



Visitor Services for  
Cultural Attractions

# Wild Connections

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

July 2010

## SSA associates help rescue oil-soaked birds

While the recent oil spill in Salt Lake City does not compare to the one in the Gulf, there were still ecological impacts. The broken oil pipe was not discovered until around 7 a.m. June 12, by that time more than 21,000 gallons had leaked into Red Butte Creek and into a pond at Liberty Park. This pond is home to many waterfowl, and most of them became coated in oil. Hogle Zoo staff was called to help collect the birds, and the Zoo itself became a cleaning station. Over 70 workers from **SSA**, **Hogle Zoo**, Tracy Aviary and other organizations were involved in cleaning close to 300 birds over three days.

The SSA staff involved came from all departments: Culinary, Cash Room, HR, Retail and included **Seth Palmer**, G.M.; **Ashley Sage**, Culinary Director, **Nicole Daly**, Cash Manager, **Tiffany English**, HR, **Jesse Shipp**, Executive Chef, as well as **Max Bowman** and **Ben Borstadt**, two seasonal retail employees.



*Tiffany English used Dawn dishwashing soap to clean an oil-soaked goose.*



*SSA associates helped clean oil-coated birds at Utah's Hogle Zoo.*

SSA staff helped by:

- ◆ Serving as runners to get workers anything needed,
- ◆ Transporting hay bales to drying pens so the birds could stay warm,
- ◆ Helping with sand bags to help contain the oily water,
- ◆ Oiling the birds with corn oil as to help break down the crude oil the birds were covered in.
- ◆ Providing food and beverages, (to brag a little, a few people even asked who delivered the pizza, thinking it came from an off-site pizza place), and
- ◆ Doing laundry. The two teenage seasonal workers did laundry all night to provide warm dry towels to the drying stations. Eventually they were rewarded for their hard work by being allowed to clean birds and blow dry some of the more fragile birds.

The team saved and eventually released 266 geese and 25 ducks, about a dozen birds were lost.



## Third annual Samburu Olympics:

**K-M Concessions** at the **Denver Zoo** recently held its third annual Samburu Olympics, a food/retail/guest service competition. During the after-hours event, more than 45 K-M staff competed against each other in skill contests, such as cotton candy, sandwiches, ice cream, green identification, cash register, selling, product displays and Iron Chef.

K-M President **Kevin McNicholas** kicked off the event by telling competitors to be competitive and try to win a medal, but have fun. Then **Cassandra Boyd** sang the national anthem, and the games began! Judges included Denver Zoo staff. Gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded to the winners. Special awards include a gold medal to **Delrick Williams**, who has the hardest job in the zoo with the least amount of recognition. It's the second year in the row that he has won this award.



**Kevin McNicholas**

## Words of Wisdom

### HALF BAKED!

This year is a little over *half* completed. So I thought, actually I have a *half* thought, that *half* quotes and ramblings just might be *half* appropriate.

In 1971, the Denver Broncos played to a 20/20 tie with the Miami Dolphins, who went on to become the Super Bowl Champions. Near the end of the game, the Broncos ran out the clock. Coach Lou Saban, defending the strategy, said "*half* a loaf is better than none." Henceforth, Lou was known as "coach *half* a loaf."

Maybe this year some of our readers are turning 50, a *half* a century. At 50 you might have the wisdom of a *half* century of experience, but by 75 you can't even spell wisdom. How about *half* a century of marriage? How many *half* truths were told to each other; or about others? And, after a *half* century of marriage, being old ain't *half* bad considering the alternatives. In every marriage after *half* of the first year, there are grounds for divorce. The trick is to find and continue to find grounds for marriage. An important note to re-



**Kevin McNicholas** earned a gold medal in *cotton candy making with no experience* category, he closely edged out **Mike Marcely**, Regional Vice President, who earned the silver.

The event was coordinated by K-M HR Manager **Marna Dowling**.

member is that while "love is grand, divorce is a hundred grand!" (Or in the words of a great country/western song, "she got the gold mine, I got the shaft.")

Eat well, drink in moderation, and sleep sound. Somebody said that. My response is "B--- S---!"

Remember to live life to its fullest. What happens if you decide to limit yourself to only *half* of life's experiences? We enter this world wet, naked, and hungry, and things get worse from there. Some have also said that the first *half* of our lives are ruined by our parents, and the last *half* by our children!

And since we just celebrated the 4th of July, I'll leave you all with this quote: "At each moment when the promise of this great American dream was in jeopardy, ordinary men and women, students and soldiers, farmers and teachers, nurses and janitors, found the courage to keep it alive." I don't know who said it, but it wasn't *half* bad!

## SSA catering staffs shine at fundraising galas

**From sit-down dinners to strolling suppers, the summer fundraising galas were in full swing the past few months at many of our partners' facilities.**



The **Detroit Zoo** 2010 annual *Sunset at the Zoo* event featured 40 different restaurants and zoo-themed martinis. More than 2,000 guests attended. The SSA Food Booth was themed "Fire and Ice." The SSA team won the "Best Themed Tent." SSA also was responsible for all the bars.



The 21st *Do at the Zoo* at the **Denver Zoo** was a record-breaker with 2,170 guests. **A Taste of the Wild Catering** created a mountain themed food tent and served tenderloin sandwiches along with their famous frickles and Rocky Mountain bull fries.



The **Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium** held its biennial gala June 11. Over 1,000 guests attended the black-tie event, which began with music, drinks, food and stunning stilt walkers. SSA's "A Taste of the Wild" catering staffed a booth as well as several bars.



For dessert, a taste of yummy peach cobbler was served on a bamboo spoon. SSA staff also set up and ran seven bars throughout the zoo that evening.

The *Beastly Ball* is the longest-running fundraiser for the **Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association**. At this year's Ball, SSA provided the

tram service to move the guests to the event site and then offered guests hors d'oeuvres.

The event was a taste of the town with numerous restaurants and bars lining paths for guests to enjoy. Betty White, Trustee, animal advocate and actress, was

honored by co-chairs Sir Elton John, Jane Goodall, Jay Leno, Sandra Bullock, Jamie Lee Curtis and others. The 88-year old actress' love for animals has developed into a devoted partnership with the Los Angeles Zoo spanning more than four decades.



Now in its 20th year, *WALTZ on the Wild Side* is the **Tulsa Zoo's** premier event. WALTZ provided sponsors and guests with the absolute best food from over 40 Tulsa-area restaurants, including SSA's "A Taste of the Wild."

Earlier this spring, **Zoo Miami** held its *Feast with the Beasts* gala with over 1,200 guests, 40 restaurants and eight bars. The **Living Desert Zoo** planned a spring-time dinner to celebrate their 19th annual gala, *A Wild Affair*. The **Cheyenne Mountain Zoo** scheduled its *Zoo Ball* the weekend before Memorial Day. The sold-out crowd of 300 enjoyed cocktails and hors d'oeuvres near the zoo's elephant exhibit.

Several zoos, such as **Utah's Hogle Zoo, Honolulu Zoo, Sacramento Zoo and San Francisco Zoo**, hold their fundraising galas in the fall.

## Small plates and individual vessels the newest trend in catering

By Shannon McNicholas, Event Design Manager

While American portion sizes are receiving scrutiny in many recent culinary discussions, European “small plates” are becoming a popular trend in restaurants, cooking at home and of course, the catering industry. Individual vessels with “tastes” of various meats, vegetables, starches and herbs are a hot item that our catering units work hard to keep up with.

Baja shrimp cocktail served in shot glasses with an avocado garnish, vegetable dumplings atop shredded gingered carrots, touched with a sweet Thai sauce and served in ceramic Asian spoons and torched smoked teriyaki salmon served on mini metal serviettes are just some of our more popular menu selections.

Guests enjoy this trend as it brings an entertainment factor to the event, allows for rich and savory flavors to be enjoyed and offers light grazing.



**The use of spoons offers a creative alternative to a small plate.**

Whether we are butler passing the items or displaying them in varying heights at stations, “mini” and “individual” are constants in our catering lingo. Even taking a comfort food entrée and fitting it to the trend is popular. A braised mojo pork, for example, served on an Asian spoon with a jalapeno corn bread crouton — still delicious and not as filling.

Our culinary teams understand the value of this trend in keeping food waste to a minimum and begin to appreciate the creation process of small bites as 300+ guest events surface on our calendars. Our clients, who are more health conscious and have more knowledge on general cuisine, enjoy this feature as a “trend” they enjoy including at their event.

We believe individual serving vessels are here to stay!



**Espresso cups are taking the front seat for show-casing desserts and soups.**

## Something to think about . . . our work culture

By Scott Schroder, HR Director

Recent surveys indicate that there has been a shift in what employees are seeking from their employers. Employees seek a greater connection to the company’s mission statements along with wanting to match their personal values with those of the companies.

I believe we all want to feel that connection to

an organization that makes us proud to be a part of it, whether it is a business, professional group, sports team, clubs, etc.

Here is the challenge: Are we creating a culture that makes the mission and values of the company real for our employees? Are we clearly communicating the mission statement and values to our employees?



## Reid Park Zoo recycles cooking oil

Reid Park Zoo SSA is now a member of Enjoy Dining Green. As a result, all of their cooking oil will be collected and proc-

essed into biodiesel fuel at a three-million-gallon biodiesel plant local plant in the Tucson

area. The service is provided for free by the Enjoy Dining Green organization.

**Tammy Klipfel**, SSA’s Green Team Leader, discovered the company while attending a Southern Arizona Green Team Mixer.

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

For the fiscal year that ended in June, the **Minnesota Zoo** surpassed 1.3 million visitors, 11% more than its goal, for the second year in a row.

The **Denver Zoo** reported its membership-household total has reached a record level of 64,040, surpassing a previous high mark set in 2008.

When a bosque fire started burning on July 7 just behind the **Rio Grande Zoo**, zoo employees scrambled to protect themselves and the animals. **Lucille Mathews**, a Tingley Beach Café employee, helped hose down the train station building. The fire shut the bosque bike trail down along with a portion of Tingley Drive. But officials said it could have been worse if the zoo employees had not sprung into action.

Facebook has become a popular marketing tool. The **Honolulu Zoological Society** recently posted a message about its a members-only saver card where members collect one stamp per dollar spent at the gift shop and culinary stands. For each filled card, members receive a \$5 gift certificate redeemable at the gift shop.

Newly appointed **De-**

**troit Zoo** executive chef **Ryan Senk** is unleashing his culinary creativity with a background that includes training in classical French, traditional Italian, Pacific Rim and Spanish-style cuisine. Prior to joining SSA team, Senk was Executive Chef at a local restaurant and assistant food and beverage director at an area hotel.

**Dave Crawshaw** has been named the new General Manager at the **Tulsa Zoo**.

The **Detroit Zoo** has begun their weekly concert series, *Wild Summer Nights*. Each Wednesday through July and August, the zoo remains open from 6:30 - 8 p.m. and features live music from local artists.

**MOSI** Retail Associate **Laurie Pinna** has become the Tampa area's featured chalk artist, winning awards and doing TV and newspaper interviews. Staff knows she's had a great weekend when her neck is sunburned and her fingernails have a bit of chalk under them on Monday morning.

At the **Denver Zoo**, **Stephanie Ruckriegle** has been promoted to Catering Director in charge of sales and

operations. Also, **Kelly Kennedy** has been promoted to Samburu Restaurant Manager.

**Rocky Rockovitz**, the **El Paso Zoo GM**, reported that one of the zoo's new giraffe gave birth on his birthday. The animal staff told Rocky he could name the animal, but wouldn't guarantee that his suggestion would be the animal's official name. He suggested, what else but, *Rocky*.

For Faces of Africa exhibit at the **Minnesota Zoo**, SSA staff produced plush, apparel and drink-ware featuring the colobus monkey, DeBrazza monkey, red river hog and African crocodile.

At the **Denver Zoo**, the ICEE Yard has been a successful addition this summer. It's a 16-ounce "yard" souvenir cup with a straw. Also, staff added a basket program in Samburu Grill where guests are encouraged to also purchase fries. Some catered events have allowed **A Taste of the Wild** staff to showcase its bamboo-ware including plates, cones for hors d'oeuvres and spoons — very eco.



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4699 Marion Street  
Denver, CO 80216  
303/321-2760  
[www.kmssa.com](http://www.kmssa.com)

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#### Employee profile

*Chris Hepp*

General Manager,  
Zoo Miami

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

Remember there is no way that the quality of customer service can exceed the quality of the people who provide it.

*Natalie Hall, Denver Zoo GM*

A guest's purchase is not just a transaction, it is an interaction. Be sure their purchase includes all the components that will provide the best experience. This may mean batteries, a treat, a book or merchandise that a sharp associate determines is a perfect fit, based on observation.

*Laurel Jacobs, MOSI GM*

## News from our partners

**Nashville Zoo's** clouded leopard Jing Jai gave birth to a rare female cub on May 24. This is the second clouded leopard birth at the zoo in two years.

Another giraffe calf was recently born at the **Fort Wayne Children's Zoo**. Named Kesi, she joins her a nine-month-old half-sister, Zahra.

A male Grevy's zebra foal was recently born at **Zoo Miami**. Grevy's zebras are the largest of the world's zebras and are considered an endangered species.

At the **Los Angeles Zoo**, a Komodo dragon laid 23 eggs, one of the largest clutches recorded in



**New animals introduced in the recently opened Passport of Africa exhibit at the El Paso Zoo include six Grant's zebras and four reticulated giraffes. One of the zebras gave birth to a calf the end of June. There are only six accredited zoos in the United States that have six or more zebras.**

North America. They will hatch this fall. Males can grow to 10 feet long and weigh several hundred pounds. They are the world's largest lizards.

Kivuli, an eight-foot-tall, one-year-old female giraffe recently made her public debut at the **Detroit Zoo**. Kivuli came from the Albuquerque BioPark on a breeding recommendation.

**Detroit Zoo** Executive Director **Ron Kagan** wanted to bring attention to the zoo's water tower landmark — so he climbed it. The tower is being repainted. He ascended the 150-foot structure using a harness and safety clamps in each hand to reach the walkway at the base of the tower about 100 feet up. He performed a similar climb in 1999.

An addax, a rare breed of antelope that inhabits Africa's Sahara Desert, was recently born at the **Fresno Chaffee Zoo**. Addax are one of the world's rarest mammals with an estimated 300 in the wild. In December 2007, two addax from the zoo were released into Tunisia where the species was extinct.



**The zoo in Miami got a new name and a new look at its 30th anniversary celebration. Also, the zoo built a new entrance with a 30-foot animal cutout and a state-of-the-art LED screen scrolling pictures from within and announcing zoo events.**

The **Fort Wayne Children's Zoo's** Sea Lion Beach has two young new additions. Female sea lions, two-year-old Legend and one-year-old Cassandra, joined nine-year-old half-sisters Fishbone and Grits.



**Three rare snow leopard cubs were recently born at the Albuquerque BioPark, however only two survived. Only 14 surviving cubs have been born at seven U.S. zoos this year.**