

## **Woodland Park Zoo awarded transformative grant to advance empathy for animals**

**Initiative is changing the relationship between wildlife, zoos, aquariums and their visitors**

SEATTLE— Woodland Park Zoo is pleased to announce a \$7.15 million grant from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) to advance and expand the zoo's Advancing Empathy Initiative that fosters empathy for animals in Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited organizations.



This three-year grant continues the zoo's long-term partnership with MACP and organizations across the country to build strong empathic connections between humans and animals through research-based effective empathy practices, while also amplifying the zoo's mission to save wildlife and inspire everyone to make conservation a priority in their lives.

Emerging behavioral science is showing that there are social and emotional components to changing our behaviors. Feeling empathy is an often overlooked but necessary step between learning about the need for change and taking action on behalf of another. Empathy allows people to connect their concern for the wellbeing of animals to the importance of acting in caring ways, including conserving the environment upon which both people and animals depend.

"Millions of people each year visit AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums. We believe that building empathy is among the most powerful tools in our toolbox for galvanizing care and compassion for animals," said Alejandro Grajal, PhD, President and CEO of Woodland Park Zoo. "Bringing people and animals closer is an innate strength of our field. By providing close encounters with animals, our institutions are uniquely positioned to help visitors feel empathy for wildlife, increase understanding of how animals are cared for, and encourage visitors to actively participate in our wildlife conservation efforts."

Woodland Park Zoo's leadership in advancing empathy learnings and best practices within the zoo and aquarium community spans more than a decade. At the heart of this effort today is the Advancing Conservation through Empathy (ACE) for Wildlife™ Network, which began with 20 founding AZA-accredited partners in Alaska, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Washington and Wisconsin. The Network has since expanded to 27 network partner organizations across 13 states and has grown to include more than 550 participating professionals across five continents. Founded and led by Woodland Park Zoo, with philanthropic funding from MACP, the ACE for Wildlife Network facilitates professional collaboration and catalyzes accredited zoos and aquariums' capacities to develop, implement, and measure the impact of empathy programming. *(For a full list of participating Network partners, see below)*

With this new round of grant funding, the ACE for Wildlife Network will continue to identify and disseminate effective empathy practices – such as Woodland Park Zoo's kea enrichment program with the zoo's kea TepTep and Jean Luc, where guests

learn about these highly intelligent parrots, their food and enrichment preferences. Visitors step into the birds' feathers to think about the animals' perspective and needs and are given supplies to make them clever puzzles to hide treats. By observing the kea as they explore, play and problem solve, guests can relate and build a sense of connection to these birds, and that connection is critical to fostering empathy.

“We’re so proud of this innovative community of zoos and aquariums who is guiding our field into a new era of relationships between people and animals, while collectively impacting more than 17.5 million zoo visitors and program participants across the ACE for Wildlife™ Network partners,” said Marta Burnet, PhD, Director of Advancing Empathy at Woodland Park Zoo. “Our development of leading-edge empathy programs and rapid response evaluation of their impact equip our institutions to more deeply engage visitors in conservation efforts while consistently applying new learnings to our practice. Ultimately, our holistic aim is to strengthen our guests’ empathy muscles through connections with animals, nature and each other.”

During the three-year grant period, Woodland Park Zoo’s Advancing Empathy Initiative will re-grant \$3.6 million to the Network’s founding partners, who are already developing pioneering programs and continuing to expand their influence across our field nationally and internationally. For example, Racine Zoo used a previous grant to develop a virtual animal encounter program that gives school children the opportunity to meet, learn about and name a Madagascar hissing cockroach – the most popular and frequently highlighted was named Georgia by a group of kids. Giving an animal a name is an important method for fostering empathy because it helps individualize the animal. Zoo staff utilize empathy best practices during these educational encounters – including describing Georgia’s unique personality traits and engaging students in perspective-taking – that can build positive attitudes towards underappreciated species.

Thanks to grant funding from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, the ACE for Wildlife Network offers free resources and effective empathy building practices online at [www.aceforwildlife.org](http://www.aceforwildlife.org).

### **About Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies**

Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) provides meaningful assistance to society, the arts, and the environment. Based in Minnesota, MACP is the umbrella over two grantmaking foundations: Margaret A. Cargill Foundation and Anne Ray Foundation. Rooted in guidance from our founder, Margaret Cargill, we engage with strategic partners to support work that makes a lasting difference for communities, with particular attention to overlooked causes. Our global funding spans seven domains connected through common strategies and approaches: Animal Welfare, Arts & Cultures, Disaster Relief & Recovery, Environment, Legacy & Opportunity, Quality of Life, and Teachers & Students. The collective assets of MACP place it among the largest philanthropies in the United States.

This new grant supports Woodland Park Zoo’s vision to reimagine zoos through its 2018 through 2025 Strategic Plan. With the goal of being a catalyst for conservation, Woodland Park Zoo has undertaken a bold \$110 million Forests for All

comprehensive fundraising campaign to bring its Strategic Plan to life that has already been supported by more than 110,000 donors with generous gifts at every level. To learn more about the Forests for All campaign, please visit [www.zoo.org/forestsforall](http://www.zoo.org/forestsforall).

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**List of ACE for Wildlife Network Partner Organizations**

Akron Zoo, Alaska SeaLife Center, Blank Park Zoo, Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, Conservation Society of California/Oakland Zoo, Dakota Zoo, Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center, Henry Vilas Zoo, Idaho Falls Zoo, International Crane Foundation, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, Lake Superior Zoo, Minnesota Zoo, NEW Zoo & Adventure Park, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Racine Zoo, Red River Zoo, Roosevelt Park Zoo, San Diego Wildlife Alliance, Seattle Aquarium, Saint Louis Zoo, Utah's Hogle Zoo, Zoo Boise, Zoological Society of Milwaukee, ZooMontana