
ZAG NEWS

New Vision and Opportunities



A new opportunity will present itself for all ZAG members to take part in a Sustainability Professional Program, this fall on November 7 and 8th in Sevierville TN. Register at <https://iges.us/sustainabilityinretail/>. If you are an active ZAG member, ZAG will pay the fee for this class. You will receive a certificate and signature tag, upon completion of the class, provided by Emerald Expositions.

In the picture to the left: The ZAG board meeting, hosted by the Las Vegas Market, at World Market Center

Another new addition will be bagged breakfasts provided by Clarion Shows at the ZAG booth/room on November 9th 10th and 11th in Gatlinburg TN.

ZAG will also be offering chances to win gift cards at our Las Vegas ZAG mixer for those that complete the scavenger hunt, plus a chance to win a \$1000.00 fixture credit at our annual ZAG meeting.

We are also happy to announce our two Las Vegas Gift and Souvenir Show scholarship winners: Brea Schmidt and Jeremy Dusher, and a special thank you to all ZAG members that applied for this opportunity.

Save the Dates:

Las Vegas, Gift and Souvenir Show 9/20-9/23

September 21st – Visual Merchandising Breakfast, 7:30am

September 21st - **ZAG Mixer**, Room S233 5pm-7pm, **RSVP** required for entry.

TN Shows, Clarion and IGES

November 9th 10th “Made in America” and 11th “Zootique” – Buyer Tours at 11am at the stage in Gatlinburg.

November 10th – ZAG Breakfast meeting 8am-9am in Gatlinburg (bagged lunch in the room for this day).

November 10th – Sustainability Tour at 2pm in Pigeon Forge

November 11th – ZAG Breakfast meeting 8am-9:30am in Pigeon Forge

ZAG Meeting

November 9th - Pigeon Forge starts at 5:30pm and you must **RSVP**

ZAG Mixer

November 10th – Rain forest Adventures at 6:00pm

Special thanks to: Las Vegas Market, Clarion and Emerald Expositions for hosting our 2022 ZAG events.

A Message from our ZAG President



Letter from the President:

Greeting, all! As I write this I am preparing for the start of a very busy fall 2022 show season and am excited about the upcoming trade shows – new product launches, face to face vendor meetings, seeing old friends and meeting new ZAG members and sponsors. I cannot wait!

What will make this show season extra special? We have had two years of strong sales despite the many challenges of supply chain issues, freight surcharges and price increases. Our visitors have cast their vote that they still support the Zoo, Aquarium and Garden industry, and we need to be prepared to support their buying power in our gift shops! We have seen a clear increase in awareness and support for products supporting sustainability and conservation efforts:

- a. Conservation commerce – supporting indigenous crafters from around the world
- b. Sustainability products – those which reduce or replace items which harm the environment
- c. Products which give back to animal/aquatic initiatives via conservation centers around the world.

By tapping in to the many programs and items relating to these three categories, we are seeing a change in the overall assortment we carry, which furthers the mission of our institutions. It is incumbent on each of us to learn what questions to ask our suppliers to insure our assortment represents the change we seek. There will be opportunities during the fall shows – Las Vegas Souvenir, IGES and Smoky Mountain Gift shows – to explore new offerings, participate in sustainability training and take product tours of specific product categories – made in USA, Minority owned, conservation commerce and more. Look for specifics in the show section of this newsletter. Lastly, I want to invite all buyer and sponsor members to participate in the many ZAG events during the fall shows. We are excited to host our very popular ZAG Mixers at both the Las Vegas Souvenir show and during the IGES/SMGS in Tennessee. Be sure to RSVP – I will see you there!

Kind regards,
Judy



Tech Talk with Emily

By: Emily May

Your Feedback from our Member Survey and How We are Using This Information for Change!

Well hey there ZAG family! Your ZAG Board was thrilled by the feedback you provided in our Member Survey earlier this year. At our last board meeting in July, we combed through your comments and I'd like to share some of the progress and changes we've implemented since hearing your thoughts.

Edits to our Vision Statement

While our mission statement stays the same, it's important that we stay up to date with our industry and adjust our vision statement as we grow and evolve. After reading through your answers to, 'What do you think is the vision of ZAG?' we have edited our vision statement to the following:

ZAG is committed to connecting conservation and commerce by educating and supporting independent Zoo, Aquarium, Garden, and Wildlife Center buyers, worldwide.

Our new Tagline:

We also used your responses to 'How would you describe ZAG in 3 words?' to develop a tagline to be used in a variety of capacities, i.e. on our booth used at AZA and ZAA conferences, possibly on some ZAG swag, to share in passing with potential new members, etc. Pulled from our vision statement, our tagline is:

Connecting Conservation and Commerce

What can ZAG do for you?

When asked what ZAG can do for you as an independent buyer for a Zoo, Aquarium, or Garden, many of you requested more travel scholarship opportunities, and we are so thrilled to be able to provide this for you. We know travel budgets can be close to none for some, so we hope offering raffles for the Las Vegas Souvenir show and the Tennessee shows helped those of you who were selected.

On a more ‘tech’ related topic, we wanted to streamline our RSVP process for ZAG Mixers and Events. By utilizing Eventbrite, we have been able to easily gather your responses and hope to speed up the check-in process to allow for more mingling and connecting with your fellow ZAG Members and Sponsors!

If you have not RSVP’d for the upcoming events, please follow the links below!

ZAG Las Vegas Mixer - South Hall, Room S233 - 9/21/2022, 5-7pm.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zag-mixer-las-vegas-souvenir-south-hall-room-s233-tickets-390146808607>

The cutoff date to sign up for this event is **9/10/2022**.

ZAG Annual Member Meeting/Dinner, LeConte Center, Pigeon Forge – 11/9/2022, 6-8pm (MEMBERS ONLY):

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zag-annual-member-meeting-and-dinner-igessmgs-leconte-center-tickets-390179556557>

ZAG Mixer at Rainforest Adventure Zoo, Sevierville – 11/10/2022, 6-9pm:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zag-mixer-igessmgs-rainforest-adventure-zoo-tickets-390173578677>

The cutoff date to sign up for these events is **10/25/2022**.

Don’t forget to follow us on social media!



Instagram: @zaggift



Facebook: ZAG (Zoo and Aquarium Buyers Group)



LinkedIn: Zoo & Aquarium Buyer's Group

Below is a display idea from one of our ZAG members:



Composts almost 2,000 tons of manure and organic waste each year

Sustainability is a priority at the North Carolina Zoo, going back decades. Here is one example.

The Zoo's elephant herd is responsible for a full ton (2,000 pounds) of manure each day. Add in waste from the rhinoceroses, antelope, zebra, giraffe, elk, and bison, and you can imagine one large manure pile. Disposal is problematic and expensive since it is not acceptable to discard this material into a landfill. Hauling this waste away from the Zoo would degrade the air and increase fuel consumption.

During the 1980s, our Horticulture section began a small-scale composting operation. Initially we only composted plant and grass clippings associated with maintaining Zoo grounds. As we added the North America section, it was clear that the compost operation needed to expand, not only to process more plant material, but to also allow addition of

manure to the mix. In 1996, we received permission from North Carolina to develop a 2-acre site to handle our growing composting needs.

Today, we annually process about 2,000 tons of manure and plant waste on this site, surfaced with repurposed fly ash from a nearby coal power plant. Windrows take about three months to turn from manure and clippings into nutrient-rich compost. Bacteria and germs in manure do not survive the composting process. We ensure this by sending a sample from each windrow to North Carolina State University for testing. Rainwater is captured in a retaining basin and pumped into the sanitary sewer. That water goes through the City of Asheboro's treatment plant.

All the compost generated here, stays here, too. We use every bit in our horticulture operations. This also saves money. Since we do not have disposal fees, and since we use the compost on site and do not have to buy organic soil supplements, the Zoo is able to avoid some rather substantial costs.



The most recent development in compost and waste reduction has been adopted by our food service contractor. In 2017, they initiated a project to compost all the food scraps associated with the Zoo's meal preparation activities. Representatives collected these materials from the five restaurants and transported them to the compost area. But this was not enough. They have gone even further, by eliminating most single use, disposable plastics used on the Zoo's grounds. This is one reason you will not be able to get a straw at the Zoo, and that all beverage cups are compostable or refillable souvenir cups. All the spoons, knives, and forks distributed at the Zoo are plant-based, compostable plastic. Plates and bowls are also fully compostable plant fiber. We have also acquired special "sorting" waste containers for all food plaza areas to facilitate more composting that will move the Zoo closer to our target of no landfill waste.

Bob Langston

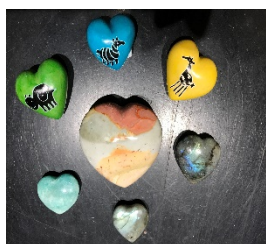
Sustainability and Conservation Outreach Coordinator

Conservation, Education and Science

North Carolina Zoo

Our retail divisions are doing so many things to promote sustainability and conservation. A couple of things I have written about previously are solar panels and LED bulb replacements. Other things some of us are doing include carrying products made from wheat or coffee...like maybe a cup or mug. Also, water refill stations and not offering single use bags.

David Whitaker

**Employee Retention in a Post-COVID world**

Our worlds have been significantly rocked in the last couple of years and we have dealt with new issues with product availability, shipping and ocean freight surcharges, and increased turnaround on custom products. Where we have also suffered is retaining employees.

Potential candidates and even existing staff have learned that they can demand more from their employers and have many more options for employment than ever before. So, what can set you apart?

The obvious answer is pay. We can work within our organizations to try to get competitive pay, but we all know that that isn't always possible and is not the sole answer. I've often heard the term "People don't quit jobs, they quit bosses" and there is a lot of truth in that! I have been fortunate to have very little turnover since 2021 and I have a few key areas that help get buy in and loyalty from your crew.

It is probably safe to assume employees at your park are there because they love animals and/or gardens. In the service industry, we are often overlooked by our own animal/horticulture teams because we don't *do* what they do. What an opportunity!

Your employees may not even fully understand your mission; it's your job to teach it to them! Help them understand that because of *their efforts*, *their* park has accomplished A,B, and C. Their job is just as necessary for the park's success, and they are the revenue drivers!

Just as important as it is for people to know who you are and what you contribute, it's important for your staff to get to know other teams as well! Get to know your senior keepers and horticulture teams. Communicate with your education supervisors and life support personnel. Connect with them to find out their needs and brainstorm *with your team* how you may be able to help! Giving your team a project like this that benefits your animal collection (for example) makes staff more connected and offers more than taking care of guests day in and day out. Arrange for a tour of your hospital or an animal encounter! I have found that 1 trip a month to something behind the scenes does more motivational good than any pizza party ever could.

The other important takeaway is communication. You may be thinking that this is another obvious one, but it has facets as well. Yes, it is important to set clear expectations for your team; my favorite term here is "Trust, but verify". I have never been a fan of a micromanager, but it is important to follow up when you have given someone a directive. This will also convey to them that you are paying attention and the work *is* important. Arguably what is more important is communicating updates. Universally, people don't like to feel stupid, particularly in front of someone else. If you are unsure what to share, then overcommunicate and let them team take the bits that are meaningful to them. When there is an event, an exhibit closure, an animal birth/death, a train malfunction...whatever it may be...inform your people! Inevitably someone will ask them about it and if you are arming them with information, they are empowered to answer those questions confidently. Communicating expectations and empowering them to speak to guests about these things also lets them know that you have their back.

In conclusion, make time for your people. Remind them why they wanted to come here in the first place. Thank them for making your life easier. Something fresh and new might come along and take them away from you, but with any luck, they'll remember their time at your park fondly and be better for it.



Attached is a photo of one of my team's ideas...selling giraffe browse leftovers as walking sticks! The keepers were happy to clean and seal them and the gift shop sold the first 12 in a week for \$50 each...keepers were thrilled that the money went right back to giraffes!

Product Selection, Pricing, Inflation and COGS in these Crazy Times

Over the past 18months, does anyone else feel like they are in a constant game of tug of war?



With the 2022 fall shows at our doorstep, how do I know how much product and what to buy?

- Meet with budget decision makers in your institution, in many cases your Director or CFO, to discuss what attendance, Per Cap and revenue budgets may look like for 2023. Inflation has impacted geographical sections of the country differently.
- The pandemic, supply chain issues and price increases have left us all in a state of wondering, what is next? It may be wise to go back to the old retail Pareto Principle, or commonly know as the 80/20 rule. Simply put, 80% of your profits come from 20% of your product. I make a list of my top sellers in each category based off historical trends and strive to never be out of those items.
- Before hitting the show sales floor, look at each category and the sku counts. I have found that I now carry 45 sku's of giraffes vs the 20 I normally would carry. The

pandemic had me scrambling to just get giraffes and the sku count is way overstated for that business and tying up valuable dollars.

Pricing of Items

Cost of Goods—what is included and what the is final cost

- **Things to consider:**
 - a. Cost of the item
 - b. Art set up charges
 - c. Freight, container surcharges and still tariffs in some categories.
 - d. Bar codes and pre-pricing charges
 - e. Consider a Good/Better/Best assortment approach to hit all guest demographics.
For example,
 - i. Good could be a 2/\$32 Short sleeve promo tee
 - ii. Better is a mid-price tee
 - iii. Best is fashion fabrics and designs
 - f. Budgeted COGS or gross margin considerations

- **Margin = (retail price of item - cost of goods sold) / retail price**
- Markup demonstrates the relationship between profit on a sale and the COGS. It represents the difference between how much the business spends on the product and how much it costs customers to purchase it.
- Margin demonstrates the relationship between gross profit on a sale and revenue. Revenue represents the total income gained from the sale, and gross profit refers to the profit that a business makes after subtracting the cost of goods sold.

Trade Show Questions to Ask or Consider

- Are vendors running any show specials? **ASK!!!**
 - Free or reduced freight
 - Extended payment terms

- Sales or Closeouts-if you can take the product right away, many vendors are reducing pricing due to full warehouses.
 - Free bar coding and pricing on apparel (it's out there!)
- What are the current freight rates and shipping container charges? I have started to see these start to decline in the last 30 days.
- Ask what the pricing increases are for 2023. What date does it take effect?
- At the trade shows, **NETWORK** with your fellow Zag Members! Ask them on categories and vendors they did well with. Opportunities exist at ZAG breakfasts and the Mixers to network with both peers and vendors. Many vendors also run ZAG specials or discounts for members.
- Hot Items or categories you are seeing in the market for 2023—our vendor partners are great on the latest trends, colors and patterns!
- **DO NOT BE AFRAID TO REACH OUT!** We have many very experienced and amazing members in ZAG that would be more than willing to help! Your ZAG board members can assist you with a “buddy” if you are new.

I am so excited to get back to shows and to see everyone! Let's celebrate the wonderful results for the last two years and make 2023 equally as successful! Continue to crawl the branch of success as an independent retailer!



Top Trends

By - Rosemary Domas – Buyer Wildlife Conservation Society

Imagine this situation “You’re in the cafeteria – the director of your institution strikes up a conversation – “Hey there – sales have been great, I was curious – what are your best sellers? How are you tracking against plan and last year?”? Can you answer these questions? Often it is challenging to know these numbers when taken off guard – below you will find a very short list to know - take a mental note or fill it out and keep it locked away in your head. If you can roll off these statistics, your credibility will go through the roof – you will demonstrate that you are more than a fabulous merchandiser, but a savvy businessperson as well!

1) What is your annual sales plan?

- 2) How are you trending to your current sales plan?
- 3) How do this year's sales compare against last year's sales?
- 4) What is your average transaction (or per cap) verses last year?
- 5) Best-selling item?
- 6) Best-selling category?
- 7) Biggest opportunity for next season?

ZAG Talks DEAI and Sustainability Efforts at NY Now

ZAG had a great opportunity to talk about DEAI and sustainability efforts with MSA, and the Brownstone Foundation at the NY Now Show. This panel brought insight to how stores and Buyers can play a big role in these efforts. Lenise Willis, Julie Steiner, Princess Tenkins and ZAG's very own Tommy Brown headed up these very important industry conversations, with about 25 buyers in attendance. Brown stated, "You as Buyers are the Gatekeepers, you decide what the public chooses in your shops,

please make sure your shop reflects everyone.” Brown also stated, “Ensure your employees reflect all of the community, and focus on what people can do, over what they can’t do.” As zoos, aquariums, gardens, NGOs and museums start embracing policies that are more inclusive; Buyers may also strive to set new goals in social sustainability. Perhaps, it is as easy as committing 5% of your open-to-buy towards a minority or women owned company? Remember it just takes one Buyer to start changing the future of a company. Will you be that Buyer?



Thank You, New ZAG Sponsors



dZi Handmade is dedicated to enhancing the livelihoods of Himalayan artisans and their communities through engagement in productive fair trade business relationships that also bring value and insight to our customers in western markets. Our five signature lines include 'Wild Woolies,' with whimsical hand-felted birdhouses and nature inspired gifts, 'Fair Trade Holiday, with seasonal hand-felted items, 'Fair Trade Home & Garden', with gift and decor for inside and out, 'Lunar Revolution Jewelry', inspired by universal symbols and sacred geometry, and 'Tibet Collection', featuring innovative products for meditation and relaxation. We are a founding member of the Fair Trade Federation, supporting and promoting sustainable business practices with 1,000+ artisans and their communities in Nepal and India.

Longer, bulleted description (158 words, 942 characters)

dZi Handmade is a founding member of the *Fair Trade Federation* and works directly with talented artisan groups in Nepal and India to create unique and high quality gifts that sell!

The five signature lines include:

- **WILD WOOLIES:** whimsical hand-felted birdhouses, bird ornaments and other fun nature-inspired, hand-felted gifts which sell in any kind of store.
- **FAIR TRADE HOLIDAY:** charming seasonal felt and knit decorative items.
- **FAIR TRADE HOME & GARDEN:** trendy wall decor, hand-felted table top cactus, planters and macrame plant hangers for gift and garden-oriented shops.
- **LUNAR REVOLUTION:** a stunning collection of upmarket silver, gold and brass jewelry inspired by sacred geometry and ancient symbols, with great prices!
- And **TIBET COLLECTION:** a classic and diverse 'conscious product' line with signature meditation bowl boxes, Tibetan prayer flags (actually made by Tibetans!), solid brass chimes, incense and other cultural-related collectibles.

All product has informative tagging with related marketing tools to support solid sales, plus an easy-to-use catalog and website, and great customer service.



- Enjoy It specializes in trending accessories with popular zoo and aquarium artwork by the best licensed artists in the world. Products include decals, air fresheners, drinkware, keychains, magnets, phone pockets, puzzles, and much more. Custom name drop/logo add on available with low minimums of 48 mixed designs. Printed in the U.S.A. Catalogs at: <https://fliphtml5.com/bookcase/zwlcq>

ECO Wear & Publishing

We are ECO Wear & Publishing. Our business helps to promote the appreciation for and understanding of nature and wildlife. Our world-famous ECO Embroidered Caps (over 150 designs) are always highly popular and successful commodities at parks, birding stores, zoos, aquaria, and museums. Each cap has an interpretive tag as an education aid for that each species. Custom embroidered name drops are available on orders of 24 or more caps. There is no minimum per design. ECO books covering a wide range of natural history topics are available with no minimum per title. Please stop by our Las Vegas Souvenir & Gift Show booth #522 or our Smoky Mountain Gift Show booth #3222. Samples of all caps, t-shirts, and books will be on display. www.ecouniverse.com. Please contact Sheri Ashley at 517-256-5533, or email ecoorders@hotmail.com



Whitney Howard Designs is an eco-friendly company that creates meaningful and inspirational pewter jewelry in Los Angeles, California. We design and make our own collections and with our “Design Your Own” program we create American Made, Eco-Friendly items for other business. We currently work with over 250 museums, destinations and organizations.

The WHD collection represents the many aspects of life’s journey. We create tangible, wearable objects that remind us of the people and things we love, the inspiration and connection we seek.

With every blessing ring, quotable cuff and promise ring we create, we make a conscious effort to put integrity first. Rather than being absorbed with ever-changing trends and fads, we remain focused on the idea of creating sentiments that last and that we are always “paying it forward.”

We design with intention, so the pieces not only have a positive impact on the recipient, but on the environment as well. That’s why we only use recycled, repurposed and organic materials to make our Made-In-America jewelry. We want you to feel as good about our products as we do, and to share that positive and inspirational energy with family and friends.

Whether you are shopping for yourself or are searching for a meaning gift for someone you love, we invite you to browse our collection of lead-free pewter jewelry and accessories and find inspiration.

We wholeheartedly believe that our jewelry and accessories make the perfect gift for anyone.



Earth Sky + Water is a nature publishing company specializing in distinctive, high-quality products that celebrate the natural world. We work with renowned artists and naturalists to bring you exceptional products printed on quality recycled papers—all are designed, manufactured, and assembled in the USA.

Our signature product—nature identification **FoldingGuides™**—feature beautiful illustrations and brief text for identifying local species. Folded and laminated, they are a durable and lightweight companion for any outdoor excursion. The same beautiful images can be found on our **Posters, Greeting Cards,** and **Boxed Note** assortments. We offer **name-drop customization**, bringing heritage species together with place names. Retailers also appreciate our selection of **custom display fixtures**. Our goal is to set you up for immediate success!

ZAG Member Special!

Mention this profile and with your first order you'll receive:

*** Free Freight ***

*** Free Display with qualified purchase (spinner displays excluded) ***

Catalogue and wholesale information at www.earthskywater.net or <https://earthskywater.faire.com>.

To speak with one of our helpful team members, call:

Eastern office located in New Hampshire: (603) 654-7649

Western office located in Washington state: (603) 654-1139

We are proud to sponsor ZAG and look forward to working with more ZAG members!



Anne Marie Rose

Have Questions? Want to place an order? Contact us...

Tel: (443) 536 - 5783

Email: Natures-retreat@outlook.com

Website: www.thebridgeconnections.net

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[The Essential Oils Collection](#)

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Free Spirit Hair Accessories - Unique Handmade in the USA Artisan Hair Accessories

With Your Choice of a Nautical and or a Boho Vibe

[Free Spirit Hair Accessories Catalog](#)

Balancing Essentials - Gemstones & Gemstone Jewelry

[Balancing Essentials - Spring 2022 Catalog](#)

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[Earth's Elements](#)

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[US Games Card Games](#)

[US Games Tarot 2022](#)

[US Games Tarot & Inspiration 2022](#)

Benjamin International - Candles, Incense, Crystals, Tapestries, Jewelry, Clothing, & More!

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Capstone - Crystals, Jewelry and so much more!

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Raku Pottery - Blessing Bowls, Ornaments, Coasters

[Raku Pottery](#)

Fantasy Gifts - Incense Burners, Waterfalls, Umbrellas, and all things fantasy!

[Fantasy Gifts Catalog](#)

Sussy's Ceramics - Pottery Ornaments and Bowls

[Sussy's Ceramics](#)

Fern Valley / Humbolt Hands - Handmade in USA soaps from Goat's Milk

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[Fern Valley Goat Milk Soaps - United We Stand Collection](#)

[Fern Valley Goat Milk Soaps - Invincible](#)

[Fern Valley Goat Milk Soaps - Checkmate Collection](#)

[Fern Valley Goat Milk Soaps - Checkmate New Edition "Pawn"](#)

**Seven Seas - Marble & Plush Marine & Land Animals - Portion of Proceeds Goes Towards
Sea Turtle Conservation**

[Seven Seas Catalog](#)

Best Statement Fixture for this issue

Please submit your best display or fixture for our next Newsletter. Send to Tommy Brown at tbrown@stlzoo.org



