Woodland Park Zoo wins five awards at national conference

SEATTLE- Woodland Park Zoo has won several top awards from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the accrediting organization for more than 200 zoos and aquariums in North America. The awards were presented Sunday, September 20 at AZA’s annual conference in Salt Lake City.

Woodland Park Zoo’s former Director David Towe was honored with the highest award for professional excellence, the R. Marlin Perkins award. Towe served as director of Woodland Park Zoo from 1984 to 2000, a pivotal time for the zoo in which it transformed into the immersive experience it is today. During his time as director, Towe also sat on the Board, and served as chair, for the Association of Zoos & Aquariums from 1992 to 1999.

“The Marlin Perkins award is a major award in the AZA community and the fact that one of our own is receiving this award is truly amazing,” said Bruce Bohmke, Acting President and CEO at Woodland Park Zoo. “Dave worked to have others see zoos as world-class learning and conservation institutions. One of his mottoes is ‘a zoo should be done right, or not at all.’ He took this motto and his vision to a national stage in the early ‘90s; a critical time of growth and professionalization for the industry. Dave is a remarkable leader in our community and there is no one more deserving of this award; we are all very proud and excited for him.”

In addition to Towe’s recognition, Bruce Bohmke also received a top award for his long-term involvement with the AZA Professional Development Program. For the past 20 years, Bohmke has taught courses on avian management, biology and conservation for the professional development program held every February. “This award came as a huge surprise,” said Bohmke. “I am honored to receive this recognition from my peers. I enjoy doing these trainings because I get to share information on subjects that are near and dear to my heart with other AZA members. To receive an award for that work is just the icing on the cake.”

Woodland Park Zoo’s volunteer program was also recognized at the ceremony in a new category for Volunteer Engagement, receiving the Significant Achievement Award. “I am proud of our Woodland Park Zoo volunteer program and the huge contribution our volunteers make,” said Bohmke. “Our volunteers are individuals who endeavor to help others make a difference in the world, and I am overwhelmed at the passion and energy that these individuals bring to the zoo each and every day.” In 2014, over 772 zoo volunteers and nine service project groups comprising 480 individuals together contributed 80,127 hours of service to the zoo.

Association of Zoos & Aquariums, award-winning Woodland Park Zoo is famed for pioneering naturalistic exhibits and setting international standards for zoos in animal care, conservation and education programs. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save
animals and their habitats in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet’s future. For more information, visit www.zoo.org.

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