

## Ways to Recognize and Support National Zoo Keeper Week:

### 1. NZKW Starts with the Individual.

- Take the week as an opportunity to personally educate the public about what it means to be a zoo keeper.
  - ask your facility if you can do a special keeper chat about NZKW
  - make posts on your personal FB about NZKW, AAZK, being a keeper, what keepers do, the history of NZKW, how you became a keeper, etc
  - make it a special point to educate the public about the zoo keeping profession and the week and why the week is recognized
- Treat yourself kindly, especially this week. Being a keeper can be emotionally, mentally and physically draining, and it's important to remember self-care. What better time to do some self-care than an entire week dedicated to recognizing members of the profession?
  - do your favorite self-care routine
  - get some friends together to enjoy the week with your favorite games (may we suggest the "Animal" category of the app game Heads Up?)
  - spend a few extra minutes with your favorite animal (check the Planning Packet for selfie papers!)
  - spend some time reflecting on the parts of your job you are grateful for

### 2. Get Your Teams or Entire Zoo Together! Pool your resources and make the week special for your coworkers, and get a special week in return.

- Break down fun activities to a team or individual (depending on the size of your facility or number of participants).
  - Examples: Carnivore team supplies popsicles on Tuesday, a teammate makes a banner and hangs it up in your area or break room (remember to sign it!), organize a talented hoofstock keeper to make stickers for teammates, education staff makes animal art for another department for Friday, etc.
- get together and make a parody video or educational video
- make awards and have a little ceremony at lunch to hand them out
  - serious: dependability award, most creative enrichment, best keeper chats, best record keeper, best handwriting

- funny: best hose roller, makes the fanciest diets, pinches their hand in a shift door the most

**3. AAZK Chapter activities.** AAZK Chapters can take point on NZKW activities and fun for the entire staff!

- put on a scavenger hunt for keepers after work or at your next chapter meeting
  - Omaha AAZK uses a site called Goosechase.com
- provide some snacks from the chapter
  - everybody loves them!
- if your chapter has a social media presence, do shoutouts
  - posts on what keepers do, their importance to zoos, their efforts in conservation, keeper profiles, keeper stories, keeper highlights, AAZK officers, longest and newest chapter members

**4. Recognition from management.** NZKW is a week dedicated to zoo keepers initiated by zoo keepers. Sometimes individual facilities do not recognize this week. If management of a facility chooses to recognize the week, remember to thank them profusely! If management would like some ideas to highlight their staff:

- shoutouts on social media
  - posts on what keepers do, their importance to zoos, their efforts in conservation, keeper profiles, keeper stories, keeper highlights, chapter highlights
- thanks, appreciation, praise
  - give personalized cards
  - verbally at staff meeting
  - in staff bulletins, radio calls or emails
- lunch provided by the zoo
- get to wear special shirts, have buttons made or anything with AAZK logo
- provide opportunities for special activities
  - BTS encounters in different departments
  - Zookeeper Olympics
    - have an opportunity drawing (extra day of PTO, swag, snack vouchers, etc)

**NZKW 2020.** With the novel coronavirus outbreak and certain areas of the country under social distancing or lockdown protocols, many of the above activities might be hindered. The NZKW Program wanted to provide some alternative ways to recognize the week under these unique circumstances.

- Chapters, facilities and individuals can use social media for shout-outs, recognition, keeper features and unique content. Consider making a video to

share what NZKW is, how it is celebrated and how you or your chapter have come up with creative ways to honor the week while following mitigation guidelines.

- Have a Zoom meeting with individuals from other teams or departments to wish them a happy NZKW and thank them for their hard work
- Utilize selfie papers or make your own
- Draw a fun obstacle course with instructions in chalk outside for fellow keepers to come across and complete (hopscotch, turn in a circle three times here, hop like a kangaroo here) and wish them a colorful “HAPPY NZKW 2020” in chalk at the end
- If your teams are split into two separate groups, communicate to make sure each team has a point person to ensure each team gets opportunities to recognize and be recognized by the AAZK chapter or individuals
- Have your chapter members write out what they would like to have seen done during NZKW this year on slips of paper (some things that may not have been possible). Have them put it in a jar and save it for a time where it is acceptable and safe for you to be together. Draw a few out of the suggestions and make them happen for a belated NZKW celebration!

