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MILLER PARK ZOO STAFF GARNER PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BLOOMINGTON – Miller Park Zoo Director Jay Pratte and Zoo Curator Pearl Yusuf recently announced professional accomplishments.

“We are extremely proud of these recent accomplishments” said Eric Veal, Director of the City of Bloomington’s Parks & Recreation department, adding, “these continued developments greatly contribute to the continued success of Miller Park Zoo and their dedication to animal management.”

Yusuf was accepted onto the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) Canid and Hyenid TAG steering committee. This is a significant professional accomplishment for Pearl as the position recognizes her many years of experience in the field and contributions to progressive animal management.

The mission of an AZA Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) is to examine the sustainability and conservation needs of species under human care and develop recommendations for population management. Each TAG coordinates, facilitates, and reviews progress toward goals for its cooperative animal management and conservation programs. TAGs coordinate with other regional and international conservation programs to lead, develop, oversee, promote, evaluate, and support the cooperative animal management, conservation, and scientific initiatives.

TAGs are composed of expert advisors who develop Regional Collection Plans (RCPs) and identify Animal Program goals and essential actions. TAGs also serve as AZA experts regarding the husbandry, veterinary care, conservation needs/challenges, research priorities, ethical considerations, and other issues applicable to their taxa. TAGs advise other zoo- and aquarium-based programs, define Animal Program goals and objectives, and identify research and conservation priorities. TAGs also examine Animal Program management techniques based on scientific studies and assist in developing animal care and husbandry guidelines.

Pearl’s new role will positively impact MPZ’s upcoming AZA accreditation inspection, as involvement in AZA programs demonstrates our zoo’s dedication to professional standards, earning the respect of AZA, the City of Bloomington, and professional colleagues.

Also last week, Zoo Director Jay Pratte’s co-authored paper, “*Improving Animal Wellbeing Using Behavior-Based Methodologies: A Discussion on Enrichment and Bears Under Human Care*” was published in the Journal of Zoological & Botanical Gardens – MDPI. Jay, co-founder, and current President of the international nonprofit “The Bear Care Group” (BCG), submitted the peer-reviewed paper with two colleagues from the BCG board of directors. The article discusses a modern behavioral approach to animal care and management, providing examples using bear species from around the world.

The Bear Care Group is a non-partisan entity, welcoming people from all disciplines (zoos, sanctuaries, rehab, field research, etc.) into discussions, teaching, and learning opportunities to increase understanding and care of all bears. The BCG maintains several forums to discuss any bear-related topics, including a Facebook group to encourage discussion and sharing of resources via social media, and a recently updated website. The BCG has also planned and hosted several international "Advancing Bear Care" conferences in both North America and Europe, inviting regional and international delegates to attend, learn and share their insight on bear care methodologies. The BCG uses nonprofit monies generated by conferences to fund regional workshops, often hosted in developing countries, creating a progressive curriculum to provide new insights and ideas on addressing issues affecting animals and their caretakers.

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