

well as other key areas in the Gift and Bookstore has demonstrated this dedication with variety, creativity and guest-friendly goods. Recycled glass, organic plush, FSC printed books, recycled jewelry, organic cotton apparel, and many other items are selling very well to guests.

**Johnna Walker** and her three children recently ran in the 40<sup>th</sup> annual **Tulsa Zoo’s ZooRun**. They joined over 3,000 runners who stamped their way through the zoo.

**Nashville Zoo AGM Jessica Marth Peach**, delivered her baby, named **Sofia** on June 3. The baby weighed 7 pounds and 10 ounces and measured 21 inches.

The **Tulsa Zoo** recently hosted the American Association of Zoo Vets & American Association of Wildlife Vets conferences. Delegates spent a day at the zoo



**Helping our partners . . . Heather Merryman, Culinary Manager, (left) and Kathy Myers, GM** are helping the staff at the **Living Desert** hang holiday lights for their annual **Wild Lights** program. This year, they cannot afford to pay the staff members to hang the lights, so the salaried staff has to do it. So SSA staff volunteered to help out for four hours a night, here and there, as needed.

where **Chef Chance Ogg** hit a homerun with the food and the event’s organization. Staff received numerous comments on how this was the best food offered in years.

**Scott Taylor**, an hourly employee in the **Beastro** at **Utah’s Hogle Zoo**, received a ‘thank you’ card in the mail from a guest thanking him for going above and beyond to make her daughter happy.

## New General and Retail Managers named

**Jeff Ahlberg** is the new General Manager at the **Sacramento Zoo**.

The **Retail Manager** at MOSI is **Laurel Jacobs**.

**Paul Pearson** is the new General Manager at the **Tulsa Zoo**. He started in June and was thrown into peak season. Staff report that he has done a

great job and is continuing to improve the culinary standards in Tulsa.

## Wild Connections



Published by  
Service  
Systems



Associates and  
K-M Concessions.

4699 Marion Street  
Denver, CO 80216  
303/321-2760

[www.kmssa.com](http://www.kmssa.com)

Send story suggestions  
and news items to:  
[newsletter@kmssa.com](mailto:newsletter@kmssa.com)



Employee profile  
Eli Grill  
Pittsburgh Zoo &  
PPG Aquarium  
General Manager

To read, go to  
[kmssa.com](http://kmssa.com)

### Customer Service Tips

*"Always count back  
change out loud to cus-  
tomers to ensure they  
are receiving the proper  
amount back.*

*Always make eye  
contact with the guest  
and smile!"*

**Seth Palmer**  
GM, Utah's Hogle Zoo

## News from our partners

The *What's In A Name? - It's Not What You'd Expect* exhibit recently opened at **Zoo Boise**. The exhibit features Indian flying foxes, Ruwenzori long-haired fruit bats, giant elephant shrews and waxy monkey frog. The concept of this exhibit encourages guests to think about the names given to species, and how they might not describe their actual appearance.

Texas wildlife officials have released 360 Houston toads born and raised in the **Houston Zoo**, hoping to replenish the wild population. The Houston toad, named after the city where it was first identified as a separate species, was once common in eastern Texas. But development around Houston has destroyed much of its habitat, and the



**A 12-year-old male mandrill joined the troop at the San Francisco Zoo.**

only remaining toads are believed to be in the zoo.

Two rainforest animals now call the **Los Angeles Zoo** home. With the addition of a pair of endangered François langurs, the zoo is one of 14 in the United States to house these primates. Also taking up residence are a pair of giant otters. Fully grown, these otters can reach a length of six feet, and adult males can weigh as much as 70 pounds. They are found in the rain forests and wetlands of South America.



**François langurs hail from the rainforests of Asia — and now from the Los Angeles Zoo.**

The **Detroit Zoo** now has three new male lesser kudus – two-year-old Natunga, one-year-old Naziri and one-year-old Moliko. These African antelopes are considered one of nature's shyest animals.

MOSI recently received the 2009 National Medal for Museums, presented by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Out of 17,000 museums in the country, they are one of only five to receive this award in 2009.

The annual award recognizes institutions for outstanding social, educational, environmental or economic contributions to their communities.

MOSI is one of only a handful of science museums to receive the National Medal, which will be presented during an upcoming ceremony in Washington, D.C. MOSI will also receive a \$10,000 award in recognition of their extraordinary contributions.

*"It is an honor to be considered a national leader for science learning," said MOSI President Wit Ostrenko, "MOSI exists to educate and excite children about science — to receive a reward like this is an incredible feeling."*