



### **Zoo Edition Archives - Spring/Summer 2007**

#### **Excerpts from an interview with Jennifer McCrary, ARAMARK food services**

**WPZ:** What is your title, and what does your job entail?

**JM:** : I am the General Manager of ARAMARK at Woodland Park Zoo. I am responsible for the oversight and operation of food services for visitors to the zoo. This includes daily concessions, catering and special events. I market the food services that we offer here at the zoo, and help create the menus and design for our catered events. We serve a lot of food here — it's a big job!

**WPZ:** What's the best part of your job?

**JM:** I like being the "boss". That sounds funny, but as the boss, I get to make decisions that have an impact. Starting this winter all of our plastic ware — the forks, knives, spoons, cups and containers — will be made of corn husks instead of plastic. Corn husk products use a renewable resource instead of petroleum and take only 30-45 days to biodegrade. A regular plastic cup takes 2,000 years!

Another important decision I made is to buy only grass-fed beef for our hamburgers and hot dogs. It's a little more expensive than other types of beef, but it's much better for everyone — better for the cow, better for the environment, better for the consumers. And since we served 43,400 hot dogs last year, it makes a difference!

**WPZ:** What did you study in school?

**JM:** My degree is in sociology, and my favorite subject was English. Those subjects gave me a good background for dealing with people and with a variety of situations. In high school I was pretty much involved in every extra curricular activity, from school newspaper to debate team.

**WPZ:** How did you prepare for this job?

**JM:** I started working at the zoo at one of the concession stands when I was 17 years old, and continued to work in food services during the summers throughout high school and college. My hard work and attention to detail was noticed, and it was suggested that I move to the catering department. I knew nothing about catering at the time, but I found that I liked it very much. Because I kept asking questions, I learned a lot. I made a lot of mistakes, too, but really found my calling in the service industry.

**WPZ:** What do you like best about your job?

**JM:** I like being part of people's experience of the zoo. We have over a million visitors to the zoo every year, and most of them purchase and eat food here. It becomes a positive part of their memory of the zoo — lunch is an important part of school field trips, too! I also love coordinating the catered events that we offer, it comes very naturally to me. I love to plan the parties. You get to participate in someone's wedding — perhaps the most important day of their lives. Last year we catered 328 events at the zoo! It's very rewarding.

**WPZ:** What advice do you have for students that might like a job like yours?

**JM:** Get experience working in a food environment while you are in school. It's hard work, you need to be dedicated, so you need to be sure you like doing it. Part of my success at my job is the way I got started in this business. I worked my way up, and I've done all of the different jobs. My staff might not always like what I tell them, but they know that I've done their job, and understand it.

**WPZ:** Why do you like your job?

**JM:** I'm a real foodie — I love to cook, and I love to eat in restaurants. I enjoy being part of this industry and serving people. At the same time, I love the zoo and am very passionate about having a positive impact on our environment. With this job, I get to combine both of these passions. I feel very lucky.