

# The AAZK Lee Houts Advancement in Environmental Enrichment Award

The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) is the administering organization of the Lee Houts Advancement in Environmental Enrichment Award presented by the AAZK Awards Committee. The purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding keeper-initiated contributions to the art and science of environmental enrichment. It is hoped that recognition of outstanding efforts by keepers to improve animal care and welfare through environmental enrichment will provide incentive to keepers to continue to be leaders in this important endeavor.

The Lee Houts Advancement in Environmental Enrichment was established in 2001 by the AAZK Enrichment Committee. Lee Houts proposed the award to the AAZK Board of Directors. The award was renamed in Lee's memory, and to honor her many contributions to the field of enrichment, following her death in 2005. The award is presented at the annual AAZK National Conference.

## Qualifications

- North American zoo, aquarium, or related facility that has improved the well-being of an animal or group of animals through outstanding keeper-initiated enrichment techniques.
- The enrichment is to be **above and beyond** typified programs and achievements of current professional and industry standards.
- Nominees must have excelled in one or more of the following categories:

### **Impact on Animal Welfare:**

- Developed innovative techniques that were implemented and evaluated to improve animal welfare.
- Created goal-oriented enrichment to increase positive behaviors or decrease negative behaviors. Enrichment helped animal(s) to exhibit natural behaviors, create positive social interactions (for social species), and/or increased utilization of exhibit.

### **Versatility:**

- Enrichment items are able to be used with a variety of species.
- Are made with sustainable materials.

- Utilized creative fundraising efforts which increased the availability of enrichment items for staff to utilize.

### **Involvement:**

- The enrichment project involved multiple departments including, but not limited to: maintenance, horticulture, interns, volunteers, and guests.

### **Sharing Knowledge/Education/Research:**

- Information gained from the enrichment project was disseminated to the zoo community to advance the art and science of environmental enrichment. Information was spread through conference papers/posters; Animal Keeper Forum articles; contributions to research; and/or workshops/classes at conferences or home zoo.
- Enrichment project motivated and developed staff, volunteers, and peers to invest and participate in in-house enrichment programs.

## **Nomination Procedure**

- The nominee must be nominated by an animal care professional.
- Complete the nomination form which includes the name of keeper(s) who initiated the enrichment, institution's name, address, phone and Director.
- List and **document** outstanding achievements in one or more of the categories listed under qualifications.
- Completed nomination packet (nomination form and supporting documents) may be submitted beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> and no later than the deadline: **MAY 1st** of each year.

**Verification** of the nomination requires a signature from the Director/CEO of the facility or their representative.

## **Selection Procedure**

- The Awards and Behavioral Husbandry Committees will independently review each nominee.