

Monday, Sept. 10, 2012

Zoo staff,

Great news from AZA.

We've been accredited for another five years, our certificate has been issued and the AZA committee praised a number of departments and PDZA practices in its report.

"We passed with flying colors," John Houck reported this afternoon from the convention in Phoenix. "It's an excellent report. I'm thrilled for the staff who accomplished this, because it's a great reflection on the high achieving team at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium."

John asked that we send a note out as soon as possible because he wants to share his joy in this accomplishment.

"I want staff to know how proud we are of them and that we wish they all could have been there in that room" when the report was delivered, he said.

Several zoo areas and practices were cited as excellent, John said.

- Veterinary
- Animal care
- Animal enrichment
- Education
- Horticulture
- Dive safety
- Staff morale

Here are some excerpts from the report:

On animal enrichment: "The visiting committee believes the computerized enrichment program exceeds current standards."

On veterinary services: "All of the staff had great respect for the veterinary program and its contributions to the overall health of the collection."

On education: "The accomplishments of this department exceeded what the committee expected." The committee called the education program "superior to what members have seen at most institutions regardless of size."

On staff morale: "The committee met with a large number of staff members, and the camaraderie between all levels of staff is quite impressive, resulting in an overwhelming sense of pride in their facility."

On guest services: “Throughout the visit, the inspection team was impressed by the level of interaction between the staff and the public.”

On horticulture: The committee called the horticultural program exceptional and wrote: “The plantings in many of the public areas and in all of the exhibits are remarkable.”

On conservation and research: Both received praise from the committee.

On facilities: “With the exception of the North Pacific Aquarium, “all of the other areas of the park were in excellent condition and very well maintained.”

Not unexpectedly, the committee noted the NPA as an area of concern, John reported. The accreditation report said the committee “believes this building needs a major renovation or replacement to meet modern zoological practices.”

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