

## Accreditation: Celebrating Successes and Embracing Challenges

Dear Colleagues,

It's the time of the year when some parts of the country still have snow on the ground; and for some of us, like here in Dallas, we're experiencing record warm temperatures. Despite our different environments, we are all gearing up for the Spring Break rush and getting ready for what is likely one of our busiest seasons of the year.

We will welcome guests who may be locals, or may be visiting from afar, but all of whom are coming to zoos and aquariums seeking inspiration, education, and entertainment. We play such a critical role in connecting our diverse audiences with core themes of sustainability, responsibility, and wildlife conservation. We have the privilege of helping open their eyes to new experiences, new ideas, and of course, new animals.

We are fortunate to have partners in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums commercial members that support of our collective mission of care, conservation, and engagement. We will spotlight several of those partners in this month's issue of *Connect*.

Commercial Member Engagement Council member, Event Network, gives us a look at how Georgia Aquarium and Tennessee Aquarium are engaging guests in innovative ways. Both are using unique retail experiences to reinforce a commitment to sustainability and community.

We also will explore a new research study on gender and racial equity from Canopy Strategic Partners, also an AZA commercial member. Canopy Strategic Partners offers insights from the study and members discuss new measures that they are implementing to assist staff members with overcoming longstanding career barriers.

We continue to celebrate hitting a record number of SAFE and Species Survival Plan® programs. And we highlight the work being done by the Andean bear SSP and SAFE teams to raise the profile of what is often considered a largely unknown species to the North American public. AZA zoos, and these programs, are well positioned to raise awareness of the value of taking actions to benefit Andean bear conservation.



We hope you find your own inspiration within these pages. I challenge you to think about how to create the most inviting and inclusive space for your patrons this spring, while also inspiring them to learn more and care more about protecting wild places and the animals that call those wild spaces home.

**LISA NEW**  
AZA Board Chair  
Chief Executive Officer, Dallas Zoo



# Connect

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