



NEW DEPUTY DIRECTOR SARAH OLIVER BRINGS PASSION FOR PEOPLE TO POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

Olympia, Washington native comes from South Sound career of nonprofit “servant leadership.”

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TACOMA, Wash. – For Sarah Oliver, leadership is all about helping people achieve their mission.

The Olympia, Washington native with a career in nonprofit leadership is bringing her people-focused expertise to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium as its new deputy director. The position oversees all zoo operations and staff, reporting to Metro Parks Tacoma Director of Zoological & Environmental Education Alan Varsik, who leads both Point Defiance Zoo and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.

“I’m really excited about the opportunity to work with a team of people who are so mission-driven,” said Oliver, who began in the position in July. “Zoo staff are so passionate, knowledgeable and skilled about animal care, conservation and the community. I’m very interested in the servant-leader approach, and I see my job as supporting everyone here at the zoo to grow and achieve our collective mission.”

And since Oliver is passionate about nature herself, that support comes full-circle.

Born and raised in Olympia, Oliver earned her Bachelor of Arts at the University of Washington, also gaining a teaching certificate before moving into the Puget Sound nonprofit sector. She served as the deputy director for Olympic Workforce Development (Area 1) and assistant director of workforce development for Goodwill (Olympics and Rainier Region), developing and directing workforce training, education and employment for youth and adults.

Prior to those positions, Oliver served as state coordinator for Dynamic Educational Systems, which also trains youth for workforce jobs, and as the national director for youth programs for Women in Community Service.

But in her spare time, she loves to get outside.

“Conservation is a big part of my life,” Oliver says. “I live on the Kitsap Peninsula, and the ability to hike and get out on the beach and forest, where it’s quiet, is very important to me. But that powerful experience of being in nature is not available to everyone. That’s why helping people experience it at the zoo is a wonderful goal to support.”

With a calm demeanor and quiet sense of humor, Oliver has spent her first few months learning all about the zoo world: animal care and biology, ecosystems, global species conservation and how zoos contribute to it.

“It’s a whole new world of learning for me, mid-career, and that’s a huge gift,” she points out. “But what I like most are the people here – passionate, driven and so positive. It’s a joy to work with them and help them.”

Plus, she adds, it’s a bonus to work in a beautiful zoological park.

“Whenever I need to clear my brain or stretch my legs, I can go spend time with the penguins or sharks,” she smiles. “It’s a mini-dose of nature.”

For more information, go to www.pdza.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources. A member of the [Metro Parks Tacoma](#) family, the zoo creates a legacy of sustainability for future generations through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities; it also embodies Metro Parks' mission of creating healthy opportunities to play, learn and grow. The zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). [The Zoo Society](#), a 501(c)(3) organization, is an instrumental partner in the conservation, animal-welfare and education initiatives.

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