

A Message from the Saint Louis Zoo

2008 - A Roaring Success

2008 will stand out as one of the best years in the history of the Saint Louis Zoo. There are many reasons for this, but the first five reasons for our roaring success are the baby tigers that enthralled us all. Born to a mother that was hand-reared in the Philadelphia Zoo and a father whose own mother was slaughtered by poachers in Siberia, these Amur tigers are priceless and beautiful jewels.



Of course, there were other new arrivals at the Zoo that couldn't help but galvanize our public. Two baby giraffes were born, one on a busy summer day in front of a huge crowd of visitors, lucky enough to witness the final act in the drama of creation. Three baby Somali wild asses were born this year—our first for the second rarest equid in the world. Numerous animal births made this the “year of Zoo babies” in St. Louis, and people flocked to see them.



2008 was also the “Year of the Frog” here at our Zoo and at zoos and aquariums around the world. We marked the year with a wonderful exhibit we called “Awesome Amphibians,” a free experience that featured giant Chinese salamanders—the largest amphibians in the world. This exhibit documented the three different kinds of amphibians and focused on the threats facing these wonderful creatures. The biggest threat

is a deadly fungus spreading around our globe—a disease that could result in the largest mass extinction since the end of the Cretaceous period—the third and last great age of the dinosaurs.

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Speaking of mass extinction, not all of our new arrivals were living, breathing creatures; some sixteen of them were life-like recreations of animals long extinct. “Dinoroarus,” our temporary exhibit of animatronic dinosaurs, drew huge crowds. This exhibit gave us a chance to talk about difficult topics like extinction and how some predecessors of dinosaurs, like turtles and crocodiles, are still with us, as well as how some descendants of dinosaurs, like birds, still grace our lives.

Another great reason 2008 was a roaring success is that we had 2,988,058 visitors, our largest number since 2004! We’re particularly proud of this because we just weren’t sure how significantly the construction of the west section of Highway 40/I-64 would affect us.

In fact, we first predicted back in 2006 the Highway 40/I-64 construction project could negatively affect our attendance and revenue, and that’s when we started to plan for the future. We did plenty of belt tightening two to three years ago, but we did it in a gentle progressive fashion. We allowed attrition and retirement to bring down our staffing levels. We instituted new and rigorous systems of cost control and involved our entire staff in the process of making our organization as cost effective and efficient as possible. We saw the results of those efforts in 2008, where we set new records for cost

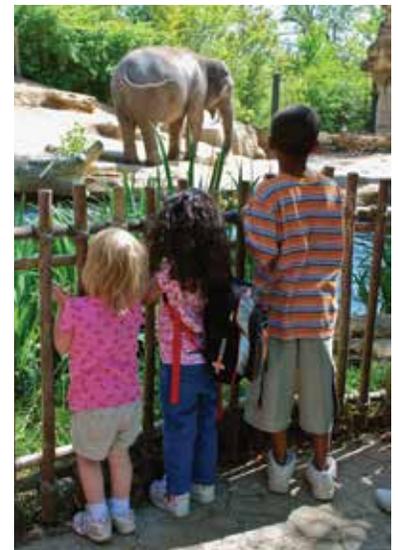
control while managing to break every major revenue target! But these aren’t the only reasons why we had a successful year during a period we now know was a significant recession. There are two other important reasons why we thrived during a year when some businesses and families in our community struggled mightily to make ends meet.

The first reason is that we are truly an accessible, affordable, and amazingly beautiful place to visit. As you all know, there are only three free zoos of any size left in America. While we may charge to park, there are an abundance of free spaces in and around Forest Park. We charge for food, of course, but unlike many zoos in America, we invite you to bring your own picnic and provide tables in the Zoo and immediately outside it. And if you love to ride the Mary Ann Lee Conservation Carousel or the Zooline Railroad, or bring your young ones to the Emerson Children’s Zoo—don’t worry, they’re all free for the first hour of every day, 363 days a year.

When an economic recession comes, it hurts. It hurts our ability to care for and enjoy our friends and families. But it is not only the fact that the Zoo remains an affordable destination even for those with the most limited means. There is something more—and this is the second reason—we are emotionally nourishing.

I saw it first in the dark days following 9/11. Within days of that horrible time, every zoo and aquarium in the nation was reporting record numbers of visitors.

Why? Perhaps they felt safe. Perhaps they wanted to



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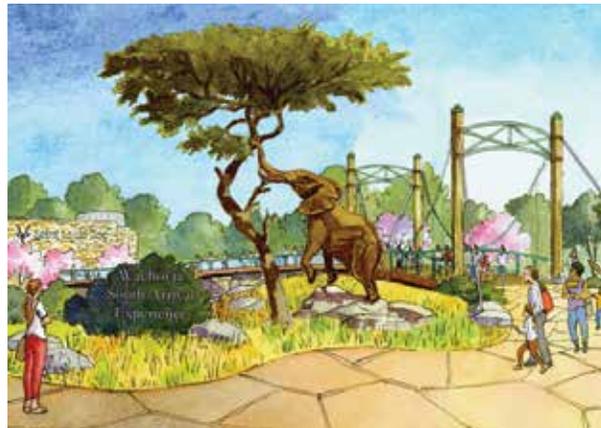
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be close to the amazing array of living things that can only remind us that life does indeed go on. Perhaps they were looking for the peace, beauty and tranquility of nature—a place where they can be close to those closest to them.

I see it now. I see people who find our Zoo as a place of refuge and security in a most uncertain time. Perhaps the recession will catch up with us in 2009. Perhaps the road closure, now at our front door, will dramatically reduce our attendance. All we can do is what we did in 2008—plan for the worst and hope for the best!

That's not all we will do though. In 2009 we plan to bring in a stingray exhibit, "Stingrays at Caribbean Cove", and allow our visitors to touch these delicate and unusual creatures of the sea. We'll also continue to improve our campus and our visitor experience by implementing the objectives of the Zoo's Strategic Plan.

For example, we have secured funding from the U.S. Government in addition to a very generous gift from The Wachovia Foundation that will allow us to completely rebuild our South entry experience by building a pedestrian bridge over the busy road that separates our South Parking Lot from our entrance. The bridge will be graced by a massive life-sized bronze African elephant, ponds and meandering walkways and



plantings. Also in the Strategic Plan, we aspire to bring new life to our polar bear and sea lion habitats. Thanks to generous leadership gifts from Jay and Carolyn Henges and the David B. Lichtenstein Foundation, we are closer to fulfilling those dreams.

We will continue to offer award-winning education programs, like ZOOMagination Station and Camp KangaZoo. And our conservation programs in the WildCare Institute continue to thrive as they touch

people and animals around the globe (Saint Louis Zoo staff in Madagascar pictured below). We'll continue to work on other aspects of our nearly one hundred year old campus—updating heating and air conditioning systems, repairing roofs, tending to our historic buildings, and adding to our safety network with modern fire detection and a campus-wide public address system. Maintenance personnel will soon be housed in a new modern facility thanks to a wonderful gift from Sunny Glassberg to create the maintenance complex. 2009 will also see our first full year of operation in our new First Aid Station—a joint project made possible by St. Louis Children's Hospital.

Those who are closest to the Zoo family know that 2009 will be a historic year. On the first day of January, the Friends and the Trustees officially merged to form the new Board of Directors of the Saint Louis Zoo

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Association. This merger was made possible when the Trustees paid off the bonds from the previous campaign. As merger discussions progressed, we were thrilled to learn of a generous commitment from the Friends to fund the many needed, and underappreciated, infrastructure improvements that will benefit all members and visitors. We are now better than ever positioned to implement the aspirations of the Strategic Plan.

2009 will also mark two very important occasions here at the Zoo. First, we will undergo the process of accreditation—a rigorous inspection of our entire Zoo by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Because we have to make sure that our Zoo is in perfect shape for this inspection, which occurs every five years, we thought it would also be an excellent time to host the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums for their annual convention. It is by far the most prestigious meetings of zoos and aquariums, and it is an honor to have delegates from the best institutions in the world here at our very special institution.

This conference will, in effect, mark the beginning of our Centennial celebration—a year-long event that celebrates the founding of the Saint Louis Zoological Society in 1910. I hope all of you will plan to participate in this incredible celebration—made all the more special by the completion of Highway 40/I-64 and the “re-opening” of our town.

As you can see from all of this, the Saint Louis Zoo has both a rich history and an exciting future. On a personal note, let me tout just one last “first” for our Zoo. For the first time ever, a foundation has elected to

generously endow the president of an American zoo. Thanks to the Dana Brown Charitable Trust, I have a new title beneath my name. This position is now the Dana Brown President & CEO of the Saint Louis Zoo—a position that all who come after me will hold for the next one hundred years and beyond. This is a huge honor and, while I know it is the position that they are recognizing and not the person, I can't help but feel humbled by their generous and far-reaching gift to the Saint Louis Zoo Endowment Trust.

It is, indeed, a privilege to be associated with this great institution and to work alongside the generous supporters, dedicated volunteers and talented staff—people like you—who make this institution the very best zoo in the nation.

Thanks for all you do.



Jeffrey P. Bonner, Ph.D.
Dana Brown President & CEO
Saint Louis Zoo

P.S. Mark your calendars on June 19th for ZOOFARI 2009—the best party in St. Louis!