



Visitor Services for  
Cultural Attractions

# Wild Connections

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

May 2010

## Establishing superior guest service is a process

The EXTRAordinary guest-service training has never been easier and never more important, said **Denver Zoo General Manager Natalie Hall**. She added, "It's why we are here. It's everything we do. We're more successful when we offer good service."

Developed and introduced in 2008, this training program provides an interactive approach to train new employees to deliver outstanding service to guests by creating positive memories and exceeding guest expectations by being friendly when interacting with the guest.

As part of the team that developed the program and one of

the Company's top trainers, Natalie believes in using role playing to illustrate the techniques to provide quality service to guests.

She identified nine tips to use while training:

1. Make group size between 5 to 20 to allow for interaction.
2. Don't lecture.
3. Have fun while training.
4. Make the training session extremely interactive, such as rewarding answers with candy pieces or small stuffed animals.
5. Use an animated member of your staff to help.
6. Focus the meetings exclusively on customer service training.

EXTRA is an acronym for the service skills that should be performed when coming in contact with a guest:

- Every guest is greeted.
- Xcross paths with guest.
- Take the time.
- Remember to suggest.
- Always thank a guest.

7. Make employees go through the training again after being on the job for one year.
8. Have employees demonstrate how to sell promos by using different techniques.
9. Use the question cards to reinforce training at daily one-minute meetings.

Remember training is the best way to reinforce our guest service mindset among our employees.

## Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Catering Honored



CHEYENNE  
MOUNTAIN  
ZOO

"Wild Things Catering" at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo was recently picked by the Colorado

Spring's Gazette as

"Best Caterer" in the Colorado Springs area.

The Gazette credited SSA and the Zoo for enhancing the culinary team; Chef Beau Greens top prize award to at the

Premier Chefs Gala; and the opening of the new "Grizzly Grill" restaurant, which will surely be a destination dining experience! Congratulations Todd, Beau, Carol & Team!



Words of Wisdom



**Kevin McNicholas**

This is a story about a boy named “Sparky.” He stunk in school; flunked physics, Latin, algebra, and even English. He was very shy and awkward socially. He wasn’t liked or disliked, nobody cared that much. Afraid to ask a girl out, he just lived in his own “loser” life. He did, however, like drawing. He submitted cartoons to the school’s year book group and was turned down. After leaving school, he submitted some cartoons to Walt Disney Studios, and another turn-down. He decided to write his own autobiography in cartoons; a boy loser and under-achiever. This cartoon character would soon become famous. Sparky’s real name was Charles Schultz and the rest (Charlie Brown and Peanuts) is history!

Garden-to-table connection increasing

*By Travis Kight, Corporate Executive Chef*

Chefs gardens are becoming more than a trend, they are becoming a way to offer the freshest quality ingredients and help off set our carbon foot print. These gardens vary in size and in scope, but they have two common goals: to gain a deeper understanding of the produce used in the kitchens and to share that garden-to-table connection with customers.

There are a growing number of SSA & K-M partner locations that are growing some of their own vegetables and herbs. One location is the 10-acre Heritage Farm at **Albuquerque Bio Park’s Botanic Garden** and home to **Executive Chef Brian Filson**.

Chef Brian has an extensive background in hotels and restaurants and prior to coming to SSA, he worked for Whole Foods. Brian said that while working at Whole Foods is where he first started to understand the benefits of local and organic produces.

Quality is what motivates Chef Brian to use these local products he gets from the garden while making people think differently



**Chef Brian harvests the herbs from his chef garden at Heritage Farm.**

about where food comes from. “It makes you respect the food and the quality,” he said.

Plants and crops at the Heritage Farm are mostly heirloom. This year the farm will produce a variety of herbs as well as 10 types of fruits and vegetables. This selection will allow Chef Brian to create special dishes, like rhubarb bread pudding and 100% farm-grown omelets.

Some of the other locations that are utilizing their own fresh produce include

- Chef Mike Manoli, Denver Zoo,**
- Chef Shawn Carlson, Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium**
- and Chef Don Morgan, Reid Park Zoo.**



**Albuquerque Bio Park’s Heritage Farm**





## Eco-activity happenings

For the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, many K-M/SSA partners celebrated the environment movement.

The Conservation Team at the **Monterey Bay Aquarium** hosted an environmental fair. Departments presented information on various topics, including energy efficiency, green construction, paperless recruiting, and more. One department built a solar oven to bake brownies. Bon Appetite shared information on how people could identify their carbon footprint of the foods they eat on a daily basis by going to [www.eatlowcarbon.org/](http://www.eatlowcarbon.org/).

SSA's presentation demonstrated the environmentally-friendly products sold in the Gift and Book stores, including bamboo kitchenware, mini-plush penguins and polar bears made from recycled water bottles, planter sets made from recycled milk cartons and Zen gardens made with recycled US steel and other repurposed items.

Due to the success, the event planners plan to offer the event again next year.

### Other eco-activities



*During the Earth Day Fair, Monterey Bay Aquarium GM Andrew Fischer shares the many eco-friendly products available in the aquarium's store.*

**Zoo Boise** started operating its Conservation Cruise. The two solar-powered boats will ferry visitors across the lagoon to the new mangabey monkey exhibit and will then leave them at the entrance of the African Plains exhibit. The Conservation Cruise costs \$1 per person and will run through September. Funds raised will benefit the Zoo Boise Conservation Fund.

The **Denver Zoo** was recently named a Sustainability Champion! The Colorado Department of

Public Health and Environment and the Connected Organizations for a Responsible Economy (CORE) recognized the zoo as one of three Sustainability Champions for their efforts to reduce waste and greenhouse emissions, among other accomplishments. Winners were selected from more than 100 entries.

## Food trends revealed

Cooking locally and growing locally will be a food trend that will continue. Another hot industry trend is burgers. We plan to improve this popular seller by using 100% all-Angus beef on either a potato or brioche bun.

We can't overlook im-



proving the popular accompaniment: fries! We plan to offer a 5/16-inch coated, skin-on fry.

## What's happening in the field . . .

**SuLi Sabo** was promoted from Sales Supervisor to Senior Supervisor at the **Monterey Bay Aquarium**. Also, **Sabrina Wedderburn** was promoted from Assistant Operations Manager to Retail Operations Manager.

At the Pretend City Museum, **Allyssa Zander** was promoted to shift lead and **Stephanie Tomita** was promoted to assistant manager. Also, **Robyn Luttrell** and **Michael Rajotte** joined the retail team.

**Charlie Collins** is the new General Manager at the **Albuquerque Bio-park**. He has more than 10 years experience from such locations as the Cincinnati and Louisville Zoos and other venues. **Annie Fedora** assumed the new position as Assistant General Manager/Catering Manager and Special Events Manager.

At the **Minnesota Zoo**, **Ryan Mehlberg** graduated from the University of Wisconsin — River Falls with a degree in surveying and city planning. Ryan has worked at the zoo since July 2004. Also at the zoo, **Julie Cowsert** is the new Retail Store Manager; she had been General Manager at Cost World since 1998.

**Laura Roland**, Assistant Manager of Food Ser-

vice at the **Dallas Zoo**, is the new Catering Coordinator. She will be “hands on” with our guests from the beginning through the end of their event, delivering outstanding guest service and making sure that they want to come back for more!

The **Dallas Zoo** Retail Operations Manager, **Jane Eatmon**, has a son who lives and goes to school in Salt Lake City. Her son, **Corbin**, recently joined the retail team at the **Hogle Zoo**. They are keeping it all in the family!

The **Dallas Zoo** recently awarded the contract for the new Group Sales Department to SSA. This means that a dedicated Sales Manager will be working throughout the Dallas/-Fort Worth area selling consignment tickets and memberships, catered outings and admission to the zoo for any groups of 25+ plus.

For Year of the Farm, the **Minnesota Zoo** SSA staff opened a Farm Store in the zoo's Replay Park. A variety of farm-related products will be sold. Also, in partnership with the zoo and its web-

based game, *Who Pooped at the Farm*. After guests play the game, they can print a coupon to receive a 20% discount on their “Who Pooped” T-shirt purchase.



The Spring Fever Promotion at the **Pretend City Museum** offered a T-shirt for \$9.99 with the purchase of admission and a completed Be-Connected card, which is a free card for people who sign-up to receive e-mails regarding events and other information from the museum. Also, the museum now sells the popular Dippin' Dots, the tiny beads of ice cream, yogurt, sherbet and flavored ice.



**In January, the Dallas Zoo SSA staff catered an awards presentation for the Dallas Zoological Society Board of Directors on the coldest night in 14 years! They completely transformed the Zoofari Food Court into an elegant dining venue. Over 100 guests attended and were wowed by the food, the service and the transformation of the restaurant. Chef Alan from Los Angeles Zoo and DeAnna Velez flew in to support the Dallas Culinary and Catering Teams.**

## Connections



Published by  
Service  
Systems Associates and  
K-M Concessions.



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## Employee profile

**Cheryl Cobb**

*Dallas Zoo GM*

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

Always make sure that every guest that leaves the museum has a great experience and has a goal of coming back another day.

*Krista Adams  
Pretend City Museum GM*

Know your merchandise and listen to your guests!

When a school group comes into the store, greet them and ask how much money they have to spend.

This allows you to think quickly and direct them to items within their dollar range. Their teacher is usually waiting, so you need to work fast and create a memorable moment.

*Laurel Wright  
Minnesota Zoo GM*

## News from our partners

The **San Francisco Zoo** celebrated Earth Day in 2010 by unveiling Greenie's Conservation Corner. This lively, sustainable space interactively engages guests and helps inspire "green" practices at home, school and within the community. The 4,000-square-foot Greenie's Conservation Corner features an organic garden, which will grow food for some of the zoo's animals, an historic 1906 earthquake shack, working rain barrel harvesting system, solar-powered fountain, wind turbine, worm farm, drip irrigation, water-wise gardens, beehives and more.

The **Nashville Zoo** sustained minor damage during an early May storms thanks to staff who worked through the weekend sandbagging around animal enclosures. During the storms, animal care staff also closely monitored the births of two



**A tapir was born at the Nashville Zoo during the recent storms.**



**Greenie's Conservation Corner opened at the San Francisco Zoo as part of the zoo's Earth Day celebration.**

animals. A Baird's tapir gave birth to a male aptly name "Noah." Later, an Eurasian lynx gave birth to a single male. The un-named kitten is being hand-raised by animal care staff and will be part of "Wildlife on Wheels."

The five African painted wild dogs raised by Honey, a domestic surrogate at the **Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium**, are growing up. Born last October, the five pups ventured outside their exhibit at the zoo the first of May.

The **Dallas Zoo** recently launched an iPhone app, becoming the first zoo in the U.S. to offer guests information in both English and Spanish. This iPhone app is

free and offers information about hours, admission, parking, directions, maps that will help guests navigate exhibits at the zoo, information about the zoo's animals, membership, educational programs, special events and more.

**Zoo Boise** recently opened Giraffe Encounter, which allows guests to feed giraffes with pre-purchased biscuits.

Shanti, one of the zoo's two pregnant Asian elephants, gave birth to a healthy male calf at the **Houston Zoo**. Baylor weighed 348 pounds. He was named in honor of Houston's Baylor College of Medicine, which is trying to develop a vaccine against a herpes virus lethal to elephants, Baylor brings to six the number of Asian elephants at the zoo.