**2017 American Association of Zoo Keepers, Inc. Awards**

**Lifetime Achievement AAZK Professional Service Award**

**Kathy Brader,** Smithsonian’s National Zoo. This award is in recognition of her outstanding commitment to professionalism in her distinguished career as a zoo keeper. Kathy has devoted her career and life to caring for and promoting the conservation of North Island brown kiwi. She is the SSP coordinator and studbook keeper for brown kiwi, has successfully hatched and raised six and was fundamental in creating the only “Meet A Kiwi” program in the U.S. She works closely with the New Zealand Embassy and New Zealand Department of Conservation and has even been named an honorary member of the New Zealand Order of Merit. She has been a long-time mentor to future zoologists and volunteers much of her time with Roger Jones and City Wildlife in addition to fundraising for a New Zealand non-profit and running the Kiwi Feather Program. She ensures that her knowledge and experience is shared with others through the various associations she is a member of.  As an accomplished keeper and conservation advocate, her 30-year career is an inspiration.

**Lifetime Achievement AAZK Meritorious Service Award**

**Susan Gurley,** San Francisco Zoo. You have been distinguished by your peers and superiors for your outstanding commitment to professionalism in your distinguished 27 year career as a zoo keeper. You have had success breeding Gila Monsters, Roadrunners and Ringtail cats, worked mainly as a carnivore keeper and was the primary trainer for Uulu, a 36 year old polar bear. Specifically noted is your having served for over 20 years on the Awards Committee.  You have been a mainstay of the committee and have given informative opinions, suggestions and judicial judgements for many years. You are the consummate professional.

**Kris Vehrs,** Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The American Association of Zoo Keepers is honored to recognize your outstanding career, service and contributions to the zoological community. Especially noted are your contributions as Principal Executive Vice President, Interim President for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and your commitment to maintaining the highest standards of animal welfare and accreditation in the zoo and aquarium industry. Through the development of conservation programs such as AZA SAFE and as a Trustee for Species360, you have shown your dedication to advancing efforts to save wildlife from extinction. Your distinguished career earns the respect and recognition of all members of the zoological profession.

**Lutz Ruhe Meritorious Achievement - Professional of the Year Award**

**Nicole Pepo,** North Carolina Zoo.  This award is in recognition of her outstanding commitment to professionalism during her distinguished career as a zoo keeper. Specifically noted is her extensive involvement with AAZK, national and local, North Carolina Zoo’s AAC Team, Training Resource Team and her promotion of conservation and ability to spread awareness of environmental issues. She promotes conservation through outreach and education, but also practices this herself by participating in and organizing events such as tree plantings with the Asheboro community. Nicole has shown that aspirations can be achieved through her drive to take on any challenge or opportunity presented that will improve the lives of the animals under her care as well as their wild counterparts.

**Jean M. Hromadka Excellence in Animal Care Award**

**Danila Cremona,** Los Angeles Zoo. This award is based on her extensive efforts to provide excellent care for red uakari monkeys. She has improved the lives of the red uakari housed at Los Angeles Zoo as well as rescued wild uakari at the Pilpintuwasi Rescue Centre. She is recognized for her dedication to researching wild diets and care, she is inventive with enrichment and shares her knowledge by working with high school students, presenting at conferences and through Animal Planet Live Streaming. Furthermore, her devoted activity in AAZK has greatly benefited uakari, as well as numerous other species worldwide.

**Nico van Strien Leadership in Conservation Award**

**Ann Knutson,** San Diego Zoo, for raising considerable funds for various causes: most notably the plight of the African Vulture. Not only have funds been raised but also critical awareness for the vulture has been shared both in the states and in Kenya. She received the AZA CGF grant to continue her work and has brought other zoos on board as well. In addition to her fundraising efforts, she currently serves as the San Diego Zoo AAZK Chapter President.

**Animal Nutrition Award**

**Brooke Stowell,** Fresno Chaffee Zoo, for updating and renovating the diet protocol for the avian species at her facility. She completed extensive research on species’ natural history and collaborated with the veterinarian, nutritionist and keepers to implement a commissary system that benefits the welfare of the animals and the keepers.

**Lee Houts Advancement in Enrichment Award**

**Lindsey McLaurin and Hilda Tresz,** North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher & Phoenix Zoo, for their collaboration to create a new enrichment device and training programs for elasmobranchs in a touch pool setting. These devices and programs allowed for animal 11615, a cownose ray, to become the first ray to carry an underwater camera on cue. The end goal, with continuation of the enrichment and training program, is for restraint-free barb trim, ultrasound, and injection training.

**An Nguyen,** Denver Zoo, for his work to establish a zoo teen enrichment intern program for the Predator Team and for working on increasing space for a variety of exhibits, most notably the Asian small-clawed otters and fishing cats. An has also utilized broken enrichment from other areas in the zoo to provide “new” items for the Predator animals.

**Nikki Maticic**, Smithsonian’s National Zoological Park, for the great passion she shows for all animals in her care - including 0.4 Leghorn chickens. She uses innovation and creativity to provide enrichment to combat the issue of bumblefoot and with the development of a goal-based enrichment plan to provide opportunity for displacement behaviors. All this has showed a decrease in foot issues, increased foraging behavior, and less territoriality between the flock.

**Commissary Team (Brian Cannon, Chelia Char, Tyrone Savoy, Albert Olson, Chris Stout, Coral McDonald, Stephen Schulze, Brittany Hudgins, Mike Kirby, Lori Smith),**Smithsonian’s National Zoo, for their work with various food enrichments offered to zoo animals. They work with all units, across taxa, to provide enrichment with some form of diet components - utilizing the normal diet in new and interesting ways to promote natural behaviors.
Certificate of Merit for Zoo Keeper Education
Endangered Wolf Center Animal Care Team (Tracy Rein, Emma Miller, Sarah Holaday, Danielle Rosenstein), Endangered Wolf Center, for creating a handling and husbandry workshop for Red Wolf and Mexican Grey Wolves. At the workshop, keepers gain knowledge on a variety of topics ranging from diet and enrichment to breeding and geriatric care. Keepers get hands on experience at the workshop by participating in annual exams for the wolves at the center. The workshop is free to Red Wolf and Mexican Grey Wolf keepers or keepers from facilities looking to acquire one of the species. The past three years the workshop has been filled to capacity.

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**Michael Crocker,** Dickerson Park Zoo, for going above and beyond to ensure his staff has access to professional development opportunities. Not only does he make professional development a budget priority but he discusses career goals with his staff. In 2016, the budget for staff development was $41,000 and roughly half was used for animal care and keeper staff training. These opportunities are not just for full-time staff but part-time staff can benefit as well. In addition to making sure keepers attend the AAZK conference every year, keepers can also participate in the AZA managing for success classes.

**Training Resource Team (Bria Stambaugh, Nicole Pepo, Dana Urbanski, Tamara Trull and Kelly Nields),** North Carolina Zoo, for developing a training resource for keepers at the zoo. Through this group new trainers are able to seek advice from experienced trainers. All keepers are able to ask for advice and guidance in between visits from their behavior consultant. The team meets monthly to discuss training issues and all keepers are invited to attend. The team also puts out a monthly newsletter highlighting training successes which has boosted morale amongst the keepers.

**Hilary Colton and Chelsea Grubb,** Smithsonian’s National Zoo, for initiating and creating ethical discussions to talk about current hot topics in the field. Being a large government organization the process was long but they persevered and brought these discussions to life. Topics included Maintenance of Orcas in Captive Environments and Management Euthanasia. Over sixty animal care and education staff attended their first discussion.

**Greater Baltimore AAZK Chapter,** Maryland Zoo in Baltimore and The National Aquarium, for their dedication to offering professional development opportunities to their members. The chapter maintains a budget of $1000 each year in their professional development fund. In 2016, the Chapter funded ABMA, two AAZK conference trips and a keeper exchange with the NC Zoo. In addition to conference trips, the Chapter also offers educational talks at each meeting and facilitated a zoo and aquarium keeper exchange program.

**Certificate of Excellence in Exhibit Renovation**

**Reptile Discovery Center (Zoo Keepers: Matt Neff, Lauren Augustine, Michael Miller, Robin Saunders, Kyle Miller; Assistant Curator: Matt Evans; Curator: Alan Peters),**Smithsonian’s National Zoo, for the creation of their innovative and diverse salamander exhibit. They are being recognized not only for their exhibit that highlights the local fauna and allows for the occurrence of natural behaviors, but the extra effort put forth to promote conservation in your own backyard as well as share and inspire others through the use of technology and social media.

**Certificate of Recognition**

**Penny Jolly,** Disney’s Animal Kingdom, for serving on the AAZK Board of Directors and as President for two years
**Dennis Charlton,**Smithsonian’s National Zoo, for serving on the AAZK Board of Directors  **Rachael Rufino,**Smithsonian’s National Zoo, for serving on the AAZK Board of Directors
**Melaina Newcomer,** Disney’s Animal Kingdom, for serving as Chair of the Professional Development Committee
**Zachary Page**, Pueblo Zoo, for serving as Chair of the Communications Committee
**Janee Zakoren,** Denver Zoo, for serving as Vice Chair of the Conservation Committee
**Dawn Neptune,** Hogle Zoo, for serving as a Chair and long term Advisor of the Behavioral Husbandry Committee and as one of the original members of the Committee
**Dawn Neptune,** Hogle Zoo, for serving as a Co-Editor of the Animal Keepers Forum Enrichment Options column
**Dennis Charlton,** Smithsonian’s National Zoo, 2017 National AAZK Conference Co-Chair
**Kenton Kerns, Smithsonian’s National Zoo, 2017 National AAZK Conference Chair**

**Certificate of Appreciation**

**Smithsonian National Zoological Park,** 2017 AAZK National Conference Host Institution

**Distinguished Service Award**

**National Capital Chapter,** 2017 AAZK National Conference Host Chapter

**Barbara Manspeaker Chapter of the Year Award**

**Saint Louis AAZK Chapter,** St. Louis Zoo