
ZAG NEWS

Happy Holidays!



New Sponsor Plate for 2022

Welcome to the final edition of the 2021 ZAG newsletter. In this edition, we will be sharing the Holidays with you. It has been an amazing year, and thank you for sharing in our 2021 ZAG events, Mixers and our TN Meeting.

For this issue, we say goodbye to Ross, we thank him for his service on the board, and welcome Sheila to her new board position. Thank you both for your past and future service to ZAG.

Due to a passed amendment at our last TN meeting, Emily will be the new *Officer of Communication Technologies* and Terri will become the *Treasure/Secretary Officer*. Please welcome them into their new roles for 2022.

Winter Show Dates

Surf Expo Jan. 5th-7th
AmericasMart Jan. 11th-18th
Las Vegas Market Jan. 23rd-27th
Philadelphia Gift Show Jan. 30th-Feb. 2nd
NY NOW Feb. 6th-9th
The Gathering West Feb. 6th-9th (Invitation only)
ASD Feb. 27th-March 2nd



By Judy Rancour

Letter from the President:

President's message – December 2021

Greeting, all!

What a relief to be writing a holiday message actually filled with good news (or glad tidings to keep with the season)! It has been a long couple of years since the end of 2019, but I have heard from many that 2021 proved to be an excellent, though chaotic, season. It is only slightly comforting to say we have all been through the worst together – supply chain issues, price increases, labor shortages – but the reality is whether you are a retailer or a supplier, we have ALL been dealing with much the same pressures on our business. The head of a company I once worked for told me “anyone can be successful in a good business environment, it’s when things get tough that a true merchants shines.” I know I have used this example before, but it rings especially true this year!

It was a relief (and a bit overwhelming) to return to an in person market this fall, but what a great experience at IMC Fall Gift Market, the Las Vegas Souvenir Show, IGES and the Smoky Mountain Gift shows! Seeing old friends, meeting new buyers, making new vendor acquaintances, and finding new products to entice our visitors were a refreshingly normal experience! I would to add a special thanks to all the ZAG buyers and sponsors who joined us at the ZAG Mixers in both Las Vegas and Tennessee. They were both enjoyable evenings! I am also pleased to recap that ZAG did support two travel scholarship opportunities in 2021, and will continue to make this financial commitment in 2022.

Looking ahead, I am sure everyone is polishing their assortments for 2022 and hoping for another strong attendance year. We are optimistic at our institution that our visitors will continue to support our efforts and visit as often as they have in the past - we could not survive without them!

In closing, I wish everyone the happiest of holiday seasons however you choose to celebrate! I look forward to seeing you in upcoming markets, and as always we are here to help, so please do not hesitate to reach out.

Happy New Year!

Judy

ZAG Events 2021

ZAG MIXER

Sponsors and ZAG Members enjoyed a night out at Rainforest Adventures with food, drinks, and snakes! Thank you to all that came out for this annual fun event.



Annual ZAG Meeting

ZAG Members engaged in important conversations, and all got food and a goody bag.





Sylvan Heights Bird Park is a True Equal Opportunity Employer and ADA Supporter

By: Tasha Tillery

My name is Tasha Tillery and I work for Sylvan Heights Bird Park in Scotland Neck, NC. I have been working for them for 4 years now as the Retail/Admissions Manager and I love my job. Before working at Sylvan Heights I could not be myself in the work environment because of being afraid of the outcome. I was afraid to let anyone know I suffer from SLE Lupus and I am a part of the LGBTQ+ Community. I applied for the Retail Manager position at Sylvan Heights after being unemployed for over a year. I was excited to get the call for the interview. When I got the call to come in to interview I still was not myself and dressed and acted differently which almost cost me the job opportunity. Then I received a call from Brent Lubbock the Director of Operations and Development to say I got the job. I was so excited and then I realized I had to play another person in the work force again. For me to see how long I was going to last I decided to tell Brent I suffer from SLE Lupus and that I had a wife. I was told at that point it made no difference to them all that mattered was the results of my work performance and to never hide or change myself for any job or work place and if so you don't belong there. I finally got to be myself in a workplace and now I have made a promise to myself to never make others go through what I went through in discrimination in job seeking.

After 6months of me working there we had got a gift shop extension so I had to begin the hiring process to staff the gift shop. That is how I got my Assistant Manager Shameka Pittman. When she came in to her interview she was shy, soft spoken and timid and I noticed her obsession with cleanliness and organization but I did not let that discourage me. She has been with me for 3 years now. We never gave up on her or judged her instead we helped her build her confidence and believe in herself. By her being so soft spoken the visitors would have a hard time hearing her so one day I took her into our education room and gave her a microphone and told her to speak into it. She was looking at me crazy and I told her she would be doing this until we could hear her beautiful voice and from that day on she was speaking up and visitors noticed her change. I also have to say by her obsession of cleaning and organization I had the most sanitized and organized gift shop around and

when Covid-19 came we were already ready. So you see I never thought about any of those things and just focused on her work abilities.

To give another example Sylvan Heights Bird Park had a sponsor a student program and I gave an application to a bright young lady with high level of Autism and ADHD. She was nervous at her interview but she got the position. She started off as a summer hire working in the Landing Zone her junior year in high school and she is still there till this day and she is now a sophomore in College. Before working at Sylvan Heights Bird Park Shanice Tillery never came out of her room or socialized in public much. But now she has opened up a lot and is going out with friends and coming to Company events. Before working at Sylvan Heights I would have never thought of her doing any of these things. Sylvan Heights Bird Park gave Shanice self esteem and courage to embrace her differences and open up a lot more. I wish more employers would do the same for people like Shanice.



Shanice Tillery

After a year of hiring Shameka I had to get another staff member for the gift shop since we were getting to seeing close to 60,000 visitors a year and the two of us needed help. I put out applications and went to local places to see if anyone working part time would like to pick up a few more extra hours. I had no luck.

Then I received an application from my Director and I quickly jumped on it to call this person in for an interview. When he showed up for his interview he was a man of few words, very shy, showed no sign of personality and was very respectful. Hunter Waters asked questions about the job and what it entails. I asked him why he wanted to work here and he said because I needed the money. Right then I knew he was honest and truthful. I am glad I gave him the opportunity to join our Sylvan Heights Bird Park team. He caught on fast and instead of being a summer hire he ended up becoming a part-time hire who now works 3 days a week which are 2 days for 2 hours and 1 day for 8 hours. Hunter is a great addition to our gift shop staff and has been with us over 90 days and counting and is slowly opening up and showing a little bit of personality each day.

So here at Sylvan Heights Bird Park we give the true meaning of equal opportunity employer. Just by giving these young adults the opportunity when others didn't, it made them more confident human beings and also gave them the knowledge to know that there are companies out there that are the true meaning of EOE and ADA. I hope this article helps some of you to reach out to your ADA community to help staff your facility and to not to judge a book by its cover because it could be the best book you ever read.



Shameka Pittman, Hunter Waters 1



Employee Gift Guide with Emily

By: Emily May

Employees can be tough to buy for, check out these gift ideas that anyone would love to receive!

We spend so much time buying for our stores, sometimes it gets tough to find a unique gift that our employees haven't already seen. Working in gift shops, not everyone wants Zoo, Aquarium, or Garden swag for the holidays. Here are some holiday gift ideas that would work for just about any employee!

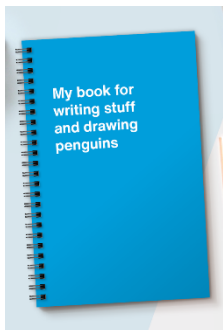


A Solar Power Bank

Power banks have been around forever, but a solar power bank provides a different option that anyone can use. We all have our electronics on us and when they die and we're in a bind, having a solar powered option means you're never without power. Lots of them come with flash lights and multiple ports for charging a variety of items. For your employees that are always on the go, this power bank might be the ticket.

A Waterproof Bluetooth Speaker

Along the same lines, a Bluetooth speaker is usually something people don't expect to receive, but can always use. I particularly like a waterproof option. These are great for taking on trips, listening to your jams in the shower or around the pool, or even just to be careful in case you get caught in bad weather. Super easy to use and convenient, a Bluetooth speaker can work for a variety of people.



A Kitschy Notebook

For specifically a workplace gift, you might be looking for office supplies or items that can be useful. A notebook seems like an obvious and bland choice, but there are so many options out there! Find a notebook with a silly saying, their favorite animal or their favorite movie character, or just a really nice leather-bound notebook. Truly, the options are endless and this is something that anyone will use, just find something different that you think would appeal to your employee.

Don't Forget to Shop Local!

This may seem obvious, but sometimes your local shops have the perfect item to inspire your holiday gifts! Handmade gifts, local candy, chocolates, or coffee are always crowd pleasers. Maybe you know a ceramic artist or a woodworker that can make custom gifts no one else can offer. You really never know what might pop up when you walk through a little shop. The best part is, if you're late to the game, you don't have to worry about shipping and you'll still be able to provide a quality gift.



Then when all else fails, you can learn to knit and everyone gets scarves for the holidays, even if you live somewhere warm.

Happy Holidays from the Buckeye State! May your winter be warm and your New Year be prosperous!



Conservation Corner

Two thousand twenty-one...WHAT A YEAR!

Our industry has seen a remarkable comeback this year. Not only did most facilities have record attendance month after month but also our gift shops have been ultra-busy. The increases in average sales are resulting in record net dollars for their institutions.

Obviously, there have been a few issues that go along with the great year we are having, staffing shortages, rising wages, price increases and of course the big one...sourcing enough merchandise. We can only hope merchandise availability will get better at least by the second quarter of 2022.

Donations for conservation also has been fantastic at the NC Zoo this year. Our button program continues to produce significant revenue. Raising our button donation price from \$1 to \$2 or 3 for \$5 has been a win. Our margin is 80% for this program.



Since 2012 this program has netted and donated \$476,543 to our NC Zoo field conservation programs, including \$88,175 this year. See below a note from Dr. Rich Bergl, Director of Conservation, Education & Science.

The button program at our gift shops has grown far beyond anything I expected. It has become one of the single largest sources of support for our field conservation work.

Dr. Rich Bergl

If anyone would like information about how your gift shops can produce substantial revenue \$2 at a time, please contact me at 336.879.7269.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

David



Why I am grateful – 2021!!

By - Rosemary Domas – Buyer Wildlife Conservation Society

When Life Gives You **Lemons** make **Lemonade!!!**

We all struggled through 2020, and thought business opportunities could ever get more challenging – then came 2021!

It wasn't just COVID to manage – but lack of staff, shipping, containers, tariffs, taxes, empty shelves and margin challenges – all dropped at our doorstep. After speaking with many of my peers, the general consensus was, “I have NEVER worked as hard as I have over the past 2 years!” Whew – let's all unwind this holiday season and celebrate our major victories!

Through all of the mayhem – I did learn some really amazing lessons and better understood my contributions to my parks Mission:

- 1) ZAG Peeps are the BEST Peeps – I have had the pleasure of working with so many amazing talented people over the course of my career – but nothing rivals the partnerships and friendship of the ZAG community – THANK YOU!!!! These friendships opened up lines of communications and support. I relied heavily on my teammates to find resources, challenge my status quo, and keep my overall sanity!**



- 2) When we win – vendors win, and our PARKS win!!!! Strong sales could never have happened this season without our tremendous vendor community. Their partnership on so many levels allowed us to move and groove – monitoring daily inventories and ship dates. Their concerns to keep our shelves filled and demand satisfied was incredible!**



- 3) Commitment to sustainability is alive and well. Many of us were forced to compromise our plastics standards due to lack of merchandise. As the merchandise becomes slightly more accessible and we plan for our 2022 sales, we have layered back in our mission statements of a commitment to reduce single use plastics – WELL DONE – I am always inspired at ZAG meetings to hear what my counterparts are doing for Mother Earth and sustainability. If we could get our big box partners to share our sentiments and global concerns – imagine the impact ☺



- 4) The home Team is the best Team – this year, our roles driving revenue for the parks has been recognized and rewarded. Essential workers rule! We rolled up our sleeves, met face to face and kept our stores and restaurants open and thriving.

Happy Holidays, from Sue

As the year winds down to a merciful end, I wanted to personally Thank ALL OF YOU for your dedication, extremely hard work under unprecedented conditions, your sense of humor 😊, and most importantly the contributions you all made to your institutions to continue our missions of animal care and welfare, conservation, and education.

It was great to see most of you during the show season and as on par with the past 18 months --- Gatlinburg did not disappoint.



My friends and myself are planning to relax and enjoy the remainder of the Holiday season:



I am so **THANKFUL** for all of our awesome vendor partners and ZAG members. You all are the best of the best and I truly appreciate all you do.
May you and your families enjoy the Holiday season and may all of your wishes come true.



Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for an Awesome 2022 to all!



Thanks and Happy Holidays,

Sue



Good Bye 2021!

By Donna Steakley

What a year! I know this year has been totally crazy with product shortages, learning new ways to order what we can, and still trying to plan for 2022, but we made it thru another year. Most of us have new hairdos from pulling out our hair, some beat budget, some didn't. What I can say is it's almost over. We did it as a team and the struggle was real!

As we go into 2022, we are stronger, remember we have the ZAG family to help us through, we also will have a new and improved website you can turn to and each and every ZAG board member is an email away to help you, listen to you vent, and Tommy and I are always around for a giggle.

To our wonderful sponsors, thank you for being part of this awesome family and all the support you have given us. I hope 2022 only grows our business partnerships!

May the holidays keep you all and your family safe, joyful, and may all your holiday dreams come true. Thank you and Happy Holidays to you all! See you in 2022!

Las Vegas Market Information

Tuesday, January 25: 10-11am

SUSTAINABLE AND ETHICAL PRACTICES FOR NON-PROFIT RETAIL

Sponsored by Las Vegas Market

In collaboration with Fair Trade Federation (FTF), Museum Store Association (MSA), Zoo, Aquarium & Garden Buyers Group (ZAG)

World Forum, B-16

Want to use your retail business to express your values in the marketplace? Join trade association leaders from ZAG, MSA and FTF in a discussion that will focus on challenges, best practices, and solutions to incorporate sustainable and ethical practices in non-profit retail operations. While both "ethical" and "sustainable" are terms used often in the marketplace, time will be spent illuminating and broadening their concepts in order to help retailers (nonprofit or for profit) thrive in a challenging marketplace.

Moderator is Chris Solt, executive director of Fair Trade Federation. Panelists include Meg Hauser, secretary of Museum Store Association and Tommy Brown of Saint Louis Zoo, board member of Zoo, Aquarium & Garden Buyers Group.

Tuesday, January 25: 8:30-10am

NON-PROFIT RETAIL NETWORKING BREAKFAST (RSVP)

Sponsored by Las Vegas Market

In collaboration with Fair Trade Federation (FTF), Museum Store Association (MSA), Zoo, Aquarium & Garden Buyers Group (ZAG)

World Forum, B-16

Non-profit retailers, you're appreciated. You buy according to a mission, are uniquely positioned in your community and are the lifeblood of independent retail. Exchange best practices, explore solutions to your toughest challenges and network with fellow non-profit retailers from across the country.

Start your Market day off right with complimentary breakfast! Existing and prospective association members, buyers and vendors are welcome. You're encouraged to arrive and depart as time permits. Or stay for the 10am session, "Sustainable and Ethical Practices for Non-Profit Retail."

Sarah Schuetz | Director Buyer Engagement, Independent Contractor

[International Market Centers](#)

(o) 1.608.712.8998 | (m) 1.608.712.8998

A Thank You to Our New Sponsors



Playfully Outrageous with an Underlying Message of Sustainability!

POOPOOPAPER was born in 2005 when my wife and I realized that this outrageous concept we had been fiddling with for a couple years checked all of the key boxes that we had on our list for the kind of business we wanted to create:

We wanted to focus on something that was socially & environmentally responsible so we were contributing to the solution & not the problem. We wanted a challenge that had meaning to us, was artistic & used the local talent of the artisans in my wife's native Thailand. We craved something we could be passionate about & that could be a possible vehicle to convey the important message of social equality & sustainability. We wanted to work on something that stimulated our creativity everyday...something that was fun & positive and kept the workplace loose with laughs. We wanted a product that was unique & head-turning so we could leverage that to connect with the ever-growing number of like-minded people who care about our planet. This is the story 'behind' POOPOOPAPER - sustainable gift and paper products made from poo!

Elephant POOPOOPAPER, Cow POOPOOPAPER, Horse POOPOOPAPER and limited 'runs' of other types of POOPOOPAPER are all tree-free & chemical-free and represent a new paradigm of sustainable & fun gift & paper products that your customers and visitors will love, if they don't already!

While we have been a ZAG sponsor in the past, it's been a couple years and we're thrilled to be back! POOPOOPAPER has some wonderful, long term ZAG retailer relationships that continue to this day and we'd love to build further upon this. We still have awesome assortments and still doing lots of custom work. We still ship fast from Texas, Toronto or direct from Thailand and that hasn't changed during the pandemic.

The bottom-line is this with POOPOOPAPER - our pies sell like hot cakes! We have designs and collections that fit every imaginable channel including, of course, botanical gardens, zoos and aquariums. I look forward to connecting with each one of you over the coming weeks!

All the best!

Michael Flancman, Co-founder/ CEO (Chief Excrement Officer)
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www.poopoopaperpark.com





Over 250 million car air fresheners are sold in the U.S. each year. With more and more travelers opting to drive instead of fly during the pandemic, that number is sure to go up.

Take advantage of these popular items by working with American Air Freshener, Co., which offers air fresheners with custom artwork. Businesses can also easily drop their names onto hundreds of designs that have already been made. Some of our more popular zoo air fresheners include call-to-action designs like “Protect & Defend the Bald Eagle” and more playful “Baby On Board” designs with pictures of baby animals.

After artwork is finalized, clients may choose from dozens of scents — from pine and breeze to lavender and cherry.

All air fresheners are made in the USA and are great low-cost, high-profit impulse items. With a retail price of \$2.99 to \$3.99, customers will love these small inexpensive mementos to remember their time at your zoo.

American Air Freshener, Co. is a family-owned and operated business in West Texas.

Contact Ron at Ron@AmericanAirFreshener.com to learn more or visit www.AmericanAirFreshener.com.

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