

# ZAG NEWS

## Happy Holi-ZAGs!



**ZAG members on a Sustainability Class Tour**

Welcome to the final edition of the 2022 ZAG newsletter. In this edition, we will be sharing the Holidays and ZAG successes with you. It has been an amazing year for our organization. ZAG offered the first *Sustainability in Retail Class* for active members, had booths at AZA, ZAA and National Retail Shows. We enjoyed two ZAG mixers and a delicious ZAG dinner in Tennessee. ZAG also awarded multiple show scholarships, door prizes, and two, thousand dollar fixture credits. We are investing in our members, and we are growing every year. Thank you for being a part of ZAG!

### 2023 Winter Show Dates

In this issue, we say goodbye to Terri and Sue, and we thank them for their service on the board. In turn, we welcome Elie and Samantha to their new board positions. Thank you all for your past and future service to ZAG.

Surf Expo	Jan. 4th-6th
AmericasMart	Jan. 10th-16th
Las Vegas Market	Jan. 23rd-Feb. 2nd
Philadelphia Gift Show	Feb. 5th-7th
NY NOW	Feb. 5th-8th
ASD	Feb. 26th-March 1st

**For 2023, your new ZAG officers will be as follows:**  
President – David Whitaker

Vice President - Tommy Brown  
 Secretary/Treasurer – Judy Rancour  
 Technology Communications – Emily May



## Letter from the President:

By Judy Rancour

Greetings everyone – as I write what is my last letter from the President, I am so grateful for the many experiences and opportunities while being in this role for the past five years. Despite the challenges of operating during COVID, ZAG has made steady gains and is bigger, stronger, and I think better than when I started – due primarily to all of you – our ZAG buyers and sponsors. One indelible takeaway from this role is the many people whom I have met and collaborated with to move the needle forward. Whether talking about sustainability, single use plastics, visual concepts or budgetary challenges – it has been a sincere pleasure to get to know so many of you. An organization such as this exists because we invest in the future of the industry, and collectively we have the strength and ability to affect change in our institutions, our industry and in the greater world around us - I am constantly amazed by the creativity of our many institutions, and the ingenuity of our wholesale partners.

I am particularly pleased to hand off the president's role to my peer at the North Carolina Zoo, David Whitaker. The organization is in good hands! David has worked tirelessly as vice president for the past few years, so he is well acquainted with what the new role entails. David will be joined by Tommy Brown as vice president, a role that he has held previously. Both will bring strong continuity to the ZAG presence and will build for the next generation of buyers. As always, we welcome your input and participation as we continue to grow - I look forward to where we will be going next.

Wishing you all the happiest of holidays, and I look forward to seeing everyone in the new year!

Kind regards,

Judy





## Our Wildlife Conservation Work

The North Carolina Zoo is devoted to protecting our natural world each and every day. The Zoo has been involved in the conservation of wildlife for more than two decades. We have worked to preserve a variety of species. From vultures and gorillas in Africa, to endangered plants and amphibians in our own state.

A modest conservation project, focused on one country in Africa, has grown into a leading zoo-based program. Our staff are active in conserving wildlife and their habitats across the world. We work in eight different African countries, the Caribbean, the Mariana Islands in the Western Pacific, and across North Carolina.

Through partnership and collaboration with more than 90 partners, we have been able to help save animals from extinction. The Zoo has maximized its wildlife conservation impact in over 20 countries.

Because conservation challenges can't be solved overnight, we purposely make significant, long term, strategic commitments to the projects we undertake.

Our Zoo is committed to preserving endangered plants and animals species. Our staff has worked to protect natural resources all around the world. We have engaged in conservation efforts to preserve natural habitats, protect wildlife, and prevent illegal wildlife trade across the world.

### International Conservation



We work closely with wildlife conservation centers and organizations around the globe. Our efforts focus on preserving protected areas and preventing endangered species' habitat destruction. We have also focused on preventing wildlife trafficking and developing assisting technologies.

Additionally, our team has carried out thorough research to understand the needs of endangered research. We have provided data and technology to local communities and organizations.

Our international work seeks to lower threats to wildlife all around the globe and ensure a better planet for future generations. Some of our international conservation efforts include:

## Regional Conservation



The North Carolina's Zoo to conservation of wildlife also translates into local work. We engage in local efforts with North Carolina wildlife conservation centers to protect national wildlife. Our regional work focuses on preserving endangered species and protected areas for the benefit of our community and future generations.

Furthermore, the Zoo also works in protecting over 2,800 acres of land around our property. Some of the local species we work to protect include:

1. Eastern hellbenders
2. American red wolf
3. Pine Barrens treefrog

*It's very important to get to know the Conservation and Sustainability Team at your facility. Partner with them in educating your staff so they can inform the guest on all the great conservation programs that your organization is involved in. Also, partner with them financially, raising money through the gift shops. It's a great way to get your upper management to support keeping retail in-house.*

*David*



# Top TRENDS

## Conservation Conversation -

Conservation is a super-hot topic in all our gift shops – as it should be! For many of us, the revenue generated in our stores goes directly to support wildlife or gardens. In our assortments of products – often there are items with conservation and sustainability messaging. If your customers are like our customers in New York City, we get many questions about how these items are differentiated from our core items. Because of this, it is important to have the facts and info easily accessible for customer facing staff members so they can quickly and accurately respond.

For my stores, I am going to pull together a binder to include all my vendors I identify as conservation suppliers. This, along with packaging or additional materials provided by them, will be included in the binder, and will be easily accessible to our sales staff.

Attached is a checklist that can be sent to your vendors, or filled out yourselves, with all of answers readily available.

## PILLARS of CONSERVATION

<b>Social</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Pillar	<b>Environmental</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pillar	<b>Economic</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Pillar
<p>Social Sustainability puts humans as part of the sustainability equation. It is an informal and formal look at systems, laws, relationships, economics, environment, and communities that impact the human condition of today and tomorrow.</p>	<p>Environmental sustainability focuses on the conservation of biodiversity without foregoing economic and social progress. The foundations of environmental sustainability are safeguarding water, saving energy, reducing waste, using recyclable packaging, limiting, or eliminating the use of plastics, using sustainable transport, reusing paper, and protecting flora and fauna.</p>	<p>For many businesses, economic sustainability equates to generating sales and profit. Although growth is still a primary focal point, true economic sustainability emphasizes long term growth without negative impact to social, environmental, and cultural groups in the community.</p>



## Conservation - Sustainable Suppliers

<b>Vendor Name</b>	
<b>Location of production:</b>	
<b>Key Materials Used:</b>	
<b>Social Sustainability:</b> Ethical sourcing, fair hiring practices, community impact	
<b>Environmental Sustainability:</b> Materials used, natural habitat protection, recycled vs new, carbon footprint, etc.	
<b>Economic Sustainability:</b> Fair wages, reinvestments, community empowerment, etc.	
<b>Important Vendor Facts:</b> List of qualities the customer should know about your brand	
<b>Questions</b>	



# Perceived Values and Pricing Strategies

By Sheila Wewers

## Perceived Values:

Have you given thought to how pricing and margin can drive additional, incremental sales volume without having to sell more items?

Do you use close to a 3-time mark-up on every item?

Have you considered modifying the amount of your mark-up if sales of that item are strong?

*Consider this example:*

- For easy math, let's assume the cost of the item is somewhere around \$.25 and you use a 3-time mark up. Your retail would then be \$.75.
- If your location sells approximately 10,000 of the items per year, your gross sales for this item would be \$7500.
- If you raised your retail to \$.99, and sold the same quantity, your sales would increase from \$7,500 to \$9,900.
- The perceived value of the item is not negatively impacted by raising the retail price by twenty-four cents as generally customers round up to the next dollar when they spend.
- **The impact: an increase of \$2,400 and you didn't have to work harder to get it!** (...and yes, you will sell as many!)
- What else can you find in your store to tweak in a similar manner? (\$27.99 to \$29.99 for instance.)



## Pricing Strategies:

Now think about your retail pricing general strategy. If, for instance, you have a strategy where your retail pricing ends in \$.95, how much more would you add to your sales if you raised your retails from ending in \$.95 to \$.99?

*Consider this example:*



- Again, for easy math, let's assume you have 75,000 transactions per year.
- If you increase your retails from ending in \$.95 to ending in \$.99, effectively adding only \$.04 per item (an increase that won't affect perceived values), and you only sell one item per transaction, you will add \$3,000 to your annual sales!
- If you sell an average of 3 items per transaction, you will add \$9,000 to your sales, no additional work needed!

Using just these two examples, you could add \$11,400 to your sales and you didn't have to work harder to get it! How many other ways can you impact sales by using these strategies?



## Holiday Cheer with Emily

By: Emily May

**Happy Holidays! Here's to new beginnings!**

Many of us are planning our 2023 season and it's a great time to reflect on the year we've had. Here in Columbus we will end our year with our Wildlights event filled with sparkling lights and festive fun.



**Conservation Lake and Dave, the snowman.**

We have also welcomed quite a few new animals to our Zoo, we look forward to watching them grow and prosper in the New Year.



**Violet, one of 3 orphaned moose that arrived in October.**



**A male giraffe calf, born at the Zoo in August.**



**Odlha (pronounced Wur-la), one of 3 Pallas' Cat kittens born at the Zoo.**

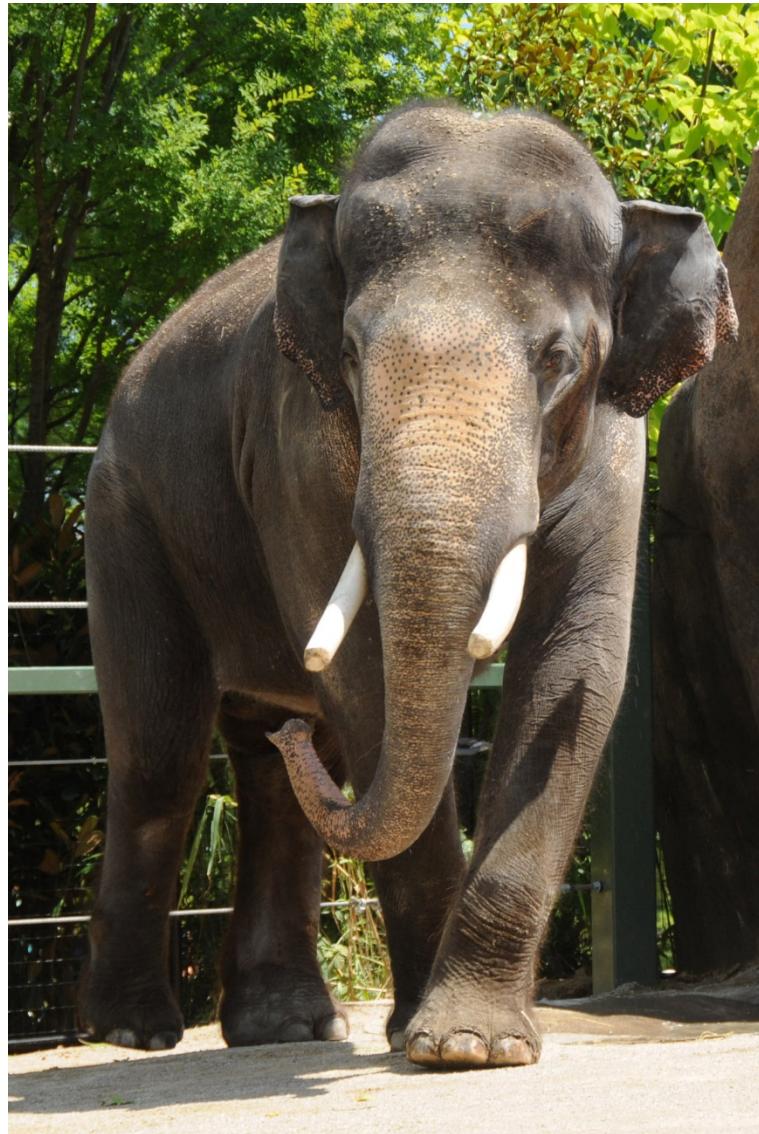
**Do not forget to follow ZAG on social media!**



Instagram: @zaggift

Facebook: ZAG (Zoo and Aquarium Buyers Group)

LinkedIn: Zoo, Aquarium & Garden Buyer's Group



**And our newest arrival! Sabu, the 34 year-old Asian Elephant.**

Thank you to our wonderful ZAG Buyers who create such a warm community for all to flourish and succeed. And to our Sponsors, thank you for your continued support, with which we are able to provide valuable resources and connections for our Buyers. ZAG would be nothing without either of you!

Cheers to you in the New Year!  
Emily

# Sales Drivers- Opportunities and Successes from 2022 and Looking Forward to Spring 2023

As we wind down the show season for 2022 and look forward to 2023, we had a brainstorming session at our Gatlinburg ZAG breakfast to discuss successful categories in 2022 and drivers for Spring Break/Easter 2023. Thank you to all that attended and shared your insights!

## 1. Sensory Sensations (smell, taste, touch, sight, sound): think about these for Spring Break, Easter and School Group season.

- Grow Eggs
- candy Items
- Squishable toys and balls
- Toobimals
- Books with sound or touch features
- Putty and Slime

## 2. Miscellaneous Pick-Up Items

- Magnetic Stones
- Best Friend Jewelry



- **Friendship Bracelets**
- **Mood Rings**
- **Name Programs: Magnets, key rings or signs**
- **Small 3-4" Plush**
- **Magnets**
- **Geodes and Rocks**
- **Water Games**
- **TikTok and Social Media Crazes...gold bricks (Warm & Fuzzy), Slugs**
- **Blind Bags---Mystery Eggs, packages, or bags**
- **Food inspired toys**

### 3. Trending Categories and Items

- **Name Dropped Stickers**
- **Pins and Patches**
- **Tracking Bracelets**
- **Marble Turtles**
- **Building Blocks**
- **Anything Axolotl or Blob Fish**



### 5. Eco Friendly and Sustainable Items

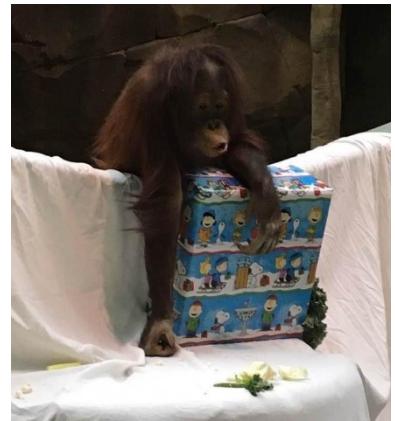
- **Wood and Reclaimed Wood toys**
- **Bamboo, Coffee, and Wheat Pens**
- **Beeswax Crayons**
- **Recycled Water Bottle Pens**
- **Skulls Head Canes**

- **Bio toys---composed with wheat, cornstarch, cork, bamboo, or other plant-based materials**
- **Eco Plush Lines**
- **STEM Based toys**
- **Conservation themed Books**

As stated earlier, the trend in Toys appear to be aligned with our five senses and focusing on Nostalgia toys that grab the attention of all ages i.e., Rubik's Cube, Building Blocks, and wood toys/puzzles. TikTok and other social media's growing role on trends is expected to continue.

Spring Break and the Easter time frame are a blueprint for what may be your trends for the summer season. The Fidget category has shifted and been rebranded as Sensory Toys. This category is ever evolving and is very social media driven. It represents a large sales opportunity during the early part of the season.

Lastly, congratulations on a solid 2022 and wishing you, your family and work family...Happy Holidays and wishing you a very successful 2023!



## E-Mails from our ZAG members

### **Eat, Cat, Poop.....Not What You Expect!**

In a world where staffing is a struggle and keeping the staff we have motivated and connected to our mission is a chore; any tool to create a fun and connected culture is a treasure! I recently attended a seminar at the Annual AZA Conference, which is where I learned about the game Eat, Cat, Poop. The title alone sounded interesting enough and had me hooked to learn more about it!

Turns out, it wasn't about eating cat poop at all, but was a simple team building exercise that was not only fun to play but showed how everyone has a different perspective and how we can work together to create answers and solutions. This was such a fun learning experience that I brought it back to my zoo and introduced it to my staff! It was a hit!

What I found was that even though it seemed like a silly game it actually motivated staff and got them excited to participate. We not only learned new things about each other, but we also saw how creative, competitive, and fun we can be as a team! The work atmosphere completely changed on the days we played the game and there was a sense of renewed energy and team focus. I now have a board full of these fun and creative drawings, requests from staff to play the game daily, and a better understanding of who my team is and what gets them motivated and connected with each other and the organization.

### **Here's how it works!**

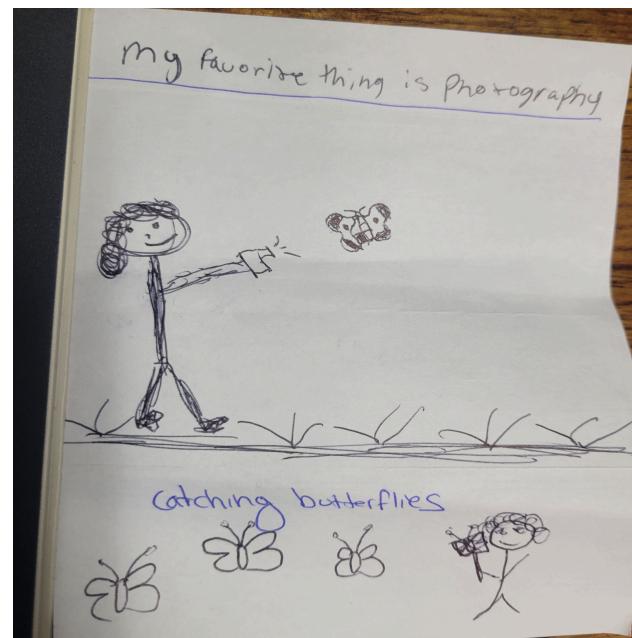


- Take a 8x11 piece a paper (or grab one from the recycling b5n) and cut it in half the long ways.
- Hand a piece of paper to each staff member and ask them to right a response to a simple question. For example, we asked the staff "What do you like to do for fun?"
- Staff then wright their response, in a short sentence, on the very top of the paper.
- Once they answer, have staff swap their paper with the next person (or have a manager/supervisor collect and hand them out)
- The next person has to draw a picture without using words to the describe the original answer.
- Once the picture is drawn, fold the question so that the next person can only see the picture.
- The next person needs to create a sentence based on the drawing then fold the drawing so the next person can only see the new sentence.
- Pass to the next person- They draw based on the new sentence
- Repeat as many times as you want or for however many staff you have.
- When you're ready to call it done, collect all responses and go over them as a team. Study the responses and different perspectives. This is the BEST part, and you'll have a wall of drawings in no time!

Eat, Cat, Poop.....not what you expected but everything you hoped for!

Samantha Halligan  
 Director of Guest Experience  
 Lake Superior Zoo  
[shalligan@lszoo.org](mailto:shalligan@lszoo.org)

**Our mission:** to provide close-up animal experiences which inspire connections to wildlife and action toward conservation in our region and around the world.



☞ **Be sustainable** ~ Please do not print this email unless absolutely necessary. Thank you for your consideration of wildlife and wild places!

## Welcome New ZAG Sponsors

# CAPE CLASP

### Cape Clasp Summary

Cape Clasp is a purpose-driven brand on a mission to make waves for marine life causes. For each of our jewelry designs, we partner with a marine life organization and donate 15% of our profits. More recently, we launched an ocean plastic line of bracelets and sunglasses called Tikós.

We are part of 1% For the Planet and Certified Climate Neutral. Over the past few years, we are proud to say our non-profit donations totaled over \$200,000. Our growing list of partners can be found at [www.capeclasp.com](http://www.capeclasp.com) and [www.tikos.com](http://www.tikos.com).

We would love to send you a care package to check out our products and discuss our wholesale options! Please feel free to reach out. Thank you for your time and consideration.

--

#### **Patrick Clarke // Founder**

Cape Clasp // 474 Woods Hole Road, Falmouth, MA 02543  
m. 401 787 3656

[www.capeclasp.com](http://www.capeclasp.com)  
[www.tikos.com](http://www.tikos.com)



Bring your imagination to life with Magformers; the Global Leader in magnetic construction toys! **Located in Michigan, we are elated to stretch across the states and visit the Smokey Mountains as a brand-new ZAG sponsor! Making magnetic magic since our inception, we strive to equip the creators of the future with the multifaceted minds, mindsets and skills they'll need to build a better world for all of us – one click at a time.**

Magformers' award-winning sets stimulate critical thinking, spatial awareness, and creative problem-solving abilities across age groups through safe, quality play time. Rare-earth neodymium magnets rotate within each piece, ensuring Magformers always stick together!

With over 40 interconnecting magnetic shapes in bright, vibrant colors and over 100 fun and exciting accessories compatible across sets, Magformers take any play time from ordinary to EXTRAORDINARY! Perfect for STEM learning, our unique geometric shapes combine to create 2D “math nets” that transform to 3D models, so kids learn with every “click”.

When playtime is over, use the magnetic power to simply stack and store the pieces. Made with high quality ABS plastic, all Magformers' products are tested for Global distribution and meet or exceed safety standards. We believe it is vital for children to develop through creativity and our patented, ‘always attracting’ magnetic technology delivers a unique building play experience. We are committed to providing a high quality, reliable product that inspires the creators of the future.



Artisan-handmade bracelets from Bali are not only a beautiful accessory. Every bracelet removes at least 1 pound of trash from rivers, canals, and oceans. We teamed up with TerraCycle Global Foundation to help remove and recycle trash from the waterways that lead to the ocean. An estimated 20 billion pounds or more of waste are dumped in the ocean yearly. With 10 different designs available, Virtu Made bracelets are the accessory you will be the proudest to wear.



201 Puente ave  
City of Industry CA 91746  
626 934 8117 Tel  
626 961 8858 Fax  
[info@sunshirtsca.com](mailto:info@sunshirtsca.com)

Sunshirt is family-owned and operated right here in City of Industry, CA. Since our company opened its doors in 1985, we've treated every customer like they were a part of our family.

Sunshirt products contain a wide selection of high quality designs and techniques. Our priority has not only been to develop unique products, but to do so in the USA. We believe our products need to be made near, under our supervision and care in order to satisfy our customers the best we can.

Designing since 1995 Zeina Zaarour has developed a unique touch with gift shop resort products.

Her designs include various wildlife, aquatic, beach and historical cities.  
She places a special emphasis on capturing the color and light of her designs by using vivid and innovative color schemes.

Her designs have redefined the tourist industry by setting new standards for her competitors.

The result of her work is not only a highly valued product but also one that leaves a lasting impression on those who wear her clothing.

Zeina Zaarour  
President / designer

All rights reserved for ZAG Inc. LLC

zeina@sunshirtsca.com



The Sparkling Pebble is a unique, United States made jewelry company. We design, sculpt and create unique jewelry that is all animal and nature inspired. Consisting of pieces that are highly detailed and wonderfully whimsical, these items showcase beautifully and are highly collectible. Each piece is made in the USA from recycled metals and hand finished. They are packaged in recycled and recyclable materials, using little to no plastic. While we love to celebrate these amazing animals with our jewelry, we also must strive to care for their, and our environment. Featuring over 60 different animals, you are sure to find you and your customer's favorites within our collection...and we are adding more each month.



## Warm Fuzzy Toys

2303 RR 620 South Suite 160 - Box 162

Austin, Texas 78734

United States

**800-888-9845**

[Website Link](#)

*Nature Related Toys and Gifts*



260 West Nyack Road

West Nyack, NY 10994

[www.wildwestshirts.com](http://www.wildwestshirts.com)

We specialize in creating unique and amazing artwork for souvenir shirts, headwear, stickers, magnets, and tin signs. Using our 80+ page catalog, you can choose from hundreds of pieces of art that can be customized to work for your attraction. We offer quick turnaround on orders and reorders, competitive pricing, and excellent customer service. Visit our website for more information and to find local sales representative near you.



Wildlife Tree makes toys that give back to wildlife. We inspire wildlife conservation through pretend play with our edZOOcation™ sets, books, and premium-quality plush animals, games, and more. Our plush animals are made with the finest soft furs and recycled polyester stuffing, making us a favorite of retailers across the country.

Wildlife Tree is a woman-owned and operated company that proudly donates 10% of its proceeds to conservation organizations across the globe. Some of our amazing conservation partners include Red Panda Network, Lion Recovery Fund, Elephant Crisis Fund, and many more.

Our California warehouse can quickly ship anywhere in the United States so you can get what you need when you need it. Check out our full inventory at [wholesale.wildlifetree.com](http://wholesale.wildlifetree.com). Please feel free to reach out to Cassie Buntin at [sales@wildlifetree.com](mailto:sales@wildlifetree.com). We look forward to hearing from you!



Pinkfong USA is the US subsidiary of The Pinkfong Company, a global entertainment company that delivers educational and engaging content around the world. Driven by award-winning IPs (Pinkfong, Baby Shark, and Bebefinn), the company strives to create a range of content across genres and formats including animated series, world live tours, mobile games, consumer products, and more.

Baby Shark Dance is still the #1 most watched video in YouTube history, with over 11 billion views! Baby Shark has quickly become one of the most successful preschool franchises worldwide with a TV series airing on Nickelodeon, world concert tours, and a movie with Paramount+ in development. With our in-house design, manufacturing, and sales team, we exclusively distribute our official in-house consumer products worldwide. These include sing-alongs and story books as well as interactive and content-heavy music toys that are best-sellers in several product categories - electronic learning toys, interactive electronic learning books, preschool musical toys, and more! All of our educational musical toys introduce multisensory learning experiences, assist in developing fine motor skills, feature child-friendly designs, and include evergreen nursery rhymes with quality sounds.

Our products are distributed in major retailers including Amazon, Walmart, Macy's, Barnes & Noble, Walgreens, CVS Pharmacy, and many more.

#### Milestones:

TIME 100 Most Influential Companies, 2022  
YouTube Custom Creator Award, 2021

Winner, TOTY License of the Year, 2020  
#1 Most Watched Video on YouTube

## Happy Holidays from the 2022 ZAG Board



Welcome  
2023  
ZAG Board

**President** – David Whitaker, Director of Retail Operations, North Caroline Zoo [dwhitaker@nczoo.org](mailto:dwhitaker@nczoo.org)

**Vice President** - Tommy Brown, Retail Manager/Buyer of Conservation Goods, Saint Louis Zoo.  
[tbrown@stlzoo.org](mailto:tbrown@stlzoo.org)

**Secretary/Treasurer** – Judy Rancour, Director of Retail Operations, Saint Louis Zoo.  
[rancour@stlzoo.org](mailto:rancour@stlzoo.org)

**Communications/Technology Officer** –Emily May, Retail Manager, Columbus Zoo,  
[Emily.may@columbuszoo.org](mailto:Emily.may@columbuszoo.org)

**Board Member** – Shelby Salestrom, Guest Relations Manager/Buyer, Jacksonville Zoo,  
[salestroms@jacksonvillezoo.org](mailto:salestroms@jacksonvillezoo.org)

**Board Member** – Rosemary Domas, Buyer, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society/Bronx Zoo)  
[Rdomas@wcs.org](mailto:Rdomas@wcs.org)

**Board Member** – Sheila Wewers, Buyer, Como Zoo [Sheila.wewers@comofriends.org](mailto:Sheila.wewers@comofriends.org)

**Board Member** - Elie Johnson, Director of Retail Operations, Zoo Tampa,  
Elie.Johnson@zootampa.org

**Board Member** – Samantha Halligan, Director of Guest Experience, Lake Superior Zoo  
shalligan@lszoo.org