



Hi everyone!



Can you believe it? The 'crazy season' is right around the corner! From September through the first half of November, we all get caught up in our favorite pastime – spending money. I hope each and every one of you has had a fantastic year so far. As usual, our successes are heavily reliant on favorable weather during key dates, but unfortunately, some of us were not so lucky with Easter or Memorial weekends.

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A letter from the President
By David Whitaker
President, ZAG
Director of Retail Operations, North Carolina
Zoo

During the bustling buying period, we're all on the lookout for the next big thing. It's essential that we share our successes and disappointments with our fellow buyers, so we can make informed decisions.

The fall shows, including Las Vegas Souvenir, IGES, and Smoky Mountain Gift shows, present excellent opportunities to participate in product tours featuring specific categories such as 'Made in USA,' Zootique' and Sustainability'. Check out the show section of this newsletter for further details on these exciting events. I would like to invite all buyer and sponsor members to participate in the ZAG events during the fall shows. We are excited to host our annual ZAG Mixers at both the Las Vegas Souvenir show and during the IGES/SMGS in Tennessee. Be sure to RSVP! -David



Follow ZAG on Social Media



Facebook: ZAG
(Zoo and
Aquarium
Buyer's Group)



Instagram:
@zaggift



LinkedIn: Zoo,
Aquarium &
Garden Buyer's Group

September 1, 2023 | The Association for Merchandise Buyers of Zoos, Aquariums & Gardens | www.zaggift.com

It is once again time for ZAG Inc. to call for candidates for the 2024 Board of Directors election. If you are interested in making a difference we would love to have you apply. Applications must be received no later than Sept 11, 2023

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

Commitment

As a board member you will be asked to do the following:

- Serve a 3 year term on the board
- Dedicate up to 5 hours a week to ZAG Inc.
- Attend 2 yearly meetings at ZAG's expense.
- Assist in Trade Show Partner events that host ZAG Inc.
- Serve on committees for the betterment of the Zoo, Aquarium & Gardens buying industry
- Assist with ZAG Week at the Tennessee Trade Shows in November.



Previous Experience

Please list your previous experience as an on-site gift buyer in a zoo, aquarium, or wildlife attraction. (Bullet Point Please)

ZAG Inc. and the future

In 5 sentences or less describe your feelings about ZAG Inc. and how we can better serve our members?

Include your name, current position, Institution, address, phone number, E-mail and a pdf image of yourself:

SEND CANDIDACY APPLICATION TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

David Whitaker
ZAG Board President
Retail Director/NC Zoo Society
336-879-7269 dwhitaker@nczoo.com

Judy Rancour
ZAG Board Secretary/Treasurer
Director of Retail Operations/Saint Louis Zoo
314-646-4736 rancour@stlzoo.org

(You will receive a confirmation email once your application has been received)

Deadline for candidacy applications is **September 16, 2023**



By Tommy Brown
Vice President, ZAG
Retail Manager/Buyer of
Conservation Goods, Saint Louis Zoo

WHY DEI IN RETAIL?

Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion are all very important factors within retail today. These four words should affect your guests, and well as your retail team. The USA is becoming more diverse daily, thus creating different shopping habits and wants. From products to merchandising, retailers now have to appeal to many cultures, and people with different experiences and abilities.

Having a diverse team will help your organization see things through many lenses, and this may help save your organization money and time. For example, when MGM designed their MGM Grand Hotel, they forced people to walk under a lion to gain access to their hotel and casino. This may have been a great design element, but out of cultural fear and superstition, some people would not go under the lion, thus preventing people from entering their establishment. Fixing this culturally insensitive design, cost staggering amounts of money, and if they had a more

diverse team, this situation may not have happened. Next time you are planning a new store design, or delving into a cultural product, ensure you get feedback from your team, community, and people from other cultures and religions. Diversity should be in every aspect of Retail, from mannequins to signs. Reflect all the people that visit your location, because people (especially children) want to see “themselves” when they enter your location.

Equity is an important factor when buying. Are your purchases lifting up everyone in the community or just some? Look at underserved areas in your own community, and see what goods they may have to offer to you as a Buyer. Giving minority or women owned business a chance in business, helps level the historically unfair playing field. We cannot change the past, but we can help change the future through thoughtful purchasing.

Access is yet another topic that we as Americans have been acknowledging more and more, since ADA laws, enacted in 1991. As retailers, we should go above the standard of the law, and seek ways to embrace people with sensory differences. By intentionally seeking out communities that may not have access in your area, you may find some new loyal consumers. For example, host a special retail night for the deaf, and have ASL storytellers in your shop to explain your great product lines. Also, remember access can be physical or economic boundaries in your area. Look for these boundaries, and see how you as a retailer can help solve these community issues. Yes, this all takes extra work, but think of the joy you can bring to people in your own community. Remember communities are an “us” issue, not a “me” issue.

We all want to belong, and this is why inclusion is very important in retail. You have to establish a sense of belonging in your retail operation, and value everyone’s opinion. In this economic landscape, you have to provide more than money to retain help; you must provide a workplace of vision and collaboration. Workers today must be cared for in their personal life, and they must be valued at work. Always take time to find out what your people are feeling, and suggest ways for them to be more involved or included in your retail operation. Within inclusion comes fairness, always ensure everyone has the same opportunity to advance, and offer clear outlines for advancements. If fairness is ever in question, inclusion suffers and it can destroy a team. Inclusion is one of the hardest things to master, because it is not about how you feel, it is learning how others feel on your team, and feelings are different for everyone. Always keep open and candid communication with your people, as this is how you get to discover some of their feelings.

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Join ZAG at the Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show and the Smoky Mountain Gift Show



Don't miss these events at the upcoming Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show taking place October 4-7, 2023 at the Las Vegas Convention Center South Hall:

Visual Merchandising for the 20's

Thursday, October 5, 11:00AM, Connect Buyers Lounge, Booth 2831

Tommy Brown, ZAG VP, Retail/Visual Manager of the Saint Louis Zoo will cover highlights and new ways of thinking for visual merchandising as well as provide an easy-to-follow checklist at the end of the session! Lunch voucher provided to all participants.

Annual ZAG Mixer

Thursday, October 5, 5:00PM – 7:00PM, Meeting Room S233

Join your fellow ZAG Members and Sponsors for drinks and hors d'oeuvres! Mingle, network, connect!

Plus, many more show features including:

- **1300+ Booths** with special areas for Made in America, Native America Pavilion, Lifestyle Products, Emerging Marketplace
- **NEW CONNECT Lounge** featuring New Exhibitor Product Preview Area as well as **NEW Connect Mobile App** that puts the exhibitor list, floorplan & event schedule at your fingertips
- **NEW Sip & Relax Booth** in the Lifestyle Focus featuring events each day such as "muffins & mimosas" or "coffee & doughnuts"
- **Stay for the last day** when up to \$5,000 worth of gift cards and prizes will be given out throughout the day

Complete your **FREE Buyer registration**

Scan the QR code to the right or visit

www.lvsouvenirshow.com/ZAG



If you have any buyer related questions, feel free to contact
Heather Overlock at 203-580-8709 or heather.overlock@clarionevents.com!

Join ZAG at the Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show and the Smoky Mountain Gift Show

Merchandising with Judy

By Judy Rancour
Treasurer/Secretary, ZAG
Director of Retail Operations, Saint Louis Zoo



A surefire way to increase sales is to rethink and redo a focal area in your gift shop. Creating something fresh as a statement or story inspires not only your visitor, but also your staff and associates alike!



Think of your own shopping pattern – if your grocery store offered the same items as their lead promotion week after week, the results would fade over time. By the same token, offering new items in the entrance or focal area creates both interest and inspiration to customers who are shopping that day.

In my own institution, we partner with our marketing team and animal division to support different animal awareness events at the Zoo. Collateral signs were created to “tell the story” of the importance of the animals or species being featured. Focal tables are used to pull supporting merchandise together – plush toys, apparel with supporting images and

messaging, gifts, textiles conservation commerce items and even candy, which all share the theme being presented. The statement creates a cohesive story translating into strong sales! These statements live for approximately 7-10 days and generate not only sales but a common message to signage out on grounds. Pictured is a table statement from the Endangered Species awareness event at the end of May.

Another key component to messaging your customer is a window statement. Although focal tables offer an upfront touchable presentation, a window can be more inspirational to those walking by. Additionally, windows can reinforce the overall event message and confirm the importance of the event statement to visitors and associates alike. The lifecycle of a window statement can coincide with the focal table or can live longer of the message has a lifespan beyond the event itself.



TENNESSEE TRADE SHOWS ZAG EVENTS

November 7th: Sustainability in Retail Class at IGES Sevierville

****ZAG will reimburse class once the tour is completed****

Tour Times: 2:00-3:30 or 3:30-5:00

November 8th: ZAG Annual Meeting

Join us at IGES in Pigeon Forge for our Annual Meeting

12:30-1:30

****We will be offering a chance to win \$1,000 fixture drawing****

November 9th: ZAG BBQ **Hootenanny**

Join us at the Smoky Mountain Gift Show Ogle Room and Terrace for a ZAG Luncheon!!

12:00-1:00

****We will be offering a chance to win \$1,000 fixture drawing****

November 9th: ZAG Annual Mixer

Join us at Rainforest Adventures for a ZAG Mixer

5:30-8:00





Don't miss these events at the upcoming Smoky Mountain Gift Show taking place November 8-11, 2023 in Gatlinburg, TN at the Gatlinburg Convention Center:

NOVEMBER 8, 2023

12:00PM: ZAG Board Meeting Lunch, Ogle Room

11:00AM: Made in America Tour, Mills Auditorium Stage – LUNCH VOUCHER PROVIDED!
Join Tommy Brown as your tour guide to visit booths featuring Made in America products

NOVEMBER 9, 2023

11:00AM: Made in America Tour, Mills Auditorium Stage – LUNCH VOUCHER PROVIDED!
Join Tommy Brown as your tour guide to visit booths featuring Made in America products

NOVEMBER 10, 2023

8:00AM: ZAG Breakfast Seminar, Meeting Room 6&7 – HOT BREAKFAST PROVIDED!
Join us in Gatlinburg for our annual seminar and hot breakfast

11:00AM: Zootique Buying Tour, Meeting Room 6&7 – LUNCH VOUCHER PROVIDED!
Join Tommy Brown as your tour guide to visit booths featuring zoo and animal themed products

DAILY:

ZAG & Association Meeting Room, Meeting Room 6&7 – open each day

ZAG Information Booth, Mills Lobby – featuring ZAG member or sponsor information

PLUS 2 levels of exhibits, Product Preview Area, Daily cash and product giveaways, Happy Hours, Show Party, Shuttles between the Smoky Mountain Gift Show & IGES, and more!

Complete your **FREE Buyer registration**
Scan the QR code to the right or visit
www.smokymtngiftshow.com/ZAG



If you have any buyer related questions, feel free to contact
Amy Bloom at 203-246-2793 or amy.bloom@clarionevents.com

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Sevierville, TN | November 7-9, 2023 Pigeon Forge, TN | November 8-11, 2023

2023 SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

To get more information about any of the items below, visit [IGES.US](https://www.iges.us)



NEW! Sustainably Made Products:
40+ vendors, including the
Fair Trade Federation.



Made in America Pavilion
with 90+ vendors.



NEW! Toy + On Trend Pavilion, a
partnership between IGES and Enchanted
Moments with 35+ vendors.



**Sustainability in Retail Professional
Program (SRPP).** Now a Webinar
Before the Show!



NEW! Swag Store where every buyer
wins IGES branded prizes.



Enter to win a Toyota Tacoma!
Increase your chances with daily entries.

ZAG Awards Luncheon hosted by IGES

Lunch, cupcakes and a champagne toast!

Join your fellow ZAG members as we celebrate Opening Day at Pigeon Forge with a delicious lunch, cupcakes and a champagne toast! Hosted by IGES we will be honoring the wonderful tenure of Tommy Brown as well as the IGES 10- year anniversary at the LeConte Center. Each guest will receive an IGES Swag Bag. In addition, there will be special deals from the vendors on opening day only!

Date: Wednesday, November 8, 2023
Time: 12:30pm
Location: LeConte Center at Pigeon Forge

Register for **FREE** today at [iges.us/zag](https://www.iges.us/zag)
or use your phone to scan the QR code

If you have any IGES buyer related
questions please contact:
Lynn Visser | Attendee Relations Manager
(678) 982-5107, Lynn.Visser@emeraldtx.com



Retail Reinvented: Pop ups!

By Shelby Salestrom
Board Member, ZAG
Guest Relations Manager/Buyer
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens



I don't know about you, but if I were to pick a part of my job to do every day, it would be store design.

Creative displays are fun and have the added benefit of making shopping more enjoyable for your guests. In my case, the best part of being in a business that revolves around children and animals is that you can have fun; get a little goofy and it will be well-received!

Many parks don't have the resources to reinvent themselves every quarter, so it's up to us and our teams to make things fresh and new and convey our message. While we have a signature store(s) and mobiles during peak times, don't let opportunities for new areas pass you by! Pop-up stores could be a new dynamic for your park. These stores can take advantage of seasonal demands, passing fads, or to welcome a new species of animal/plant! Are there under-utilized buildings on your premises? Are there alcoves near high traffic areas? Is there an old vehicle that can be repurposed?

I was bitten by the pop-up bug early on when I had 3 "normal" stores. The store at the back of the park was beautiful with a panoramic view of the river, but it had been reworked 3 times in my tenure and it just wasn't functioning. It was in an area previously designed to be hidden...and it worked! Visitors passed us by, and our payroll budget was consumed by trying to make it work. I inquired about an old tram car on our property. I was looking for an alternative to having plush available at our very humid, very popular Stingray Bay. A normal kiosk would never work, we would be dealing with rust/swelling, and all the plush would have to be hauled back every night so it didn't get wet from the climate. To my surprise, our facilities team embraced the idea and created an amazing mobile retail vehicle. So great that our management team used it for Food and Beverage instead.

C'est la vie. Still a win for the zoo.



photo above of the Dino Yurt that started it all



Fixture Winner Update

Submitted by Shawne Sheldon, Washington Park Zoo

Hi everyone! It is time for an update on the fixture award that I won last year at the ZAG annual meeting. I shopped all around trying to find the display that would work the best for our gift shop. We had this back wall that we had put bookcases there to make it usable, but I really wanted to get some slatwall there and when I found these displays, I knew these were the ones. They provided me with slatwall and storage underneath.

I was able to fit two in the space available. So, then I reached out to ZAG and they covered the cost up to \$1,000 which covered the units, but the shipping was about half the cost of the units. I opted to do the pick-up option. Road trip for me!

It was a 5 hr drive to get to Akron Ohio, I went and spent the night and picked up the displays the next day. Then I assembled them and put them into place. They made a huge difference and gave me a bunch of display space. I was ecstatic!

We set up one of them to hold most of our drinkware and it really made a nice display, and we were able to keep some of the extra underneath for quick filling. The other side we set up for the plush that had the zoo name on them and made them look pretty in the baskets. I feel like we definitely sold more drinkware this year because of this display. It drew your attention to them. Before we had them on shelves and I think people just passed them by. I am having to place reorders wherein the past I have not. I can't thank ZAG enough for this opportunity to make that space of my gift shop really earn its keep. I have been wanting to change up that area for a while now and was not able to do it because of budget restrictions.

I feel that the ZAG organization has been a huge help to me over the years. I have been able to talk to other buyers and get ideas for displays, new products that are working well for them and just keeping up to date on the latest craze. I have learned a bunch from all of the buyers. Thank you ZAG for the hard work you put in to assist all of us other buyers, it does not go unnoticed.



Living Souvenirs: Growing Gardens and Profits

Indoor gardening is more popular than ever and what better way to connect visitors to your mission and create lasting memories than through living souvenirs! Many gift shops already incorporate aspects of gardening into their retail space, and we've just recently begun our journey, but have found that the more personal you can make your garden gifts, the better they sell! Not to mention, growing your souvenirs is not only sustainable and unique, but also supports conservation programs and initiatives!

By Samantha Halligan
Board Member, ZAG
Director of Guest Experience
Lake Superior Zoo



Unique- Pairing a living plant with a popular souvenir can help boost sales and create fun and unique buying opportunities for your guests, while also promoting your brand!

Sustainable- Plants are gifts that keep on giving! Not only are they essential to the environment, but they can also be essential to your profit margins! Harvesting plants from your own garden spaces creates larger profit margins and free's up funding for other categories.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle- Along with being creative, you can also be environmentally and economically responsible! We've partnered with our animal care team to recycle cans from animal diets to create our own living souvenirs. In return, we also supply a large variety of living plants to be used in various animal habitats.



Conservation Programs- There are so many conservation programs that align with gardening and pollinators like Pollinator Partnership, Monarch Watch, and Nation Wildlife Federation, just to name a few! Pairing your garden gifts with messaging and educational information is key to upselling and strengthening your actions towards conservation! You can also harvest seeds from native plants to sell in your gift shop to promote native pollinator spaces outside of your organization and within your community.





COASTAL
Connections
CONFERENCE

A RETAIL CONFERENCE WITH AN ISLAND VIBE
OCTOBER 22-24, 2023 MARGARITAVILLE RESORT | ORLANDO, FL

The Coastal Connections Conference is the only retail conference designed specifically for beach, coastal and nautical retailers. Taking place, October 22-24, 2023, at the Margaritaville Resort Orlando, sessions address the unique aspects of running a seaside store – something you won't find anywhere else. Combined with the many opportunities to interact with other seaside retailers, you'll leave with valuable insights and meaningful connections.

Creating connections is an important aspect of the conference, and during the three-day event there will be many opportunities for attendees to interact together.

Discounted registration rates are available to nonprofit retail stores, and ZAG members and businesses with multiple registrations. Questions can be directed to conference@breakwallpublishing.com.



UPCOMING TRADE SHOWS

Surf Show
September 7-9

IGES November 7-11
ZAG Annual Meeting November 8th

Las Vegas Souvenir Show October 4-7
ZAG Mixer October 4th at 5:30 room s233

Smoky Mountain Gift Show November 8-11
ZAG Luncheon November 9th Ogle Room

Ocean City Resort Gift Expo
October 29-31

Grand Strand Gift & Resort Merchandise Show
December 3-6

Welcome new ZAG Sponsors!!



RedlineXpo Launches The Reunion: A Souvenir, Gift, and Resort Show

Industry veterans Doug Miller and Tim von Gal and the team at RedlineXpo introduce a tradeshow designed to drive new business and bring new energy to the souvenir, gift, and resortwear industry

Atlanta, GA (August 14, 2023) - RedlineXpo, a leading producer of high-quality tradeshows and conferences, today introduced its newest event: “The Reunion: A Souvenir, Gift, and Resort Show.” Based in Las Vegas, this new expo provides retail buyers the chance to browse hundreds of thousands of new designs at a strategic time in the buying cycle that will make ordering and fulfillment faster and easier.

The Reunion will take place April 4th through the 6th at The Mirage Convention Center in Las Vegas and will showcase thousands of products from exhibitors across the United States, as well as some international manufacturers. Nearly every category of souvenir and resort product will be on display with a wide array of designs making their debut at this show. Helmed by industry leaders Doug Miller and Tim von Gal, the expo will feature the premier product providers and attendees from the largest enterprises in the United States.

“Despite every challenge in the marketplace over the last few years—and there have been a lot—this industry has stayed positive, continued to support one another, and put their heart and soul into everything they produce,” said Doug Miller, Co-Founder, RedlineXpo. “The Reunion is a chance for Tim and I to provide a better strategically timed event that the industry has been asking for due to some of the economical and supply chain challenges that we’ve all been dealing with. And, while we’re at it, we’re going to bring back the fun that makes this community of buyers and exhibitors so special.”

The strategic timing of the expo will optimize the ordering and fulfillment process for both exhibitors and buyers. Hosting the show in April provides exhibitors even more time to meet with customers and fulfill orders despite any macro supply chain issues that might disrupt business as usual. And expo attendees will get more time to collect orders and ensure that product is customized and distributed according to their timeline.

“In building this expo, we asked ourselves ‘What can we do to make this the best possible experience for exhibitors?’” said Tim von Gal, Co-Founder, RedlineXpo. “We’re offering a very competitive price point for exhibitors; we’re inviting world-class buyers from enterprises around the globe; we’re hosting in Las Vegas, which is second-to-none in entertainment options for forging new relationships and solidifying the existing ones; and the whole event is produced by our RedlineXpo team. We’re confident folks will leave this expo feeling truly energized.”

Welcome new ZAG Sponsors!!

The Reunion is the second tradeshow owned and operated by RedlineXpo. In addition to Doug and Tim, RedlineXpo is run by resort and souvenir trade show veterans Matt Miller, Evan Shoda, Dirk von Gal, and Jhana Jordan.

"We're always listening to our exhibitors and using their feedback to create events that optimize the buying and selling experience," said Jhana Jordan, Global Key Account Manager for RedlineXpo. "In doing so, it became clear that adding an April show gives buyers and sellers the ability to fulfill orders for the coming season as well as add products they need to order for immediate delivery. With this new date, the commitments we've heard already have been so positive, and there's no doubt this will be an exceptional show. We can't wait to see everyone in Las Vegas!"

For more information about exhibiting or attending The Reunion, go to www.thereunionexpo.com

Companies interested in learning more about exhibition opportunities and booth packages; and Retailers interested in learning more about the show's offerings and pre-registration should contact:

- Dirk von Gal - Dirk@redlinexpo.com, 917-330-8470
- Evan Shoda - Evan@redlinexpo.com, 404-405-3590
- Matt Miller - Matt@redlinexpo.com, 470-306-5544

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About The Reunion

The Reunion is the premier expo for souvenirs, gifts, jewelry, resort merchandise, and apparel. Created in 2023, and featuring hundreds of exhibitors seen by thousands of attendees, The Reunion brings together buyers and sellers from thousands of different categories to eliminate friction in the buying and selling process. The result is a truly one-of-a-kind experience that speeds time to revenue while continuing a legacy of community building.

For more information go to www.thereunionexpo.com

About RedlineXpo

RedlineXpo is a leading provider of Resort and Souvenir trade shows and conferences across the United States. RedlineXpo is committed to bringing together innovative companies to facilitate the ordering and fulfillment of high-quality products that extend the branding of enterprise companies. RedlineXpo produces The Reunion, an annual expo in Las Vegas, and The Rocky Mountain Apparel, Gift, and Resort Show, a semi-annual expo in Denver. Collectively RedlineXpo events attract thousands of U.S.-based exhibitors and tens of thousands of attendees every year.

Welcome new ZAG Sponsors!!

GOEX

FEEL GOOD. DO GOOD.

Do you want more sustainable merchandise in your store? Are you tired of deciphering vague eco-friendly claims and wondering if your purchase is making a difference?

We hear you! At GOEX Apparel, we believe in total transparency and 100% authenticity. Our mission is to make you and your visitors feel great about their merch purchases – trendy designs, high quality, sustainable, transparent, and fair trade. You really can have it all!

It is easy to get started. First, you sign up for a wholesale account. Second, you choose a design from our customizable graphics catalog or send us your artwork along with the type of garments you would like the design printed on. Finally, we will send you a custom quote.

Did you know the average t-shirt travels over 20,000 miles before it arrives at your store? Well, a GOEX shirt only travels 2700 miles, so when you partner with us, you can rest easy knowing your apparel is good for people and the planet!

We have worked with thousands of customers who want to impact the world positively with apparel purchases. Join them and sign up [here](#) for a wholesale account today.

**THANK
you** ZAG Sponsors!!