



WHAT WE DO CHANGES
THE WORLD

TOPEKA ZOO **2023** ANNUAL REPORT



Who We Are

Here at the Topeka Zoo, we are a community dedicated to wildlife conservation and education. **Our mission is inspired by the belief that through protecting and preserving the natural world, we can enrich lives and work towards making a more sustainable future for generations to come.** Just as we strive to protect the life found in our wild spaces, we are equally devoted to creating an environment that is as diverse and inclusive as the ecosystems we protect.

Our front gates welcome people from all over the world to connect with wildlife. We aim to inspire individuals to feel more connected to the planet through our educational initiatives, conservation projects and outreach programs.

Since 1933, we have worked together to create a future where wildlife thrives, communities grow and the bonds between humanity and nature are strengthened. **Join us on our journey as we work towards protecting and nurturing biodiversity.**

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Dear friends of the Topeka Zoo,

2023 was another amazing year at your Topeka Zoo!

Throughout our 90th year, we continued to make significant strides in conservation efforts, education and community engagement. We could not have done this without our dedicated staff and passionate stakeholders, like you!

Speaking of staff, we would like to acknowledge the departure of Brendan Wiley, who made invaluable contributions to our zoo during his tenure as CEO. He was instrumental in shaping the vision and direction of our zoo, and his leadership will be deeply missed. On behalf of all of us, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Brendan for his dedication, passion and unwavering commitment to the conservation of wildlife and the enrichment of our community.

We are pleased to share that we have recently appointed a new CEO who will lead the Topeka Zoo into its next chapter of growth and innovation. Dr. Christina Castellano joins us with a wealth of experience and a deep-rooted passion for wildlife conservation. She brings a fresh perspective, strategic vision and proven leadership qualities that will undoubtedly propel our zoo forward on its mission.

Looking forward, we are excited about the opportunities that lie before us and are confident that the Topeka Zoo will continue to thrive and inspire generations to come. Together, we will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of both animals and people alike. Thank you for your support of our Topeka Zoo.



click or scan to hear more from Fawn and Fred

Fawn Moser
Interim CEO, Deputy Director

Fred Patton
Board President

Impressions Made

Our stakeholders are the backbone of the Topeka Zoo. Their steadfast support sustains our ability to provide the level of care our wildlife and infrastructure deserve. Throughout 2023, we deeply appreciated the unwavering backing of all friends of the zoo, whether visiting from our own backyard, or from afar. Our ongoing conservation and educational initiatives made a significant impact, resonating with broader audiences through the power of social media. We achieved record-high levels of followers and engagement, marking a

milestone in our outreach efforts. In the future, we hope to continue growing membership and attendance each year, ensuring that everybody has the opportunity to connect with our wildlife and create bonds that will empower generations to come. The dedication of our stakeholders fuels our commitment to excellence, allowing us to continually enhance the visitor experience and expand our offerings. Using social media, we aim to reach new audiences and deepen engagement with our mission of conservation and education.

Voted #1 Family Entertainment in Topeka; Best of Topeka

5,190+
membership households

255,757
total visitor attendance

57%
of visitors were adults

51,150+
non-Shawnee County visitors

Social Media Impact Report

4,200,000
impressions

f 382.86%
increase

i 38.01%
increase

3,804 comments

312,815 reactions

131,866 clicks

48,905 shares

on Instagram and Facebook

100,000+
followers

f 55K

T 29K

i 16K

X 3K



Giraffe and Friends

In a historic moment, the Topeka Zoo proudly introduced its newest and largest project, the Giraffe and Friends exhibit, to the public in 2023.

Home to a diverse array of African wildlife, including; giraffes, lesser kudu, bontebok, thomson gazelles and an ostrich, this immersive experience offers a glimpse into their natural habitat. The “friends” aspect of the Giraffe and Friends exhibit stands as a monumental accomplishment for the Topeka Zoo. By cohabiting in the exhibit, these animals not only provide visitors with a more engaging and authentic wildlife experience, but also foster a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Our commitment to conservation shines through this new exhibit as the giraffes and friends serve as ambassadors for their wild counterparts.

The exhibit’s construction was a monumental effort, transforming unused space into a vibrant sanctuary. Thanks to the construction of Giraffe and Friends, we had the space to expand our giraffe family with new arrival Daisy in 2023. The success of the exhibit reflects years of dedication by all of the friends of the Topeka Zoo. From the initial planning stages to the careful introduction of animals, every aspect of the project was meticulously executed by our zoo staff and is now being enjoyed by thousands of visitors.

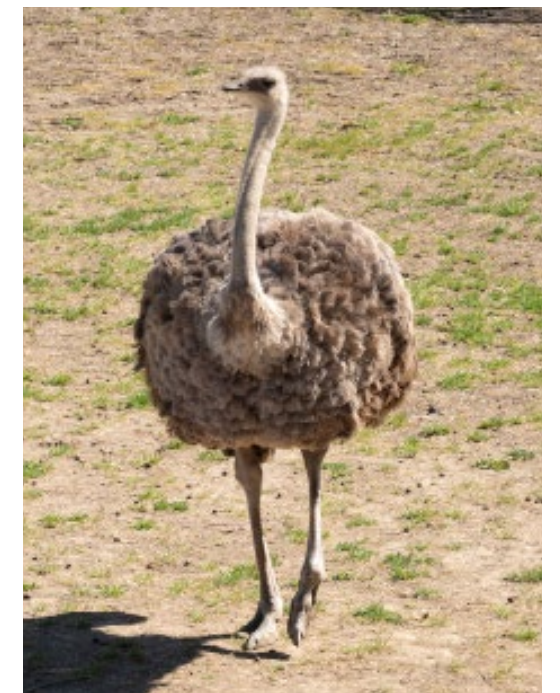
Passion Drives Our Mission

At the Topeka Zoo, wildlife conservation and education are at the heart of our mission. With the new Giraffe and Friends enclosure, we advance our vision of protecting nature and enriching our community. By uniting diverse African species, we tell a story of harmony and coexistence, inspiring empathy and connection. Each visit is an opportunity to learn,

engage and contribute to our shared commitment to preserving biodiversity. Together, we can make a difference for wildlife and communities worldwide.



click or scan to watch video and learn more



Sustainability

Sustainability is one of the keys to a better and brighter future. The Strategic Plan, created by Topeka Zoo leadership, is a five-year plan with big and small changes. With these goals as our guide, we take steps each day to a more sustainable future.

In 2023, the Topeka Zoo achieved a monumental victory in our mission to protect the ornate box turtle. After years of efforts and surveying, we uncovered the dire reality of declining turtle populations. Our collective advocacy led to legislative action which officially passed in 2023. This resulted in stricter

regulations to safeguard not just box turtles, but all reptiles and amphibians in Kansas. This accomplishment signifies more than just a legislative win, but a triumph for biodiversity conservation and a milestone in our strategic plan, particularly the first pillar.

By ensuring the survival of box turtles, we are helping preserve ecosystems and the species that depend on them. In alignment with the strategic plan, by securing a future for the box turtles, we have demonstrated the profound impact of dedicated sustainability initiatives.



Strategic Plan Initiatives

1 Slow the Threat of Extinction

2 Reduce the Effects of Plastic on the Environment

3 Ensure Food Availability for the Future

4 Create Respect and Empathy for Water Conservation

5 Be a Pipeline to Solutions

Conservation






At the foundation of our institution lies conservation, one of the key factors of sustainability. We are dedicated to contributing to conservation in the wild by taking action in an array of issues.

The black-footed ferret, once declared extinct, made a remarkable comeback thanks to efforts of programs nationwide. We take pride in our role in the ongoing reintroduction and monitoring of these ferrets in the wild. The discovery of a black-footed ferret in 1981, after it was presumed extinct, ignited hope for the species' resurgence. Now, after decades of

conservation work, these ferrets are being reintroduced into their native habitats, thanks to programs like ours here at the Topeka Zoo. We are among the few places worldwide that not only work to survey and monitor the ferrets in the wild, but display a live black-footed ferret; Olive. She serves as our ambassador at the Topeka Zoo. With care like frequent health checks and parasite control, their population has surged from 18 to hundreds. As a keystone species, the black-footed ferret's survival ensures the stability of ecosystems, making these conservation efforts crucial.



Conservation in Action

-  **2,336** plants sold
-  **52** manhole covers painted
-  **43** salt creek tiger beetles released
-  **188** monarch butterflies tagged
-  **118,000** conservation funds raised

Events at the Zoo

Reflecting on the 2023 season, we are thankful for the success of our community events. Roar and Pour sold out with an impressive 1,200 guests in attendance. The evening featured an array of experiences for guests to enjoy, including a magician and henna artists. With 16 local wineries offering over 100 different wines for sampling and 17 food vendors, guests enjoyed a night of drinks and discovery. Additionally, we revived the tradition of artist-animal collaborations, with eight local artists partnering with our wildlife to create captivating works of art. Through initiatives like our silent auction, every contribution made during the event directly supports the zoo and helps us continue our conservation and education efforts.

Brew at the Zoo also sold out, with an outstanding 2,000 guests. Thirty breweries served 100 different beers for those in attendance to enjoy. Activities included food trucks, musical acts and a raffle. Whether it was date night or girl's night out, this adult-only event allowed guests to explore the zoo after-hours and connect with the zoo in a new and unique way.

Zoo Lights wowed visitors in 2023 with brand-new attractions and activities. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Evergy, we unveiled a captivating new area featuring a mesmerizing 3D UFO, a rocket-shaped frame and interactive orb. 55,991 visitors experienced the magic of Zoo Lights, constituting nearly 22% of the total attendance for 2023.

1,200
Roar and Pour attendees



EIGHT
artist-animal collaborations



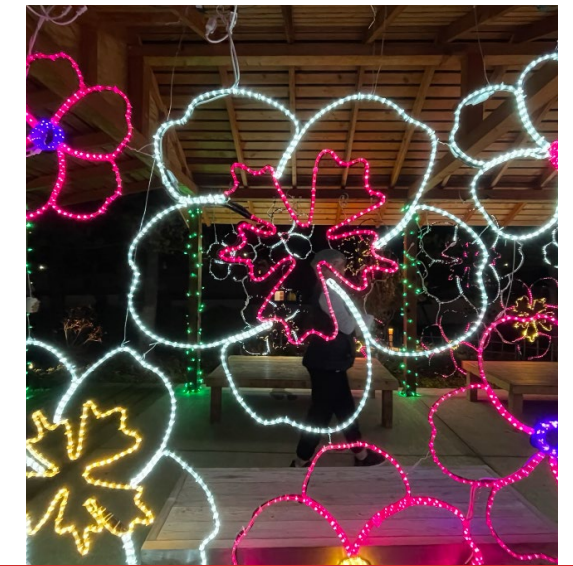
2,000
tickets sold for Brew at the Zoo



THIRTY
breweries served 100 beers




Zoo Lights



55,991 total visitors



Digital Reach During Zoo Lights
November 17 through December 30

1.5 million social media impressions

700+ new followers on Instagram and Facebook

Golden Lion Tamarin

In 2023, our focus turned to the outdoor enclosure for golden lion tamarins, an emblem of our commitment to wildlife conservation. Nestled within our rainforest dome resides Kris, Aspierta and their son, Ziko. Native to the coastal rainforests of southeastern Brazil, these tamarins faced a serious population decline in the 90s, dwindling to a mere 200 left in the wild. However, thanks to conservation efforts, their population has rebounded to nearly 3,000.

We have a commitment to the well-being and best quality animal care of the golden lion tamarins. Daily care involves ensuring cleanliness, promoting a diverse diet, training for seamless veterinary care and engaging enrichment activities to maintain their physical and mental health. Completed in 2023, the expansive new outdoor habitat triples their living space, offering more opportunities for exploration and play.

Our achievements extend beyond just physical upgrades. In 2023 we welcomed a new rainforest keeper, Caroline, who has been an amazing addition to the care of all rainforest animals, particularly for the golden lion tamarins. Thanks to funding for their new outdoor space, the golden lion tamarins now boast more saturated orange fur than ever before, a symbol of their excellent health. With every visitor, our goal is to cultivate a greater appreciation for the intricate web of life in rainforests around the globe and to recognize the urgent importance of preserving and caring for such a vital ambassador species.



click or scan to watch video and learn more about golden lion tamarins



Commitment to Animal Care

With Caroline joining our team, our care for all animals got even better. Through our efforts, we aim to inspire visitors and cultivate a deeper understanding of wildlife conservation.



click or scan to watch video and learn more about animal care

Our Global Impact

We are proud to have the opportunity to work with various wildlife from around the world, many of which are endangered, and serve as ambassadors for their counterparts in the wild. **Our conservation efforts and funding not only support animals at the zoo, but also wildlife around the world.** Hosting animals from diverse habitats right here in Topeka fosters enduring connections and leaves a lasting impression on future generations of conservationists. From rainforests to deserts, and everything in between, we showcase our impact and facilitate meaningful connections between visitors and wildlife.

Through these interactions, we strive to inspire empowered advocates, driving positive change for the future of all species.

Mapping Our Conservation Reach



Education



An Opportunity For All

In 2023, the Topeka Zoo proudly hosted a total of 511 learning programs, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to both education and conservation. These programs, ranging from classroom sessions to live animal presentations featuring our Ambassador Animal Collection, had an impressive outreach of nearly 14,000 individuals. Notably, we added around 100 new programs in 2023, further enriching the educational experience for our visitors.

At the heart of our mission is the belief that fostering a connection with wildlife is just as necessary as caring for and learning about our natural world. This ultimately contributes to conservation efforts worldwide. Our dedication to this cause was evident in the eight weeks of immersive camps we offered for both youth and teens. These camps provided participants with exclusive behind-

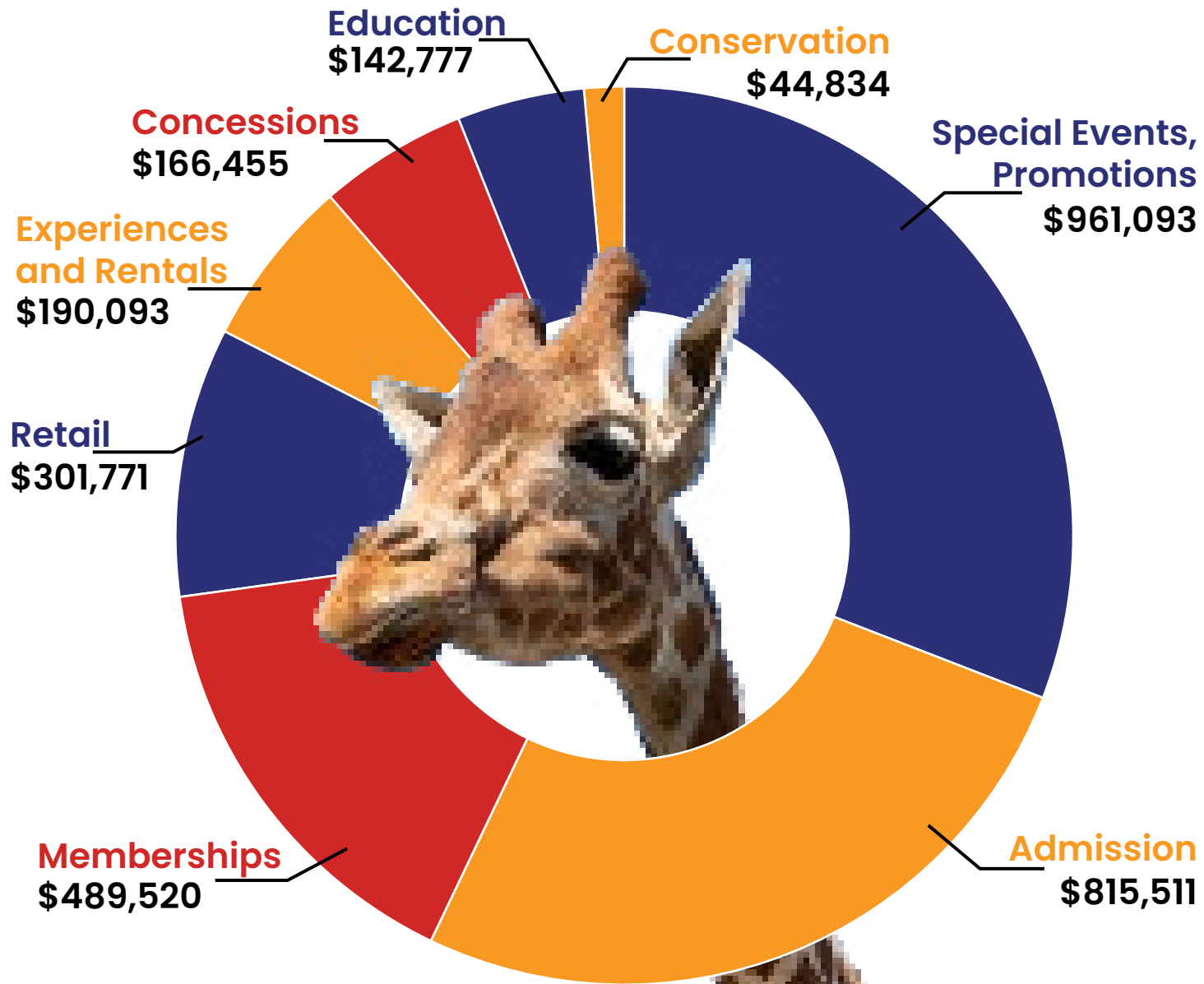
the-scenes access, exciting live animal encounters and daily themed lessons designed to inspire and educate.

Participants in our camps were engaged in a variety of activities, including crafts, games and many more hands-on experiences. Our commitment to inclusivity ensures that programs cater to individuals of all ages, from six to ninety. In addition to on-site offerings, the Topeka Zoo extends its educational reach into the broader community, with programs in retirement villages and nursing homes, encouraging a love and appreciation for wildlife among individuals of all ages.

As we reflect on the past year, we remain dedicated to promoting education, fostering conservation efforts and providing unforgettable experiences that inspire lifelong learning.



Financials



\$3,112,054.55
2023 Revenue

A Look Ahead...

As our tropical rainforest exhibit approaches its 50th anniversary in 2024, excitement grows for both the celebration and upcoming changes. Since launching in 1974, the rainforest dome has showcased a diverse range of species, highlighting the biodiversity of these ecosystems. We are excited to celebrate the impact that the rainforest has had in making us the "World Famous Topeka Zoo."

Not only do we celebrate our past, but up coming changes as well. We are

thrilled to welcome a new CEO in 2024 and announce the unveiling of "My World," a groundbreaking project, set to be the biggest update in zoo history, introducing new species and spanning 4.2 acres. The project promises an immersive experience for visitors, offering unparalleled opportunities for education and conservation engagement. With "My World," we are charting new territories in wildlife preservation and engagement, ensuring a promising future.



Leadership

Executive Team

Fawn Moser

Interim CEO, Deputy Director

Dennis Dinwiddie

Director of Conservation and Education

Dr. Shirley Lizo, VMD

Director of Animal Health

Cynthia McCarvel

Director of Development

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James Ballantyne

Margaret Ballantyne

Mary Barker

Teresa Barr

Susan Bauer

Gayle Bayless

Hillary Bixby

Paulette Bowman

Shelley Braden

Marc Braun

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Charles Brown

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Nan Cookus

Dina Cox

Dawn Crow

Annie Cummins

Joyce Daneke

Joe Davidson

Jan Escandon

Andy Evans

Sara Fincham

Nellie Finneran

Jim Garcia

Jolene Garcia

Mimi Gardner

Elsie Gibeson

Diane Glynn

Grayson Goodwin

Jennifer Grauer

Sheryl Gronewoller

Kenneth Hagen

Martha Hagen

Dennis Hale

Tina Hanson

Mina Haywood

Elizabeth Herbert

Diana Hershberger

Mary Jo Hobbs

Barbara Hoffer

Ted Jowett

Terri Jowett

John Kerl

Christine Kramer

Mary Krueger

Kim Krull

Shari LaRue

Pam Leinwetter

Nancy Leitnaker

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Terry Mannell

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Sherri McNary

Madonna Mergenmeier

Gerald Meyer

Jamie Lee Meyer

Jenna Lee Meyer

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Jean Pierce

Tom Redman

Jean Roach

Karen Scheopner

Emily Schnurr

Dennis Schwartz

Sharon Schwartz

Doreen Shea

Tom Shea

Jane Shirley

Martha Spencer

Vicki Stafford-Looka

Alan Stanton

Anne Stauffer

Greg Stitt

Vickie Stitt

Janet Straub

Vera Thompson

Carol Trahan

Sarah Tweedy

Cinda Vining

Janeen Walters

John Welborn

Susie Wells

Suzy Whipple

Jude Wiley



click or scan to watch video and learn more

117

docents in 2023

11,024

volunteer hours in 2023

59,082

volunteer hours in the past seven years

Thank You to Our Donors

Your support makes the difference.

On behalf of our beloved zoo, we wish to express our gratitude for your generous support. Your contributions help us to continue our conservation efforts, provide memorable experiences for visitors and ensure the well-being of our animals.

Your commitment to our mission strengthens the Topeka community and inspires us every day.

Individual Donors

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Holly Johnson
Nicole Johnson

Lon and Nancy Lewis Members, Donors and Advocates



We are very proud of the Topeka Zoo for being the World Famous Topeka Zoo, its scientific emphasis, conservation of wildlife and the environment... through its educational programs, all of us are enriched. Persons of all ages enjoy the zoo and it attracts persons from around the state and beyond.



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Kyle Kaberline
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Residence Inn Topeka

Pam Alexander "My World" Cabinet Member



The zoo is special to me because I have so many memories of trips to the zoo with my family for many, many years! The interaction with the animals is so fun and to experience the evolution of the zoo over the years has been incredible. The Topeka Zoo is innovative, exciting, fun, subversive and educational!



topeka zoo
& conservation center

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