



Dedicated To Professional Animal Care



National Zoo Keeper Week 2017 A Zookeeper's Tale: Then and Now

Dear AAZK Chapter,

It's time to start thinking about National Zoo Keeper Week (NZKW) 2017: July 16-22! This year marks not only the 50th anniversary of The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) but also the 10th anniversary of NZKW. In honor of these anniversaries, the 2017 NZKW theme is A Zookeeper's Tale: Then and Now. To better prepare AAZK chapters and facilities for the week, the NZKW program and the newly formed AAZK Resource Committee (ARC) created this planning packet to aid in your success. Additionally, over the next few months, we will be promoting the history of AAZK and zooquaria on social media. We invite you to join us by considering the history of keepers within your facility: What has changed in 50 years? Are there any lifelong staff members? What do you think the future holds for AAZK and the animal care profession?

During NZKW, AAZK's social media will also commit days to specific topics: in-situ (field) conservation, ex-situ conservation (breeding, incubation, etc.), training, enrichment, education & public outreach, animal husbandry, and some of our favorite animal stories. We need you to share your stories with us to better engage the public – it's up to you to make NZKW 2017 our most successful year yet! This informational packet will not only help you prepare for NZKW, but also guide you through the process of sharing your stories, photos, and changes you've seen over the years with AAZK.

In this official planning packet, we have included a press release to provide your facility, ideas for chapter events and activities to hold during the week, a guide to AAZK's social media campaigns, and *NEW* printable selfie papers. These elements can be used via social media and beyond to show the world what makes you a keeper, who you'd like to recognize as a Golden Keeper, and how you're celebrating NZKW. Please look for this packet to be updated annually; starting in 2018 it will be made available in the late winter.

The NZKW Program, ARC, and AAZK are here to help you make the most of National Zoo Keeper Week! As it is every year, this week is dedicated to sharing the passion and devotion of keepers to the world - and we look forward to helping you making this one golden!

Sincerely,

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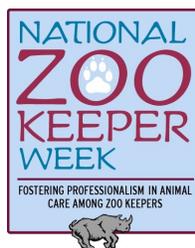


Table of Contents

Celebrating 50 Golden Years of AAZK!	3
Press Release.....	3
National Zoo Keeper Week 2017 Programming.....	4
Social Media Campaigns.....	4
Discover Some History	4
Share Your Selfie!	5
Infographics.....	4
Golden Trivia	5
Postcard Exchange	5
#ImAKeeper Graphics.....	6
Other Programming	6
About the American Association of Zoo Keepers and National Zoo Keeper Week.....	7
What is National Zoo Keeper Week?.....	7
What is the AAZK Resource Committee?	7
When is National Zoo Keeper Week?.....	7
Why is there a National Zookeeper Week?.....	7
What is the theme for the 2017 NZKW?	8
Representative Susan A. Davis introduced House Resolution 509 on June 21, 2007:	8
Who should you contact with questions?	8

Celebrating 50 Golden Years of AAZK!

Press Release

In celebration of AAZK's golden anniversary, 2017's National Zoo Keeper Week will be showcasing the work of keepers over the past 50 years through the theme "A Zookeeper's Tale: Then and Now."

Tucson, AZ – July 16, 2017

In recognition of dedicated animal keepers both old and new, the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) and zooquaria across the nation are celebrating National Zoo Keeper Week from July 16-22. AAZK is continuing its successful #ImAKeeper and #KeepersCare social media campaigns, which promote professionalism and the dedication to conservation shared by all keepers. This year AAZK is introducing #GoldenKeepers, which showcases the achievements and perseverance of rising keepers, as well as the lifelong dedication of veteran keepers.

AAZK was formed in 1967 and it, along with the zookeeper profession, has transformed over the past 50 years. Then, in 2007, the decision was made to devote a full week to recognizing the contributions keepers bring to the care and conservation of wildlife and wild places – National Zoo Keeper Week. For National Zoo Keeper Week's 10th anniversary, AAZK members from across the country will come together to promote the invaluable work done every day, as well as what AAZK has stood for over the past half a century. #GoldenKeepers will showcase the theme of this year's NZKW, "A Zookeeper's Tale: Then and Now," showing just how far keepers have come. The focus will be on changes such as the number of AAZK members and institutions, average keeper salary, job requirements, conservation efforts and zooquaria milestones.

National AAZK President, Penny Jolly states, "I have been engaging the public to take positive actions and be advocates for wildlife and conservation for almost 30 years as a zoo keeper. I am proud and thankful to be a professional member of a field which continues to advance husbandry practices, exhibit design, veterinary care and public educational programs. National Zoo Keeper Week is a perfect opportunity for zoo keepers and aquarists to showcase examples of their daily routine, professional accomplishments, conservation efforts and future goals."

AAZK invites all zoos, aquariums, and their guests to support this year's National Zoo Keeper Week celebrations, by following The American Association of Zoo Keepers on Facebook and Twitter (@AAZKINC) and sharing the posts with their social networks. By supporting AAZK, zooquaria and their guests can help promote the important work of animal care professionals across the country and around the world – and contribute to wildlife conservation at large.

This July, please join AAZK and their members across the country by following and posting #ImAKeeper, #KeepersCare #GoldenKeepers, and #NZKW2017 across social media.

National Zoo Keeper Week 2017 Programming

A lot can be done to both celebrate and promote the hard work of keepers, but remember to start small and work with managers to make it happen. Your chapter can participate in any or all of the national events, or follow the new and easy to use infographic guides to establish local plans.

Infographics

This year, ARC and the NZKW Program will bring AAZK's members more organized information by means of infographics, to help chapters and facilities prepare for a successful NZKW. Keep an eye out on AAZK's social media pages this spring for the latest guides on planning a successful event, ideas for on and off grounds activities, and how to best utilize your own social media for NZKW.

Social Media Campaigns

#NZKW2017 #ImAKeeper #KeepersCare #GoldenKeeper

Over the past two years, NZKW has started using hashtags to engage and connect AAZK's followers on social media with keepers across the country. This year, NZKW asks that you utilize official hashtags of National Zoo Keeper Week to continue that trend! By using these tags across social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), posts will be connected and easier to search for and reshare. Both of AAZK's social media pages on Facebook and Twitter will continue to share your photos and posts about NZKW this year, and further elevate the perception of the animal care field. While keeper appreciation week and similar terms are frequently utilized, the current goal of the NZKW program is to go beyond appreciation and move towards professional recognition. As such, ARC and AAZK wholly encourage the use of the unified NZKW hashtags and titles.

Discover Some History

The NZKW team invites you to honor the history of your facility as well as that of zookeeping. A lot has changed in the field in the past 50 years, and this NZKW aims to illustrate that. Watch AAZK's social media on the history of zooquaria - and at the same time, share your own! Discovering your staff and facility's history is a great learning opportunity to see how far zoos and aquariums have come. Share your findings with everyone by using the NZKW hashtags.



Photo courtesy of Akron Zoological Park

Share Your Selfie!

Please download the PDF attached to the NZKW planning packet email with printable “selfie” pages (entitled Selfie Printables NZKW 2017.pdf). You are encouraged to print the pages out on recycled paper or other materials, and fill them in with words or statements that you think complete the provided text.

Get creative! Take selfies (or regular photos) during your daily duties at work, with the animals you care for, or doing research in the field – and always remember to follow the social media policies of your facility or company. Share your images to the AAZK Facebook page (American Association of Zoo Keepers) or on Twitter (@AAZKinc) with any (or all!) of this year’s hashtags. AAZK will share selected images in the weeks leading up to NZKW - you may even see a few familiar faces from your favorite committees and the AAZK Board of Directors!

Please note, by sharing a photo with AAZK you’re acknowledging the following:

I hereby grant the American Association of Zoo Keepers permission to use my likeness in a photograph in any and all of its publications, including website entries, without payment or any other consideration. My permission indicates that my host institution has granted permission for the release of this photograph. I understand and agree that the image will become property of the American Association of Zoo Keepers. I hereby irrevocably authorize the American Association of Zoo Keepers to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish, or distribute this photo for purposes of publicizing the American Association of Zoo Keeper’s programs on social media, first and foremost for the promotion and educational value of the zoo keeping profession, but also for any other lawful purpose. In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copy, wherein my likeness appears. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of the photograph. I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the American Association of Zoo Keepers from all claims, demands, and causes of action which, I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of this authorization. I am 21 years of age and am competent to contract in my own name. I have read this release before submitting a photo, and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

Golden Trivia

ARC, NZKW, and AAZK’s Communications Committee are joining forces this year to bring you Golden Trivia! Trivia questions will cover an array of AAZK topics, past and present, and be included in the monthly Animal Keepers Forum, on social media, and at the National Conference in Washington, D.C. Prizes WILL be awarded, so make sure to watch out for the questions over the next few months.

Postcard Exchange

Consider truly making it a National Zoo Keeper Week by participating in ARC’s postcard exchange program! *Between May 7th and July 2nd*, participating chapters will send cards to fellow chapters wishing them a “Happy NZKW!”

To enroll in the program, contact paul.brandenburger@marylandzoo.org with permission to share your mailing address along with the name of the chapter member who granted us access to share. This e-mail response should be sent no later than June 18th. All enrolled chapters will both send a card to a randomly assigned chapter and receive a card from another chapter. Cards should be from either your chapter or affiliated institution. Gifts of any sort should not be sent; this program is meant to connect chapters rather than exchange goods.

The random assignments of receiving chapters will take place upon registration. Participants will receive the name and mailing address of their assigned chapter via e-mail and will be required to have their cards sent no later than July 2nd.

#ImAKeeper Graphics

Over the past two years, the NZKW Program has created word clouds to emphasize the diversity of the animal care profession, both in title and in job description. In 2015, word contributions were submitted by followers on the former NZKW Facebook page and by delegates at the National Conference in St. Louis; additional contributions were also made by delegates at the 2016 National Conference in Memphis. With the previous generations of word clouds, AAZK and NZKW recognized how keepers were (and still are) much more than skilled laborers – they are complex problem solvers in an ever changing profession. This year, under the guidance of ARC the NZKW team created these beautiful and dynamic animal word clouds, to personalize the position each keeper holds, starting with a *Golden Anniversary AAZK Rhino!* NZKW will be publishing many more species over the course of 2017 – so keep an eye out!



Other Programming

Every year, NZKW strives to bring the best of AAZK and the animal care profession to you, your chapter, and your facility. This year is no different! ARC and the NZKW Program have a few other things on deck to promote (and reward!) keepers... check your social media feeds this spring!

About the American Association of Zoo Keepers and National Zoo Keeper Week

The American Association of Zoo Keepers is a non-profit volunteer organization made up of professional zoo keepers and other interested persons dedicated to professional animal care and conservation. AAZK's mission is to advance excellence in the zoo keeping profession, foster effective communication beneficial to animal care, support deserving conservation projects, and promote the preservation of our natural resources and animal life. For more information, visit www.aazk.org.

National Zoo Keeper Week promotes the dedication and hard work of animal care professionals year round, celebrates animal care professionals' achievements during the third week in July, shares the accomplishments of AAZK chapters, creates awareness of AAZK chapters' dedication to conservation and wildlife to the public, and communicates the necessity for zoos and aquariums by way of animal care professionalism, research, and fundraising efforts.

What is National Zoo Keeper Week?

A program sponsored by the newly formed AAZK Resource Committee to recognize and promote dedicated zoo and aquarium professionals year round, culminating in an annual celebration during the third week in July.

What is the AAZK Resource Committee?

The AAZK Resource Committee (ARC) is a newly formed AAZK Committee dedicated to providing AAZK chapters, members, and institutions with the tools necessary for elevating the animal keeping profession and the zooquaria field as a whole. In addition, ARC aims to answer the most common questions in the keeper profession, while addressing new issues related to the zooquaria field. The NZKW Program now falls under the ARC umbrella.

When is National Zoo Keeper Week?

National Zoo Keeper Week starts annually on the third Sunday of July. Remember – it's never too early (or too late) to start planning for NZKW; check out the dates for upcoming years:

July 16-22, 2017

July 15-21, 2018

July 21-28, 2019

Why is there a National Zookeeper Week?

As the need to protect and preserve wildlife and their vanishing habitats continues to increase, the animal care professional's role as educators and conservation ambassadors has become essential. Zoo and aquarium professionals care for hundreds of species, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.

Three hundred and sixty-five days a year, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in all weather (from hurricanes to blizzards, to heat waves, and everything in between), keepers have to be ready for anything. They are involved in captive animals' lives and welfare from birth to death and every moment in between, and often create lifelong bonds. A keeper's day can include an array of tasks including cleaning, food preparation and feed out, medical treatment, training, enrichment, landscaping, exhibit design, animal introductions, public outreach and education, and much more.

Most animal care professionals have bachelor degrees or higher, many with advanced degrees, and continue to advance their education by attending workshops, conferences, and certificate programs annually. They are not just skilled laborers, but professionals who continue to expand their knowledge of an ever-advancing field. Working with animals requires constant complex problem solving and progressive learning. Beyond their daily duties, keepers are involved in research projects, field work, and conservation organizations.

But, in the end, being a zookeeper, aquarist, aviculturist – whatever you call it, they're all animal care professionals, and it is more than just a job. It's a career; it's a passion, it's a calling. THAT'S why we recognize zookeepers year round, and THAT'S why we have a week dedicated to promoting their skills, dedication, and enthusiasm for wildlife to world. Join AAZK every third week in July, to celebrate National Zookeeper Week.

What is the theme for the 2017 NZKW?

In celebration of AAZK National's 50th anniversary, the 2017 NZKW theme is A Zookeeper's Tale: Then and Now. The week will be focusing on the changes in AAZK and keeping in the past 50 years.

Representative Susan A. Davis introduced House Resolution 509 on June 21, 2007:

This resolution was proposed to encourage individuals on a national level to engage in programs, activities, and ceremonies during National Zoo Keeper Week which encourage species conservation and public awareness of the important role of zoos in wildlife conservation.

“Expresses support for the goals and ideals of National Zookeeper Week. Recognizes the contributions zookeepers make to the care and conservation of captive exotic animals and to research, public education, and recreation. Expresses a renewed dedication to the appreciation and preservation of animal wildlife and nature and an invigorated effort to foster conservation projects and increase awareness of the need for preservation.”

Who should you contact with questions?

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