



To: County Personnel and Finance Board  
From: Schwetz, Ronda  
CC: Sharon Corrigan  
Joe Parisi  
  
Date: October 10, 2019  
Re: Henry Vilas Zoo Equity and Sustainability Efforts in 2019 Memo

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Henry Vilas Zoo has gone through a tremendous growth and change over the past year thanks in large part to the support from the County Board members, County Executive's office and the County employees. In 2019 these were our priorities to help increase our equity and sustainability efforts.

**Equity:**

Henry Vilas Zoo added staff in 2019, including new positions such as the Zoo Keeper Attendant LTE. This created an entry level zoo keeper opportunity which did not exist before. The FT Zoo Keeper position requires two years of AZA experience which eliminates young people interested in the zoo field. This attendant position was designed to expose young adults to the zoo keeping career. Other new positions were added as part of the zoo's restructuring which will provide more employment and promotion opportunities at the zoo. In summer 2019, our zoo was also able to hire a new Volunteer Coordinator who is fluent in Spanish. This new role is responsible for updating the zoo's volunteer program to provide more opportunities for the community. Overall, the zoo went from 21 FT County employees to 30 in 2019, and hopes to add at least 6 more positions in 2020. These positions not only put us on track for meeting AZA's high standards, but leverage us to exceeding these standards for the next accreditation cycle. Our new concessions partner, Center Plate, also is working with us to provide employment opportunities to a diverse audience. Additionally, as part of the Kid's Day celebration and commitment to the community, the zoo offered free train and carousel rides for the month of April. Normal cost is \$2 per person. The zoo is looking at expanded hours next summer to provide more opportunities for the community to enjoy the zoo.

**Sustainability:**

Henry Vilas Zoo's commitment to sustainability is part of its mission. Each new project looks to incorporate better sustainability practices for our zoo. The most significant project in 2019 was the replacement of the Aviary roof. This building was one of the largest consumers of energy in the county. The new roof will help lower utility costs by improving from a R1 rating to a R6 rating. As the Aviary roof was being replaced a new efficient watering systems was installed for the plants. In both our giraffe and rhino buildings we replaced older lights with newer and less energy consuming natural lighting. Other sustainability efforts include reviewing and streamlining our expendable supply ordering to county-wide negotiated contracts and buying green resources whenever possible. Many of our staff bike to work instead of driving or car pool. Some of our staff also make use of Madison Metro

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to get to and from work. Our facility participates in the bicycle benefits program which gives 25% off the grille and gift shop for anyone with the sticker on their bike helmet.

Our Conservation Education Department focuses on providing signage, programs and meet and greets focusing on sustainability for our world both locally and globally. In particular, Arctic Passage talks about the effect of climate change in the arctic and what we all can do about it to help reduce our impact on the environment. Each year, one of the zoo's biggest celebrations is Earth Day. This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year of celebrating the earth and it is traditionally one of our biggest events. The zoo partners with many community leaders such as MG&E, while also cultivating positive relationships with our local arborists who give out tree saplings for free.

Overall, we hosted seven Conservation Awareness Days throughout the year which collected over a thousand thumbprint "pledges" by guests to take sustainable actions. Offsite and onsite education programs ranging from sleepovers and camps to school visits reached over 9000 individuals with in depth conservation messages. Each week our Summer Zoo Campers participated in a lunchtime waste reduction challenge through the year. In addition, we continue to update signage across the zoo to include sustainable action suggestions and conservation messaging.