



Visitor Services for
Cultural Attractions

Wild Connections

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

June 2010

Trends in blockbuster and special exhibits



Photo by Cheryl Cobb

Many of SSA's partners have recently built new exhibits or staged seasonal exhibits. These exhibits incorporate guest experiences and amenities with state-of-the-art animal habitats or program designs.

The **Dallas Zoo** recently opened the *Giants of the Savanna*, the biggest new exhibit to open at the zoo in 20 years. The \$30 million, 11-acre exhibit showcases many African species. The zoo's six elephants, giraffes, impalas, zebras and ostriches are featured in the savanna areas. In addition, there is a

separate predator area, which is home to the zoo's five new lions and three cheetahs.

Elegant colobus monkeys join De Brazza's monkeys, fruit bats,



dwarf crocodiles, red river hogs and rock hyraxes in the **Minnesota Zoo's** newest exhibit, *Faces of the African Forest*. Located as part of the zoo's indoors Tropics Trail, the exhibit features a bat

cave, a crocodile beach and a giant man-made fig tree with viewing windows into animal habitats.

The third and final phase of the newest permanent exhibit at **MOSI**, *The Amazing You* opened in May. Featuring interactive and informative components that tell of the human experience from conception through end of life, the exhibit also showcases cutting edge research and technology being forwarded, including a laser scalpel and a controversy-free stem cell harvest system.

Special exhibits

At the **Houston Zoo**, *DINOSAURS!* features 10 life-like animatronic dinosaurs exhibited in a wooded, landscaped setting. State-of-the-art electronics control the dinosaur's fluid, choreographed movements, punctuated by spine-chilling roars. Animatronic creatures include T-Rex and the



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Words of Wisdom



Kevin McNicholas

"If all mankind were to disappear, the world globe would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. However, if insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos."

- E.O. Wilson
(biologist)

If this statement is true, are we humans the superior animals?

Perhaps this is the answer: "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 mystery of life." (Anonymous)

Exhibits, continued from page 1

armor-plated Stegosaurus to the massive Brachiosaurus and the horned Triceratops, and even a nest full of tiny baby dinosaurs.

Nature's Nightmares at **Utah's Hogle Zoo** offers a closer look at animals people typically find "scary." This exhibit explains how these animals are actually beneficial to the environment and show that they're not so bad after all. Animals displayed include king vulture, straw-

colored fruit bats, Norway rats, red-bellied piranhas, goliath bird-eater spider, dung beetles and a skunk.

MOSI recently opened *CSI: The Experience*, an immersive multi-media exhibit where guests play the role of crime scene investigators and learn scientific principles and investigative techniques as they try to solve one of three crime scene mysteries using DNA to latent prints to forensic anthropology and toxicology methods.

Employee theft prevention ideas

By Joann Barrios, Director of Internal Audits

Every attraction should take proactive steps when it comes to employee theft prevention.

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners in its Report to the Nation on Occupational Fraud & Abuse reported that the typical business will lose an average of 6% of revenues due to employee theft.

Our company works exceptionally hard to generate revenue. We are working toward executing a company-wide plan for employee theft prevention. Here are some proactive steps you can start right now:

- ◆ Pre-screen employees to see if there is any past history of criminal activity.
- ◆ Have a "checks and balances" system in place for weekly and monthly sales reporting.
- ◆ Keep tight reins on petty cash by only allowing a limited number of employees the ability to disburse petty cash and deposit sales revenues. Require a receipt and signed voucher for all petty cash disbursements and bank distributions.

- ◆ Monitor daily payroll to ensure it is accurate.
- ◆ Note why bank distribution did not generate revenue (i.e. location closed due to rain, etc.).
- ◆ Make frequent pick-ups of revenue throughout the park for all locations even if business is fair.
- ◆ Have frequent pick-ups from armored car services to reduce the amount of money we are holding at each unit.
- ◆ Investigate purchasing low-cost security and tamper evident bags for bank deposits and for pulls, end of day closing, pick-ups and end of day revenue. Use clear view employee bags to reduce shoplifting concerns.
- ◆ Perform random complete drawer pulls multiple times a week to deter cashiers from not ringing items and storing the cash in their till.
- ◆ Conduct physical inventories frequently and reconcile the inventory to sales.
- ◆ Focus on the basics ensuring registers are in place, and receipts are being given out to every guest.

What about your unit? Are you doing everything you can to prevent employee theft? Please e-mail joannbarrios@kmssa.com any thoughts or contributions you have to share!

Guest experiences include gift shops and restaurants



When guests visit the new *Giants of the Savannah* exhibit at the **Dallas Zoo**, they can take a break at the Savannah Grill, which overlooks the elephant habitat where the gentle giants eat, bathe and splash. The new restaurant offers indoor seating for about 60 and outdoor seating for another 150 or so. The menu features salads, cheeseburger and chicken tender baskets and sliced bbq sandwich baskets plus the traditional grab and go items. One side of the restaurant is a ceiling to floor window that overlooks the lion exhibit. In the morning, there's up to five young lions laying on rocks just on the other side of the window. Guests love the experience!

What do you do when you need retail space to sell those *Lands of the Giant* souvenirs at the **Dallas Zoo**? If you're Retail Manager Janee Eatmon, you rehab an old Land Rover. She did say that she had help from her husband.

Removing the engine and seats, cutting a long window in one side of the vehicle, embellishing with old trunks and camping equipment, and then adding three different sizes of display crates creates a memorable shopping experience reminiscent of an African market. Aptly named the Retail Rover, the merchandise mix features t-shirts, plush, hats, PVC as well as sunscreen and spray fans.

Eatmon said that the Retail Rover has been more successful than anticipated.



When seasonal or special exhibits opens, there is an opportunity to offer related merchandise.

After visiting *Dinosaurs!* at the **Houston Zoo**, guests can visit an adjacent tent to purchase souvenir to remember their trip to see prehistoric beasts.



What's your carbon footprint?



All SSA Green Team Members, General Managers, Retail and Culinary Operations team and Management members and front line staff were recently asked to complete a Carbon Footprint calculation and submit their information. If you haven't, go to <https://www.earthlab.com/createprofile/reg.aspx>. EarthLab features a personalized Carbon Calculator that generates a carbon footprint score, which members can then save, work to reduce, and track their success over time as a member creates a personal green strategy.

As one of our ongoing measurements in building a greener company, we need to have a consistent record of how our team is impacting the environment. One quick and engaging way to accomplish this is for our team to complete a *Carbon Footprint Calculation* every six months. We will be reviewing our figures in November to see where we improved.

The top results to date are from the **Honolulu Zoo** where 14 people participated. Their Earth Conservation Plan score was 251.4 and 7.5 tons of carbon.

Animal prints a style staple

By Laurel Wright
General Manager/Buyer

Over the years animal print trends have become a style staple. In 2010 the animal print trend has returned in a different form. New to this reliable trend is the addition of unexpected and fun color palettes.



All jungle prints are being used this season including zebra, cheetah, leopard and python. These great prints are showing up in designer chic apparel, quirky accessories, furniture and rugs.

Scarves, wristlets, jewelry, bags and belts are just a few of the animal

print accessories that can be found in many of our retail stores.

Advise guests when wearing animal print accessories to use neutrals such as black, khaki, cream and white or play off equally bold accessory colors in hot pink or lime green. Remember to scale animal prints to guest's size and don't mix prints, but do experiment with color.



YooHoos add to retail experience

During April and May, SSA teamed up with Aurora Plush to do weekend Yoo Hoo events at **Los Angeles and San Francisco Zoo** locations.

You may be asking yourself what is a Yoo Hoo? Well, it's based on the endangered animal known as a galago or bush

baby. The events created a lot of excitement for guests, and they were able to take pictures with the Yoo Hoo.

Brad Smithling, Executive Vice President of Retail, said "We wanted to create some extra fun in our stores by doing these events. It was wonderful to see the smiles on the children and families that attended."

Faux vs. Real in our industry is always the way to go. Fake animal prints are produced in such a way that they look as real as ever.



Photo opps with a Yoo Hoo prove to be popular.

What's happening in the field . . .

The new GM at the **San Francisco Zoo** is **Tom Kelly**. **RockyRockovitz** is the new GM at the **El Paso Zoo**.

Executive Chef **Dave Harris** recently joined the **Pittsburgh Zoo** team. Dave's experience includes Executive Chef and Operations Director for the University of Pittsburgh's (PITT) event center.

Patrick Brown has started as **Director of Retail Operations**.

Patrick has been a successful retail manager for 19 years and the last 10 in multi-unit management. He recently worked at Brookstone and William and Sonoma.



Suli Sabo started as a Sales Associate at the **Monterey Bay Aquarium** 2 ½ years ago. She was quickly promoted to Lead Sales and then to a Sales Supervisor. She continues to be a shining star on the management team and was recently promoted to Lead Supervisor. She has a wealth of knowledge and delights all guests that interact with her.

At the **Reid Park Zoo**, the new restaurant has been getting amazing

reception from zoo patrons, and a new Single Day Sales Record was achieved April 24, 2010.

Arizona voters recently passed Proposition 100, which will increase the State Sales Tax by 1%. **Reid Park Zoo** will use these funds for elephant expansion plans. Also included in the new exhibit will be another catering venue and snack location. Ground breaking will take place later this summer.

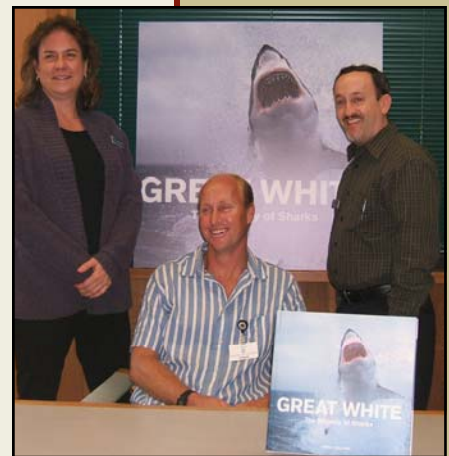
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo's Grizzly Grill recently received four out of five stars from Nathaniel Glen, restaurant critic at the *Colorado Springs Gazette*. The reviewer highlighted the chicken teriyaki rice bowls, the New York-style pizzas, lamb sliders and parmesan-garlic fries.

James Wilson, a Retail Associate at **MOSI**, earned a Master's Degree and will continue his studies next year in Michigan. He has done research throughout South and Central America for the last three years, working between jaunts. Also, four other employees, **Samantha Bass**, **Brianna Bryant**, **Julie Hayward** and **Michael**

Mathis, recently graduated from high school and will continue their studies elsewhere.

The **Monterey Bay Aquarium** Retail staff recently hosted photographer and author Chris Fallows. During his presentation, he highlighted his work with white sharks.

He later signed his book. SSA's Book Buyer **Barbara Reuther** coordinated the event. Pictured from left to right, *Reuther, Fallows and Aquarium SSA GM Andrew Fischer*.



To help celebrate Earth Day, the SSA team at the **Nashville Zoo** set up a pop-up tent with information about how SSA and the Zoo are green. They also distributed posters and magnets and shared information about using recycled items with the animals.



Connections

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Employee Profile
Maria Marquez,
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Catering Sales Manager

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In our Industry, if customer
services feels like work,
you're probably in the
wrong line of business.

*Reid Park GM Jason
Stover*

Have fun — fun comes in
all shapes and sizes. Enjoy
your atmosphere, enjoy
your co-workers and
environment. Come to work
to have a good time, meet
new people, sell some
products (or promos) and
learn something new.
When YOU are having a
good time, the guest you
come into contact with will
have a good time . . .
it's just retail!

*Monterey Bay Aquarium
GM Andrew Fischer*

News from our partners

The **Detroit Zoo** has launched an iPhone application that allows visitors to track their location on zoo grounds using real-time GPS coordinates, access photos and videos of animals and exhibits, view a daily schedule and find friends who are also visiting the zoo. The cost is \$1.99, and proceeds will benefit conservation.

After five years, naked mole rats have returned to the **Cheyenne Mountain Zoo**. The exhibit houses 21 naked mole rats and explains the rats' point of view of their intricate and strict hierarchical castes.

At the **Denver Zoo's** Sheep Mountain, there were births of two Dall sheep and three Rocky Mountain Bighorn lambs.

An African lion recov-



A black-and-white ruffed lemur was recently born at the Detroit Zoo. There are only about 215 of these endangered animals in North American zoos.

Directors receive accolades

In recognition of her tireless career commitment to marine conservation regionally and nationally, **Monterey Bay Aquarium Executive Director Julie Packard** was recently honored with a **Lifetime Achievement Award** by the **National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF)**.



Steve Marshall, Director of the El Paso Zoo, was one of two U.S. zoo directors selected to go to China to help modernize zoo practices there. This marks Marshall's sixth trip to China. The **American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA)** has also tapped Marshall to start a conversation with Chinese zoos about bringing more red pandas.



The Los Angeles Zoo recently had three red river piglets. This litter, one male and two females, marks the fourth litter for the parents.

ering from a stroke is back on display at the **Reid Park Zoo**. Kitabu, who is 18, appeared to have weakness on the right side of his body when he tried to move.

Miami Metrozoo is not only a haven for animals, but also a paradise for some of the world's most beautiful and unique trees and flowers. The 25-foot

butterfly tree, a non-native tree originally from Panama and Costa Rica, produces a yellow to deep orange-colored flower that smells like an apricot. It's the only flower of its kind to have bloomed in the United States.

