



Zoo Edition Archives - Spring\Summer 2009

Carrer Corner

Excerpts from an interview with Larry Sammons, WPZ Exhibits and Facilities Manager

WPZ: What is your job title and what duties does that entail?

LS: My job title is Exhibits and Facilities Manager. It entails all kinds of different things. In one capacity, I'm responsible for the designing and building of in-house work, which can be anything from the new flamingo exhibit to replacing a boiler. I'm also responsible for the maintenance of grounds and the horticulture collection, as well as everything mechanical at the zoo.

WPZ: What type of education and previous work experience is valuable for this job?

LS: Everybody who has this position at any zoo comes to it via a different pathway. The specific job they do is often dependent on which pathway they took. Sometimes they're engineers, sometimes they're architects, sometimes they have a landscape background. I come from a theater background as a set designer. My original function at the zoo was designing and building in-house exhibits. I'm most closely aligned with the architectural aspects of the zoo, but I also have a construction background.

WPZ: Can you describe a typical work day?

LS: Not accurately! Typically, I have a lot of meetings. I participate in the capital projects, so when we have a capital project going on, I represent the zoo's interest artistically and technically as well as monitoring the performance of contractors. I also spend a lot of time at the computer with budgets, planning renovations and alterations to facilities, doing AutoCAD design work. I also typically get out on grounds to see what's going on, see how things look, make sure they look right, make sure that things aren't misplaced, out of whack or inappropriate. Make sure everything's living up to our professional standards.

WPZ: How do zoos play a role in green practices?

LS: We play a role in green practices in two primary ways. First, by actually doing things that support a green approach. We're willing to pay a green premium to fulfill our mission. Reducing our carbon footprint is imperative in order to live up to our mission, and it's the right thing to do. Second, we're uniquely situated as an educational facility to show the general public how green practices can be incorporated into their daily lives. We can show them stuff they don't know about, as well as the practicality of things they've heard of. For example, we have a demonstration of solar panels in the Family Farm. We want to show them what's out there and what can be done. We're in a good position to be a demonstration site: we're big enough to be able to implement green practices, but small enough that to do so doesn't need massive amounts of money.

WPZ: What advice do you have for kids who want to conserve resources at home and school?

LS: Come to the zoo and learn how to do it!