



Contact: Sheelah McCaughan, 253-404-3636 or sheelah.mccaughan@pdza.org
Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637 or whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org

High-flying, four-legged star takes maiden voyage at Point Defiance Zoo this weekend



Herald, the newest star of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's animal show, promotes water safety while enjoying the outdoors.

Tacoma, Wash. – Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's award-winning Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater debuts its new show on Saturday, May 22.

Herald, the zoo's newest star, is an endearing dog adopted from the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County. He wows the crowd during his performance by leading the show and even flying across stage in a hot-air balloon.

"He's been fantastic to work with," said senior staff biologist Karen Povey, "not a diva at all!"

Staff have worked with Herald since his arrival at the zoo in January to acclimate him to zoo visitors and the main stage.

"Herald picks up trained behaviors very quickly," said Povey. "During the show, he uses some pretty ingenious methods to get around, including crossing the Pacific Ocean by raft, hiding with cargo on a flight to Africa, and even hitching a ride on a hot-air balloon."

Education and zoological staff spent nearly a year drafting the script for the conservation-focused show. Visitors see a wide array of animals display their talents on the naturalistic stage as presenters discuss making choices that are good for the environment.

"We talk about carpools, reusable shopping bags and sustainable seafood choices," Povey said. "But when you have a costar as cute as Herald, it all sounds like a blast."

Zoo deputy director John Houck thanked the Humane Society for their help in finding Herald.

"He's quite a catch," said Houck. "The show wouldn't be nearly as effective without him, and we have our local Humane Society to thank for that."

"Herald is one of those smart, active dogs who needs to have a job to do," said Cecily Joque, Dog Adoption and Behavior Coordinator at the Humane Society. "I knew this would be the ideal situation for him because he gets loads of attention, stays busy, and can use his intelligence. He needs that!"

The zoo's goals for the Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater show include providing engaging messaging, inspiring conservation behavior and motivating visitors to connect with nature by participating in outdoor activities.

In 2009, Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater staff presented 242 shows between May and September, reaching a total of 90,558 visitors. In a survey done by onsite staff, 59 percent of respondents said that their participation in conservation efforts increased as a result of the show.

"That is a fabulous corroboration of what we felt all along," said zoo deputy director John Houck, "that Wild Wonders is a strong voice for conservation and specifically helping people rediscover their need for the comfort of nature. I can just imagine how adding a superstar like Herald will enhance our efforts even more this year."

Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater shows are free with zoo admission.

For more information about Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, visit www.pdza.org or call 253-591-5337.

###

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo & aquarium, is located in Tacoma's beautiful Point Defiance Park, 5400 North Pearl Street. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).