

Member spotlight – NEW Zoo & Adventure Park



As one of only 240 zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) in the world, the NEW Zoo & Adventure Park offers an intimate experience and connection with the animals while reflecting the community's dedicated involvement.

From its humble beginnings as a reforestation camp in the 1950s, the NEW Zoo has grown to accommodate a wide variety of animals, support conservation programs and educate and entertain more than 200,000 visitors every year. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visitors has gone down in order to comply with social distancing and sanitation guidelines to keep both guests and the animals safe. This includes the closing of the Adventure Park and playgrounds and limiting the available areas and times visitors can purchase snacks.

With the entire industry being hit hard, zoos across the country have been communicating and collaborating with each other on ways to stay open and keep the animal welfare up to the gold standard

the AZA expects of them. According to Neil Anderson, director of the NEW Zoo & Adventure Park, their new master plan includes opportunities to make the Zoo touchless and just as engaging to guests as before. Anderson goes on to describe the NEW Zoo 'as much a people business as it is an animal business;' that while they work to provide the best care for the animals, the goal of the Zoo is to also provide education, entertainment and excitement to everyone who visits.

One of the most exciting upcoming plans guests can look forward to is a canopy tour that will consist of suspended bridges over the Zoo's exhibits with various aerial trails for the animals to use as well. The NEW Zoo is also looking to add "behind the scenes" areas so visitors are able to see how the staff connects with and cares for the animals. Furthermore, there's a plan to add a cheetah exhibit to the African animals' section.

Not only did the pandemic shut down hit the public hard, but the NEW Zoo's animals have been affected as well. Having been closed for 84 days from

March to June, each of the animals' day-to-day normalcy and entertainment was interrupted. Being shut down also hurt the NEW Zoo's operations and funding, making now an important time for the community to plan a visit and come see the exhibits. "The animals miss people," says Anderson. "Of all [of our] animals, our black bear was so excited to see the people when we reopened. [He] ran around and did somersaults around his exhibit; you could feel his elation!"

Thankfully, the NEW Zoo is open all year 'round for visitors to see the animals in seasons they typically aren't exposed to. While there won't be Breakfast with Santa this year, staff will still deliver presents to all the animals and set up holiday decorations around the exhibits.

"Bottom line: Without you, there is no zoo. Visit, get involved, make a difference. Life depends on life. We have the opportunity here to make those connections."

Learn more about the Zoo's programs and purchase tickets at newzoo.org.

CHAMBER EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Virtual Power Networking Breakfast

Tuesday, Jan. 5, 7:30 to 9 a.m.

Free for members

Market your business to up to 50 peers via this virtual, round-robin opportunity to showcase your products and services.

Virtual Current Young Professionals After 5: Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice

Thursday, Jan. 7, 5 to 8 p.m.

Free for members

Don't let the winter blues get you down! Join us for cupcakes, craft beer and conversation with Current at the After 5 hosted by Cupcake Couture and Zambaldi Brewery. Enjoy cupcake decorating and beer samples and tours.

Virtual Workshop: Social Media for Business 2.0: Get Connected, Maximize LinkedIn

Tuesday, Jan. 12, 8 to 9 a.m.

\$20 for members, \$30 for non-members

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Current Young Professionals Workshop: Bias is a Four-Letter Word: From Awareness to Action

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 7:30 to 10 a.m.

Free for Current Young Professionals; \$60 for others

There are several four-letter words you should eliminate from your vocabulary. One of them is bias. Bias is personal, cultural and institutional.

This workshop will focus in-depth on the concept of bias. Participants will explore the different types of bias in our society, recognize the impact implicit and explicit attitudes and stereotypes shape how we engage with others and make decisions in the workplace, and how everyday people can build inclusive environments through the elimination of bias.

Learn more about all events at events.greatergbc.org