
ZAG NEWS

In Memory of Rene Wineland – Maui Ocean Center

By Yvonne Miles of Sandiego Zoo Global



Rene Wineland, one of my favorite mentors, a dear friend, and a fierce defender of our planet, left us too early this month. I first met Rene as a junior buyer in the 1980s when she was the store manager for the opening of Monterey Bay Aquarium. She invited us to experience the new aquarium and as she guided us through each exhibit hall, she enthusiastically shared her knowledge of buying and product development. I was in awe of her creative talent and scooped up every bit of information she provided. She inspired me by her ability to see things in colors and shapes. She instinctively knew how to pull together artwork to apply on products, keeping in mind how to display a collection within her stores.

**“The sea, once it
casts its spell,
holds one in its net
of wonder forever”**

~Jacques Yves Cousteau~

I reached out to her on many occasions for help and her wise counsel. We shared stories of our challenges and our victories. Most importantly, the tight net that brought all of us together was the animals. It didn't make a difference if they were from the land or sea, we shared a bond because we cared about Earth's precious wildlife no matter where they lived. We spoke of how we could be partners to get our conservation messages out. I eagerly followed Rene during tradeshow and at annual conferences. Our friendship grew out of a common cause but also out of a respect for one another's gifts and talents. Even though there were times when our paths didn't cross for years, I always thought of Rene as colleague I could count on! When Rene came out of retirement a few years ago to work for Maui Ocean Center, she saw a need to reconnect with the retailers of our industry.

Rene searched online and found ZAG, to her delight! When she clicked on the board listing, she found me once again. I was delighted to reconnect with her when I received her email and felt a warm surge of gratitude to have her in my court again, fighting the fight!

Her strength and commitment to conservation has always been her guiding light. Voted in on the ZAG Board in 2018, and our first Aquarium Board member, Rene shared her stories about how we collectively could make an impact on the plastic crisis facing our oceans.

When I received the message that she was in the hospital and her condition was grave, I selfishly prayed for her recovery because I wanted to keep her here on this earthly plain to help continue our conservation efforts. Don, her brother, called with the news that her condition was worsening so I asked to speak with her one last time. As he held the phone to her ear, my message was of love. I told her if she left us, I would see her again someday. As her brother pulled the phone away, he shared that she moved her head toward the phone. I knew she had heard me!

Life support ended for Rene on November 5, 2018, at 4 p.m. Maui time. I will never forget my dear friend and will always treasure the time I had with her. For those of you who had the privilege of working alongside Rene, I'm sure you will always remember her as a creative genius with a hilarious, quick-witted sense of humor, and as a dedicated defender of our planet's natural resources. Aloha~Rene~

Your Forever Friend, Yvonne

In Memory of Ramesh Shah

By Yvonne Miles of Sandiego Zoo Global



It's never easy losing a loved one, yet the recent passing of Ramesh Shah has left all of us who knew him with heavy hearts. Ramesh, a gentle giant with a tender soul, possessed an incredible spirit devoted to helping others, especially those from his beloved homeland, India. His energetic commitment to his family, his friends, and his work is a testament to how he led his life.

Ramesh's career path began in the United States when his late brother Ray asked if he would help with the family business formally known as Maharani Imports. The company was founded by Ray and Bonnie Shah in the 1970s. Ramesh moved his family from India to Dallas to help out. What began as a temporary move, lasted more than 40 years.

When Ray and Bonnie passed away, Ramesh decided to leave Maharani Imports to create his own company, Moksha Imports. He and his wife Usha were committed to purchasing the wholesale merchandise from families in India, whose lives depended on producing the wonderful products that Moksha Imports sold worldwide.

Usha, his cherished wife, helped in creating new designs for the products while their son Aashish oversaw their overall operations and social media. The charities they helped throughout India provided support for less- fortunate families.

My journey knowing this incredibly gifted and generous family began in 1985 and our relationship has continued to this day: their products are still shown and sold at the San Diego Zoo. I will miss Ramesh tremendously. In my heart, I know he has simply gone ahead of us. One day I will see his cheery smile and warm embrace again as I so often did at the tradeshow.

Rest in peace my friend, and keep a watchful eye over your family and friends until we meet again.

ZAG Scholarship Winners

By Tommy Brown of Saint Louis Zoo



Picture above of Samantha Halligan, Jackie Poepping and Samantha Haley (2018 Scholarship Winners)

This year ZAG was able to offer 3 Scholarships to the Gift Shows in Tennessee. The 3 winners were as follows: Samantha Haley (Bearizona Wildlife Park), Samantha Halligan (Lake Superior Zoo) and Jackie Poepping (Hemker Park and Zoo). Each of these winners were dynamic and really enjoyed the opportunities ZAG had to offer each of them and their institution.

Scholarship winners really took advantage of every tour or lecture ZAG offered. Jackie said, “I really enjoyed the *Conservation Tours* as they gave me the opportunity to see new product that I may have missed.” By going on tours, buyers take more time to really see what is in a vendor’s booth and the vendor has the opportunity to explain their product(s). ZAG also offered lectures on conservation fundraising at the registers. Samantha said, “The *Conservation Button Program* for fundraising really hit home, as we just started a similar initiative and I am hopping for the same success in donations for my Zoo in Lake Superior.” ZAG also had a lecture on *Reimagining your Retail Space* to relay the importance of a fresh looking sales floor. “I really enjoyed the reminders to keep rearranging the store and to keep products looking fresh for your customers” said Samantha. Over all there were nothing but positive comments from these 3 winners on the tours and lectures ZAG offered at the Shows.

ZAG also hosted a business meeting and dinner for all members and this is what one of our winners had to say about the dinner; “I loved the open discussion at each table and to hear perspectives and ideas from other institutions from around the World” said

Samantha. There was much discussion on “Single Use Plastics” at the dinner and this gave valuable information to all Buyers that attended the dinner.

“The ZAG mixer was thoroughly enjoyable meeting all the new people with places like my Zoo” said Jackie. The ZAG mixer is an annual event enjoyed by ZAG Sponsors and Members, in a fun Zoo setting in the Smoky Mountains. This is a great laidback event to get to know each other after a long day of working the Shows. Samantha said, “This is an energized and exciting event and I really loved being surrounded by all the animals.”

When the 3 winners were asked how they enjoyed the 3 Shows, they all responded with; “It was an amazing experience!” Samantha learned how to negotiate for better prices for Lake Superior Zoo, thanks to some of our dedicated ZAG members that were showing her the ropes of the Show world. Samantha took new knowledge home to her Bearzona Wildlife park for new conservation and USA vendors. Samantha said, “It is great companies stress conservation, education and helping others through their product lines.” Jackie was so excited that she was able to bring back a list of new vendors for her Hemker Park and Zoo. “I got a lot of “best buys” at the show and I was happy to see so many new products” said Jackie.

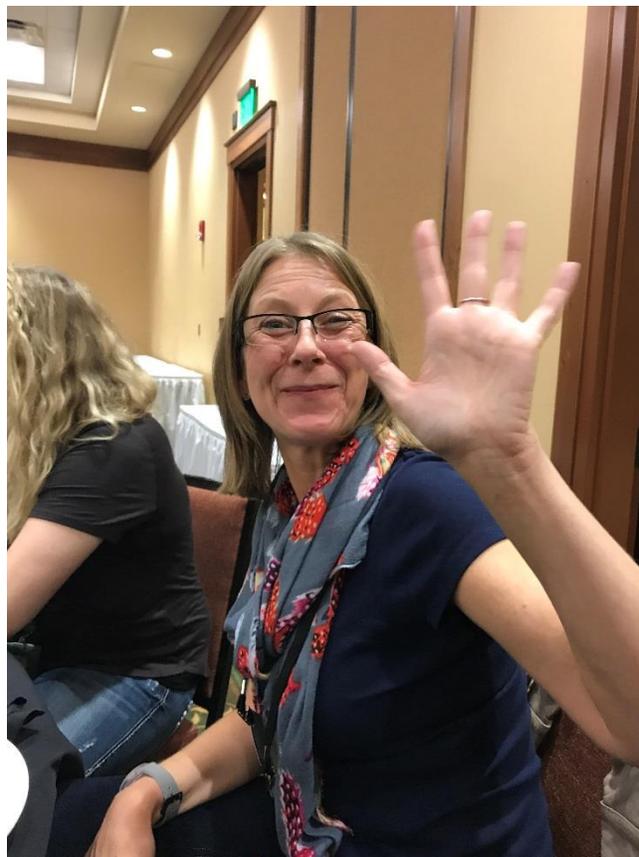
All 3 of these winners took back knowledge and new friendships from this Scholarship opportunity. Jackie said, “It was a pleasure to meet everyone” and she looks forward to another show or ZAG event in the future. Samantha said, “I was so happy to find a Minnesota (local) vendor on this trip on the Made in America Tour, and it will fit perfectly into my shop.” It is always nice when you can go to a Show and find someone in your own back yard. Samantha said, “I will miss the happy faces and great attitudes of the ZAG members” Sometimes a happy attitude is one of the most important things you can have during a workday and working in the mountains should be no exception. ZAG offer scholarships every year to its membership, if one fits the application criteria. So if you want an experience like these 3 winners had, keep your eye out for information on our website.

ZAG Business Meeting

A part of being a ZAG member is our annual business meeting and dinner. This years dinner was held in Pigeon Forge and the main topic for discussion was “Single Use Plastics”. The ZAG board announced that they have been in talks with many manufacturers to have them end the use of “Single Use Plastics” in their packaging. This is really a big win for ZAG and the World!

It was also announced at the meeting, the new ZAG Board members for 2019. The new Board members will be as follows:

Tommy Brown – Saint Louis Zoo, Melinda Green – Kansas City Zoo and Terri Scheunemann – Como Zoo. Congratulations to all, on your 3 year commitment to our industry.



“We have an obligation to ZAG, our institutions and the World to decrease single use plastics.”

The ZAG board also extended its gratitude to **Yvonne Miles, Bill Lucey and Michael Davis** for completing their service on the board and to the organization. Michael Davis will continue on the ZAG Board for one more year for Yvonne Miles who has stepped down from her position.

-JUDY RANCOUR, ZAG PRESIDENT



Gardens Join ZAG

This was the first official year for Botanical Gardens to join ZAG, so we are now called the **Zoo, Aquarium and Gardens** buyers organization but we will still do official business as “The Zoo and Aquarium buyers Group” ZAG Inc LLC. Please reach out to your Botanical Gardens in your city and let them know they can join ZAG free of charge and be a part of our growing organization.

The Connection Corner



**A message from our
ZAG President**

**Judy Rancour of
Saint Louis Zoo**

Greetings, all!

As we close out 2018, I am pleased to have the ZAG newsletter back in print. The past year has been one of change and transition – we mourn the loss of Rene Wineland, ZAG board member and buyer for the Maui Ocean Center. We also welcome new board members, a new website platform and a new approach to bringing value to the ZAG community. At times, I feel like a juggler with way too many balls in the air!

A couple of highlights from 2018:

1. Travel scholarships – ZAG funded 3 scholarships to the Tennessee show; plus our ongoing partnerships with several trade show organizers helped support travel to the Tennessee shows, LVMKT, Las Vegas Souvenir show and Dallas Market for dozens of ZAG members.
2. Professional Development sessions – were held at LVMKT in January and August, Las Vegas Souvenir Show and IGES and Smoky Mountain Gift Shows. We are committed to help support our members become better professionals by sharing the experience and expertise of our ZAG team.
3. Trade show product tours – Made in America, Conservation Commerce and Handcrafted tours were held at trade shows throughout the year. These are a great way to get a quick overview of new products within a category
4. ZAG Single Use Plastic Initiative – as highlighted at our Annual Member Meeting in Tennessee, ZAG has worked with several top suppliers throughout 2018 to find ways to reduce or eliminate single use plastic in packaging. New packaging options are available for the 2019 season and we are confident this initiative can only grow in importance going forward.

New for 2019:

1. Communication - as we move into 2019, we are positioned to communicate on a consistent basis through newsletters, social media – Facebook and Instagram – and a better and more supportive website.
2. Professional Development – we continue to partner with our trade show organizers and will kick off the 2019 show season with a networking event on Tuesday, 1/29 at the LVMKT. Topics for these events are being constantly updated to reflect requests for information made by ZAG members on topics which have meaning for them.
3. Travel support – we will continue to make members aware of any travel offers which are made available. The LVMKT supported 7 ZAG members with travel support for the January show, and the Dallas market has also offered ZAG members special incentives on hotel accommodations.

4. Single Use Plastic Initiative – we plan to roll this discussion to the next level of suppliers, and continue to advocate for redesigned packaging which reflects the steps being taken and the savings generated in plastic kept out of recycling.

In closing. I am excited by opportunities for 2019 for all ZAG members and hope for the opportunity to meet and interact with more of you throughout the year. Please feel free to reach out with questions or concerns at any time. We are here to help!

Happy Holidays to all!

Judy

Make it Keen in 2019

By Melinda Green of Kansas City Zoo

It's that time of year again to put away the holiday decorations, ring in the New Year and get your store ready for the new season. Here are the top 5 Ways I would suggest to get ready for the upcoming year so that you can put your best foot forward and be ready to refresh and renew your store for when customers start to roll in:

1. Inventory-It's super important to do at least an annual inventory so that you can sure up your numbers and review your numbers. Determine if you have a section in your store that is constantly seeing a loss and consider moving that section to a more visible area and also seeing what items are still hanging on which takes us to #2
2. Let it Go-This may be a good time to play your favorite Disney songs from Frozen and take a cue from Elsa to Let it Go...once you have reviewed your inventory, find those lingering items that aren't selling and make a plan to get rid of them. If they haven't sold now, trust me, they aren't going to get any cuter by keeping them around. Make them into a grab bag, make a clearance for them...don't let them jam up your inventory any longer.
3. Review Purchases- Make sure you spend some time reviewing purchases and making PO's for orders made at tradeshow and make improvements before it starts to ship-Maybe you saw the cutest t-shirt with penguins on it and your return home and find that you still have 6 penguin shirts in stock or you have no tiger shirts on order but several customers have asked for that. Look over your purchases so you understand what is coming in and you still have time to update.
4. Plan your staff reviews and staffing plan-The end of the year is a great time to do reviews with your staff...applaud them for all the great things they have done throughout the year and work with them on goals that you would like to see them achieve for the year ahead. This is also a great time to look at who is on staff and think about the number of staff you will need to hire and how you will do that.

5. Planogram-Bought all that inventory but, do you have a plan for it? Start looking through your orders and making a plan for where the inventory will go or having a loose idea for your merchandiser or sales team on what themes you will have so once the inventory starts rolling in you will know where you want it to go! Thinking about it ahead of time will also play into some of the other ideas of reviewing purchases and making sure you don't have too little or too much to tell your story and achieve your sales goals.

All in all, we wish you the best 2019 season ahead and hoping for great weather and continued success for all institutions!

IT'S SHOW TIME





(Urban Expositions) 2019 Show Calendar

Philadelphia Gift Show

January 4-7, 2019

The Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, Oaks, PA

Seattle Gift Show

February 2-5, 2019

Washington State Convention Center, Seattle, WA

The Gathering West

February 4-6, 2019

The Riviera Palm Springs, Palm Springs, CA

WWIN Womenswear in Nevada

February 4-7, 2019

Rio Hotel & Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV

Philadelphia Gift Show

July 21-24, 2019

Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, Oaks, PA

WWIN Womenswear in Nevada

August 12-15, 2019

Rio Hotel & Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV

The Gathering

September 17-20, 2019

Shingle Creek Resort, Orlando, FL

Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show

October 2-5, 2019

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV

Smoky Mountain Gift Show

November 6-9, 2019

Gatlinburg Convention Center, Gatlinburg, TN

Ocean City Resort Gift Expo

November 17-19, 2019

Roland E. Powell Convention Center, Ocean City, MD

Grand Strand Gift & Resort Gift Show

December 8-11, 2019

Myrtle Beach Convention Center, Myrtle Beach, SC

Vendors/Sponsors Need Your Help for Show Season

As the Show Season starts for some and finishes for others, vendors keep asking the same question; “What can we do for you as the buyer?” We would like to connect more with our vendors/sponsors this year and this is where ZAG needs everyone’s help. For our next newsletter we would like to compile a list of buyer’s needs for the vendors. Here are the following questions for our ZAG buyers to answer:

- 1) What animals would you like to see on products?
- 2) How do sponsors/vendors entice you (the buyer) to thier booth?
- 3) What new product(s) would you like to see?
- 4) How can vendors help make products more “conservation friendly”?
- 5) Which is more important: quality, price or minimums?

Please send your answers back to Tommy Brown at tbrown@stlzoo.org by February 16th 2019. All answers will remain annoimous.



“Embrace Show Season like a big Koala”



2019 Show Calendar

Surf Expo

January 10 - 12

Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL

NY NOW

February 3 – 6 and August 11 - 14

Jacob K Javits Convention Center, NY, NY

American Handcrafted Philadelphia

February 16 – 18

Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA

ASD Market Week

March 17-20 and July 28 - 31

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV

Global Shop

June 25-28

McCormick Place South, Chicago, IL

IGES

Sevierville TN, November 5 - 8

Pigeon Forge, TN, November 6 - 9

IMC International Market Centers



www.lasvegasmarket.com

Las Vegas Market

Upcoming Market Dates:

2019

January 27-31, 2019

July 28-August 1, 2019



www.americasmart.com

AmericasMart

Upcoming Market Dates:

2019

January 8-15, 2019

July 9-15, 2019

Sponsor News



Thank you sponsors for all of your support in 2018, as we were able to provide scholarships, help conservation efforts and keep the Zoo, Aquarium and Garden's industry thriving. We hope all the sponsors enjoyed this year's "mixers" and ZAG events and will continue your support into the future.

Please remember to renew sponsorships starting January 10th. We will still be offering a one year sponsorship and the three year GOLD sponsorship.

Please be on the lookout in our ZAG Newsletter for all the fun ZAG events for 2019.