

MARYLAND ZOO

NEWS

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THE MARYLAND ZOO RECEIVES SENSORY INCLUSION CERTIFICATION

BALTIMORE, MD – The Maryland Zoo has become the first tourist destination in Maryland to earn sensory inclusion certification through KultureCity.

KultureCity is a nationally recognized nonprofit that provides sensory inclusion training and tools to venues and large-scale events

“We strive to make The Maryland Zoo welcoming to everyone,” said Don Hutchinson, president and CEO of The Maryland Zoo. “This certification better prepares us to assist guests in having the most comfortable and accommodating experience possible at the Zoo.”

Sensory sensitivities or challenges with sensory regulation are often experienced by individuals with autism, dementia, PTSD and other similar conditions.

As part of the certification, Zoo staff was trained by leading medical professionals on how to recognize guests with sensory needs and how to handle a sensory overload situation. KultureCity supplied the Zoo with sensory bags, which are equipped with noise cancelling headphones (provided by Puro Sound Labs), fidget tools, and verbal cue cards (produced in conjunction with Boardmaker).

One of the major barriers at the Zoo for guests with sensory challenges is sensitivity to over stimulation and noise. KultureCity signage around the Zoo denotes loud areas where noise-cancelling headphones might be helpful and quiet areas where guests can relax.

“To know families can visit The Maryland Zoo with their loved ones who have a sensory challenge and who were not able to previously attend, is truly a heartwarming moment. Our communities shape our lives, and to know that The Maryland Zoo is willing to go the extra mile to ensure that everyone, no matter their ability, is included in their community is amazing.” Dr. Julian Maha, co-founder of KultureCity.

Prior to visiting the Zoo, guests can download the free KultureCity app to see what sensory features are available and where they can access them. The app also includes a photo preview of what to expect while visiting the Zoo.

For details on the KultureCity program at the Zoo, please visit www.marylandzoo.org and www.facebook.com/marylandzoo.

About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo’s varied natural habitat exhibits in areas such as the award-winning Penguin Coast, Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the Children’s Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. For more information, visit www.marylandzoo.org.

About KultureCity

KultureCity is a leading non-profit recognized nationwide for using their resources to revolutionize and effect change in the community for those with sensory needs; not just those with Autism. Since the program's inception, KultureCity has created over 350 sensory inclusive venues in 4 countries; this includes special events such as: NFL Pro-Bowl, NFL Super Bowl, MLB All Star Weekend. KultureCity has won many awards for its efforts: NASCAR Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award in 2017, Cleveland Cavaliers' Quiet Space Sensory Room at Quicken Loans Arena was a finalist for the 2018 Stadium Business Award, and the 2018 Clio Sports Silver for social good in partnership with Cleveland Cavaliers/Quicken Loans Arena. Recently, KultureCity was awarded one of the World's Most Innovative Companies for 2019 by FastCompany.

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