

Behind the Scenes with the President

April 2008

Dear Friend of the Zoo,

Remember when you were young, dreaming about what you wanted to be when you grew up? Maybe you wanted to be a doctor, lawyer or fireman. Maybe even a zookeeper. It may have been many years before your true calling or passion became clear.

I think as organizations change and grow they, too, find their passion. Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is at such a juncture.

For years we've been serving the mission of connecting people with animals. Certainly, conservation has been a key component of our organization for as long as I can remember. But we're about to embark on a new phase.

Our conservation work is not going to change. But we've come to realize how few people really know about the conservation work we do. Furthermore, we recognize that being a conservation organization is just not enough for us. We want to be a conservation organization that engages the community to help us achieve our goals. It's a subtle change but it puts greater responsibility on us to connect people with wildlife.

Part of our focus now will be on how we connect people with wildlife. Creating lifelong memories will be important. And challenging our guests to be a part of environmental solutions will be critical.

I'd like to share with you two new programs we're introducing that illustrate our shift. Quarters for Conservation celebrates the wildlife conservation work we're already doing and provides us an opportunity to further expand our outreach regionally and around the globe. With every visit, guests will know they are making a difference for the preservation of wildlife. How will we accomplish this? The Zoo's admission price will increase this year to \$14.25 for adults and \$7.25 for kids (our first increase since 2003), of which \$0.25 will go directly toward wildlife conservation. Upon paying your admission you'll receive a "quarter" token and get to vote for one of six conservation projects that inspire you. Hopefully you'll have saved your token until the very end of your visit, after learning about the projects from informative graphics located

throughout the Zoo. Every vote is important as it will determine how much funding each project receives. We hope to raise \$100,000 through quarters alone the first year!

The six projects selected this year for Quarters for Conservation funding benefit snow leopards in Central Asia, African lions in Kenya, orangutans in Borneo, Mantella frogs in Madagascar, endangered butterflies in Colorado and Andean bears in Ecuador.

The second program is one we haven't officially named yet, although internally we refer to it as the Steve Martin training program (no, not that Steve Martin). Steve is a world-famous animal trainer who works with zoos, mostly training birds for free flight demonstrations. Steve's particular specialty is using positive reinforcement to train these animals to exhibit natural behaviors as they would in the wild.

During a visit to Cheyenne Mountain Zoo last winter, we talked with Steve about a concept that is not being done anywhere else in the United States: using his bird training expertise and applying it to other animals so that we might create "natural behavior" animal shows at our Zoo. Training the animals to exhibit species specific behaviors is not only mentally and physically enriching to the animals, but is also a new and exciting educational experience for the Zoo's guests who will witness behaviors that help species adapt and survive in the wild. A close encounter with a live animal demonstrating natural behaviors can leave a lasting impression, hopefully prompting guests to feel a stronger connection with wildlife.

What might this look like? Some of you know that we work with our animals to enable the staff to do husbandry and veterinary procedures. An animal allowing us to give it an injection or to look inside its mouth would fall in this category. For our new program, a grizzly might be taught to dig up some berries or to climb up on a rock and exhibit territorial or chuffing behavior. Or it might be trained to find fish in a pool. Contrast these types of experiences to those where a keeper talks about an animal while the animal does nothing.

Conservation remains our highest mission and the reason behind all that we do. I hope you'll agree that these new programs allow us to further expand our outreach – illustrating our desire to not only be a more fun and exciting destination, but a place where with every visit you know that you are making a difference for wildlife.

With warmest regards,



Bob Chastain
President & CEO
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo