

# **City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska**

**Tuesday, January 21, 2014**

**Regular Meeting**

## **Item Public Inp1**

**Council to receive the Riverside Discovery Center Annual Report.**

**Staff Contact: Anne James, RDC Executive Director**

# Riverside Discovery Center

## Year End Report 2013

Scottsbluff City Council,

2013 was a successful year for the Riverside Discovery Center. We are continually striving to improve our facility and what we offer to the community and tourists. This is truly a community venture – ranging from usage to support and passion for what we provide. It takes all of us in this venture to make it successful. And we offer a big thank you to all involved.

### Mission / Vision

**Vision:** To be a premier center for tourists and families, providing an attractive and safe destination for great experiences, discovery and quality education.

**Mission:** To inspire a sense of awe and stewardship for the natural world by supporting conservation, education, discovery and recreation.

Attendance/Impact      32,892

### Membership

182: 172 family memberships (\$65@), 5 Supporting memberships (\$150@), 3 Contributor memberships (\$250@), 1 Benefactor (\$500), and 1 Gift of Discovery member (\$1,000). In October we offered a special event for members only that featured popular targeted animal enrichment encounters and snacks. The RDC provided 13 free family memberships for local civic organizations for their fund raisers.

### AZA Accreditation

Every 5 years Association of Zoos & Aquarium members must go through an accreditation process. In 2013 we received accreditation status from the AZA following 2 years of extensive inspection. There are only 223 accredited zoos & aquariums in N. America and we are one of the smallest.

### Board of Directors

Board officers are Tony Kaufman, President; Todd Lewis, President Elect; Jamie Winters, Past-President; Mindy Burbach, Secretary; and Troy Hilyard, Treasurer. Dave Boeckner, a long-time supporter of the zoo and City of Scottsbluff representative, moved to Lincoln. Mark McCarthy graciously volunteered to fulfill the City of Scottsbluff representative role. We look forward to working with Mark. Board members include Adam Hoelsing, Darlene Kovarik, Kerri Schnase-Berge, Martin Mickey, Lisa Mohr, Pam O'Neal, Jill Pleick, Danyel Rein, Sandy Schon, and Lorrell Walter. They are all excellent Board members who assist the RDC in so many ways. We thank them all for their dedication.

### Staff

Executive Director, Anne James; Zoo Director, Peter Halliday; Education Curator, Kim Miedema; part-time bookkeeper, Susan Whitaker; Zookeepers Laurel Hauf, Dennis Davis, Gwen Schwanke, Katie Prinsen, and part-time zookeeper Michael Gillen; maintenance Tim Meister and Danny Lara; part-time gift shop attendants, Mary Ann Closson, Kimber Duncan, and Cynthia Townsdin.

### Animal Collection

RDC's animal collection contains 170 animals. These animals are either exhibited or used for educational programs. Our focus on exhibiting animals is to provide short-grass prairie exhibits from our region to provide a sense-of-place as well as to exhibit animals from around the world to demonstrate the variety of the wide world of the animal kingdom. All of our exhibits are currently full. With the completion of the Heritage Barn / Petting Zoo in 2014, we will be adding a few new petting zoo animals.

Education animals include box turtles, Blue & gold macaw, domestic ferrets, various snakes, hedgehog, chinchillas, leopard geckos, bearded dragons, Greek tortoise, tiger salamander, tarantulas & Madagascar hissing cockroaches, turkey vulture. They made 356 educational appearances during 2013.

### Education

- During 2013 we educated 12,187. (RDC is the largest non-formal educator in the area.) over an area of 200 miles radius.
- ESU 13 student events: Trip Through Time (kindergarten, N. Platte Valley Museum), Water Wonders (5<sup>th</sup> grade, Trails West Camp), Zoo Quest (2<sup>nd</sup> grade at RDC), and Let's Rock (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> at SBNM)
- ESU 13: English as a Second Language programs, Migrant Education programs
- Chadron Native American Outreach Center programs
- Senior living presentations
- School programs: WY & ESU #13 schools
- Pre-K programs: Head Start, Lil Explorers, Scottsbluff Preschool
- Civic presentations: Community Day Monument Mall, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Gering, Mitchell & Scottsbluff library programs, Camp Scott, National Night Out, United Way Duck Race, Legacy of the Plains Trees Along the Trail, among others
- Adopt a School partners: spring - GJH, fall - Lake Minatare and Scottsbluff Preschool
- Imperial, NE, Science Camp presentations

### Conservation

Most of our Species Survival Program (SSP) animals have birth control devices, as they do not have breeding recommendations by the SSP coordinators. The exception is the new birth of a female Reeve's Muntjac in December 2013. The RDC exhibits 16 species of SSP animals and teaches about the reasons their homes are disappearing and why the sustainability of the animal populations are of concern: Amur tigers, lions, Reeve's Muntjac, chimpanzees, Colobus & spider monkeys, African porcupines, Swift fox (endangered in NE), Golden-headed lion tamarins, Waldrap Ibis, Meerkats, addax, waterbuck, bobcat, 2-toed Linneas sloth, plains zebra, and bobcat.

### Special Events

- Zoobilee
- Zoo Carnival
- Earth Day
- Summer Season Kick-off
- Car Show
- Holiday at the Zoo

- Spooktacular
- Mini special days: Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentines at the Zoo
- Birthday parties
- Oregon Trail Days parade: our float won Best of Show and featured animals from Wildlife World and our Zoofari youth.
- I Can, You Can, We Can event at the zoo brought in food for the Guadalupe Center food pantry
- Animals predicting football game outcomes –animal enrichment and public entertainment
- Various scavenger hunts throughout the zoo
- Jingle Paws enrichment drive

### Volunteers

- Docents: we currently have 7 active docents who assist with animal presentations during programs or special events at the zoo. They are a very integral part of our education department and contributed 625 hours of service. New docent training will take place in 2014.
- Zoofari: During 2013, the Zoofari youth volunteer program was re-instituted at the RDC. 24 youth ages 13-17 yrs. participated in the 2 summer sessions. They went through rigorous training and assisted the zoo by monitoring the petting zoo, selling concessions, assisting with special events and conducted education stations at the zoo. The program was brought back by popular demand and once again proved very successful and popular.
- Petting Zoo monitors: 20 youth and adults assisting with monitoring the petting zoo (a USDA requirement for any animal contact area). They donated 75 hours.
- Special events: We have over 500 volunteers who assist with many of our special events and are crucial in providing those events. They do things from carving pumpkins, filling Spooktacular treat cups, helping to set up for events, and clean up. We couldn't do what we do for the public to enjoy without these very dedicated people. The Danny Lara family received the Volunteer of the Year award in 2013 for such tremendous volunteering in this category.
- Community Service: Several people do their hours of community service at the RDC. The Scotts Bluff County jail inmates also do grounds work on occasion.
- Adopt-A-Spot: 12 civic groups, families, or individuals care for garden spots throughout the zoo grounds. Their hard work makes the zoo a lovelier spot to visit and we greatly appreciate all of their gardening work.

### Capital Construction

- Zoo grounds improvements: The Oregon Trail Community Foundation provided a \$12,000 grant to improve the irrigation system and landscape several areas of the zoo grounds. The public certainly appreciated the improved grounds.
- Capital campaign funds were turned over to the Oregon Trail Community Foundation to oversee in December 2013. This provides a well-known community foundation's oversight for our capital funds. Our capital funds are maintained in a separate account, for RDC capital improvements only. We are glad to have OTCF as a major partner in our capital investments.

- Heritage Barn/Petting Zoo: Construction began in September and should be completed in the spring of 2014. No construction loans were required. The petting zoo will move to this area and 60 shoulder mounts from Wildlife World museum will be displayed within. These mounts will provide the educational component to demonstrate the wild breeds from which our domestic stock originated. We are very grateful that many of the construction firms involved in the project have given back part of their services to support this project. It all goes a long way to making us successful.

### Finances

- Contingency fund: established for operations in December 2013.
- City of Scottsbluff provides financial support for the RDC through a 10-year inter-local agreement signed in 2009. Their annual support helps us fulfill our mission of providing a great place for the community to enjoy, encourage tourism, and our main purposes: education and conservation.
- Sustaining Partners: The RDC currently has 56 Sustaining Partners who sign 5 year pledges to provide financial support for the facility. In July 2013 the Sustaining Partner recognition board was installed within the zoo center, for the public to realize those who support the RDC as Sustaining Partners.
- Grants: United Way, \$3,000 for education; Oregon Trail Community Foundation, \$12,00 for landscaping improvement; Scotts Bluff County Tourism, \$190,000 for capital improvements
- Donations: Throughout the year we receive memorial contributions, financial contributions, and in-kind contributions. They all help to provide operational assistance.

### Wildlife World Natural History Museum

Since the sale of excess mounts in 2013, the, museum has been closed to the public. However, many wall mounted animals will make the move to the new Heritage Barn / Petting Zoo in 2014 for the public to enjoy.

### Going Forward

Our grand vision of building a new children's museum and moving the natural history museum to our main campus, has not changed. The Board of Directors and management felt that taking on a huge construction debt at this time was not prudent. So improvements are being made to the zoo and the museums will occur in phases over time.

Thank you to the Scottsbluff City Council for their continued partnership in the Riverside Discovery Center.

Anne James,  
Executive Director

January 2014