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**AMERICA’S ANIMAL CARE AND CONSERVATION PROFESSIONALS**

Tucson, Arizona -- In recognition of dedicated animal keepers, the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) and zoos and aquariums across the nation are celebrating National Zoo Keeper Week from July 17-23. AAZK is continuing its successful #ImAKeeper social media campaign, which promotes professionalism and recognizes the varied and complex skill sets that all keepers maintain, and is introducing #KeepersCare which showcases the diversity of keepers’ husbandry and conservation contributions.

National Zoo Keeper Week recognizes that while animal care professionals are as diverse in title as they are in responsibility, they all share one thing in common: a passion for saving wildlife around the world.

“Our goal with this campaign is to encourage zoo keepers and aquarists to share their interest and passion for animal care with the general public during individual encounters,” says AAZK National President Penny Jolly.

The American Association of Zoo Keepers invites zoos, aquariums, and their guests to participate in National Zoo Keeper Week to recognize the complex roles that keepers play in animal conservation and education, and how they help increase public awareness about the need to preserve the world’s ecosystems and the animals which inhabit them.

Penny Jolly adds, “Every individual makes a difference and by inspiring children and young adults about conservation, we are making a difference for the future.”

Join AAZK and their members across the country by following and posting using #ImAKeeper, #KeepersCare, and #NZKW2016 across social media.

**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](http://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.

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