



Visitor Services for  
Cultural Attractions

# Wild Connections

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

August 2011

## A growing appreciation for globally-inspired grilling

By Travis Kight, Executive Chef

Grilling in American backyards has gone global as standard hot dogs and hamburgers take a back seat to regional enticements inspired by the grilling traditions of cultures from around the world.

Our chefs are fulfilling the demands of their increasingly sophisticated guests for more adventurous menus, styles and healthy options using this technique. Think about it! What type of cooking style brings in more natural flavor than grilling over an open pit with wood or charcoal!



**The new grilling station at the San Francisco Zoo provides a dining alternative.**

Anytime you talk about cooking over fire, you're talking about killer flavor and FUN!

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## Industry expert Kathman joins the SSA team

Mark Kathman has recently named Regional Vice President of Operations.

Mark said one of the reasons that he made a career move to work with the SSA team is that he saw the exciting things that have been occurring within SSA in the past few years. "SSA's vision, goals, strategies and culture are exactly what I want to accomplish in my career," he added, "I wanted to join the winning team and be part of something special." Mark also pointed out that his new role will allow him to be more hands-on with staff and with clients.

Mark has more than 15 years of extensive experience in culinary management operations, guest services and staff development.

"Mark has proven his leadership skills

while serving as a Regional Manager for a competitor's Leisure Division," said SSA Senior Vice President Tim Brantley said, "Mark is a natural leader who brings a wealth of operational planning experience as well as a drive to innovate to be the best. We are excited to see what he adds to our SSA formula." He added that Mark has a passion for mentoring others and his positive leadership and strategic innovation have always been valued by his team and his clients.



**Mark Kathman**

Mark and his partner, Elsa, have two daughters, Maya, four, and Isabella, 14 months. They currently live in Houston.



## Words of Wisdom



Kevin McNicholas

Whether you are 20, 40, 60, or even 70; whether you have succeeded, failed or just barely got along; whether yesterday was full of sun or a storm, or one of those dull days with no weather at all, life begins each morning! Each night of life is a wall between today and the past. Each morning is the new door to a new world—new vistas, new aims, new attempts. Yes, each new morning is indeed a NEW DAY!

## Popularity of grilling, continued from page 1

The increasing interest in globally-inspired grilling is in line with a universal restaurant shift occurring throughout the country. **Chef Beau** (Cheyenne Mountain Zoo) explained that there's an increasing sense of passion around grilling, especially for Americans who embrace the heritage of barbecuing. It lends to a more relaxed atmosphere. It's the way things are trending from food trucks to more casual dining in general.

K-M Concessions and SSA are adding grill concepts around their locations, so customers can see and smell the experience of grilling

**Grilling tips from the experts**

Marinades and spice rubs play an integral role in the aroma and flavor of grilled meats and vegetables. They also provide an endless avenue of experimentation for chefs. Marinades help to achieve caramelization and intensifies the flavor. One great technique is to marinate meat in yogurt. Yogurt contains an acid that tender-



**Chef Ryan (Detroit Zoo) believes the major benefits of grilling are enhanced flavor, healthier preparation and faster prep time.**

izes the meat. This also gives the meat a beautiful caramelized color and flavor. One easy technique is to take lamb and put sliced onions on top of the meat. Then tap it with the back of the knife to tenderize it. Why onions? Because their acid breaks down the muscle. One of the biggest mistakes people often make is to over marinade and mask the original ingredient. Adding flavor without killing the product is key when marinating!

**The McNicholas Family helps build a therapy garden**

Kevin, Mary and their children have long been the champions of the Rocky Mountain MS Center, an organization that improves the lives of people with multiple sclerosis through care, support, education and research.

One of their recent projects for the organization was to help fund a therapy garden for the Center's King Adult Day Enrichment Program (KADEP). This effort provides a day program for younger adults with MS, brain injury and other neurological conditions.

"In everything they do, they demonstrate their deep commitment to our community, and they live out their values. They are role models for all of us on how to be our brother's



**Kevin and Mary McNicholas helped create a therapy garden for one of the many charities that they support.**

keeper, said Karen Wenzel, MS Center Executive Director. "Our community is richer because the McNicholas family is here in Denver. They are my favorite family," she added.



## Roof-top gardening proves to be a success at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo

Chef's Gardens are becoming more than a trend, they are becoming a way to offer guests the freshest quality ingredients and help offset an institution's carbon foot print.

The culinary staff at **Cheyenne Mountain Zoo** jumped on this bandwagon by planting a small

garden on the roof-top of the renovated Grizzly Grill. You may wonder why a rooftop garden? Space consideration was one reason and the other was that guests could view the rooftop garden while riding the popular Mountaineer Sky Ride, a chairlift-style, open-air ride at the mountainous zoo.



*The Cheyenne Mountain Zoo culinary team hauled pots and soil to plant a small garden on the roof of the recently renovated Grizzly Grill.*



*Chef Beau takes a walk through the roof-top garden to harvest a few vine-ripened tomatoes.*

**Chef Beau** reports that they decided to do a test run on a roof-top garden to see if it's possible to harvest enough produce to make an impact on what they do day-to-day and also to see what would grow successfully. The garden is fairly small at this point because they weren't sure what to expect from it.

They have been able to grow several varieties of heirloom tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, tomatillos and an abundance of herbs. They have used the harvested vegetables in menus for small, higher-end catering parties.

This idea has caught the eye of Zoo President **Bob Chastain**, as well as zoo guests. The zoo has also given their commitment to support the team next season so they can go **BIG**. Chef Beau reports that they are very excited for the possibilities that could come from this and can't wait for next spring!

## El Paso Zoo offers "green" attractions

Two new attractions at the **El Paso Zoo** provide green ways for guests to enjoy the zoo.

The Hunt Family Desert Spring is a naturalistic-looking splash pad featuring dancing water and low-flow jets with recirculated water. It's sanitized with chlorine and UV.



*El Paso Zoo staff show off their new environmentally-friendly splash pad.*

Also, a refurbished 16-gauge train, called **African Star** (left), offers guests a half-mile journey around the zoo's African exhibits. The train is fueled by propane. The design resembles an 1865 steam locomotive from the old west.



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

New members of the SSA team at the **Detroit Zoo** are **Stacie Linn**, General Manager, and **Jill Lajoie**, Facilities Manager.

Stacie joined the SSA Detroit team the week that it had its largest sales in history. Stacie was previously the General Manager of Food Service at the Columbus Museum of Science and Industry (COSI).

Jill will manage grounds, janitorial, custodial and special projects in this new role for the Detroit Zoo. Jill has a background in hotel operations from the Marriott umbrella.

**Mike Marcely** will be the Area Manager and GM at the **Colorado History Museum**. When the museum opens in 2012, K-M Concessions will be responsible for Admissions, Catering, entire Facility Custodial, the Café, Gift Shop, and working together with History Colorado to implement Business Intelligence initiatives through a fully integrated Point of Sale system..



**Lisa Sparks**, Retail Operations Manager at the **Cincinnati Zoo**, shared that one of the reasons she works for SSA is because of people like retail staff member **Katie Geiser** who recently performed a random act of kindness.

**The act . . .** After Katie took a phone order for a plush snake from Utah's Make A Wish Foundation, she offered to deliver it to the young boy who faced yet another surgery at a local hospital. As you can see both he and Katie shared an EXTRA special time with his new snake.



**Chef Miguel Guillen**, Culinary Director for the El Paso Zoo, hosted a bug cooking demonstration during the zoo's bug educational event. He showed guests how to make bug stir-fried rice, chocolate chip cricket cookies and chocolate-covered crickets.



The **Maryland Zoo** team faced a clean-up job after Hurricane Irene. The storm forced an early closure on Sunday as well as Monday due to a power outage and destroyed trees. Unfortunately, when the zoo re-opened on Tuesday, food service was not available due to loss of food.



The **Cincinnati Zoo's** **Chef Brian McCorkell's** Sweet & Smokey Chili won spiciest chili and best presentation at the Hamilton County Fair. Displaying the awards are **Kurt** and **Carla** of the culinary staff.

## Connections



Published by  
Service



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K-M Concessions.

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## Employee Profile

*Rus Murakami*  
Honolulu Zoo  
General Manager

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## News from our partners

The **Detroit Zoo** recently unveiled its remodeled lion habitat. The \$1 million project, which began in February, doubled the size of the 3,500-square-foot habitat. And the moat that once surrounded the habitat was replaced with a 17-foot-tall glass wall that allows visitors to see the lions up close. The habitat now includes hot rocks to keep the lions comfortable during the winter and a new visitor viewing plaza. The lions' habitat was among the first to debut when the zoo opened in 1928.

**Pretend City Children's Museum** celebrated its second birthday on August 30 by offering free admission into the museum.

**Zoo Miami's** new Wacky Barn, located at the Children's Zoo, provides guests with a petting zoo experience in a colorful, non-traditional barn featuring a new collection of animals including



**MOSI recently opened its new Sky Trail® Ropes Course, featuring 36 elements on a 12 – 36 foot high, multi-level structure.**

miniature and Shetland horses, goats, alpaca and sheep.

**Nashville Zoo's** elephant population recently doubled its size with the addition of two female African elephants from the Jackson Zoo in Jackson, MS. The four elephants live in the zoo's African Elephant Savannah, a three-acre habitat complete with a 150,000 gallon wading pool, mud hole, tall trees for shade and plenty of grass.

### Welcome to our new residents . . .

*The San Francisco Zoo welcomed a five-year-old male Lady Ross's turaco, who joined 25 other birds in the zoo's African Aviary. (Pictured left.)*



*At the Denver Zoo, two capybaras, named Rodrigo and Gabriella, just arrived from Buffalo Zoo. The capybara is the largest rodent in the world. (Bottom left.)*

*A tiny rare tamandua or lesser anteater was born at the Reid Park Zoo mid-August. (Middle photo.)*

*A sitatunga, an African antelope, was recently born at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo. The male calf will spend most of his day hiding in the tall grass. (Bottom right.)*

