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Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Announces Recipients of Quarter Century Award

The Maryland Zoo receives Award recognizing 35 years of continuous AZA accreditation

Silver Spring, Maryland (January 12, 2016) – The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the primary accrediting body for top zoos and aquariums in the United States since 1974, announced today the recipients of the Association’s Quarter Century Award. Established in 2015, this new award acknowledges facilities that have maintained AZA accreditation continuously for 25 years or more, highlighting their commitment to animal care, welfare, conservation, education, and more. The inaugural group of 119 awardees includes many facilities that have successfully achieved AZA accreditation well beyond the 25 year mark, including The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.

“AZA is dedicated to ensuring that the highest standards in the zoological profession are met, and this means that the accreditation process is therefore quite rigorous,” said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. “The fact that these aquariums and zoos have maintained continuous AZA accreditation for 25 years or more is an extraordinary achievement that deserves to be celebrated.”

“We are incredibly proud of our status as an AZA accredited zoo,” said Don Hutchinson, president and CEO of The Maryland Zoo. “That we have met the rising standards to maintain our accreditation since 1980 is a huge feat. Over time zoos and aquariums have grown to not only focus on animal welfare, but also on our commitment to education and conservation action. Together, we are making a difference in today’s world.”

To be accredited, AZA-accredited facilities have completed a thorough review to ensure that they meet and will continue to meet rising standards, which include animal care, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires zoos and aquariums to successfully complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years in order to be members of the Association.

The accreditation process includes a detailed application and a meticulous on-site inspection by a team of trained zoo and aquarium professionals. The inspecting team observes all aspects of the institution’s operation, including animal care; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services; and other areas. Finally, top officials are interviewed at a formal hearing of AZA’s independent Accreditation Commission, after which accreditation is granted,

tabled, or denied. Any institution that is denied may reapply one year after the Commission's decision is made.

Recipients of AZA's Quarter Century Award will receive a plaque honoring their achievement. The full list of facilities continuously accredited by AZA for 25 years or more is available by request.

About AZA

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the accrediting body for the top zoos and aquariums in the United States and seven other countries. Look for the AZA accreditation logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in saving species and your link to helping animals all over the world. To learn more, visit www.aza.org.

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