

SUSAN ALTRUI

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Director, Little Rock Zoo

Leadership Experience in Nonprofit Management, Fundraising, Project Management, Team Building, Strategic Communication and Business Planning

Track record of exceptional success in directing, motivating and inspiring teams to meet and exceed expectations, objectives and challenges. Documented experience in managing high levels of responsibility. Strong leadership credentials and proven track record of adaptability to change. Experience working in nonprofit, government and corporate environments. Highly driven with a passion for excellence.

Key Value-Offered Knowledge & Skill Areas

- Project Management & Organization
 - Public Speaking/Presentations
 - Leadership, Team Building & Training
 - Strategic Communication
 - Relationship Building & Repair
 - Technical Aptitude: Microsoft Office, POS
 - Diversity & Inclusion
 - Creative Problem Solving & Innovation
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PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Director, Little Rock Zoo

December 2016 – Present

Direct all operations of the state's only accredited zoo including spearheading the development of short and long-range goals and maintaining a financially solvent organization. Inspire a culture of safety by fortifying policies and procedures that protect staff, volunteers, guests and animals. Create innovative programming that inspires conservation learning and provides fun family recreation. Develop branding strategies to attract tourism and build the zoo's reputation. Lead all zoo government relations efforts. Represent the zoo in fundraising solicitation and galvanize public support for capital campaign efforts by serving as executive director of the Arkansas Zoological Foundation. Maintain accreditation and ensure compliance with all laws. Build community relationships and partnerships. Support diversity and create an inclusive environment that provides opportunity for all people.

Selected Achievements/Contributions:

Led Zoo Foundation to Consistent Growth, Completion of New Governance Task Force and Development of Tax Initiative

- Tripled Zoo Foundation assets in last three years and acquired \$3 million endowment fund
- Successfully led Zoo Task Force that petitioned the Mayor and City Board for the Zoo's inclusion in a sales tax for critical new funding for operations and master plan implementation (summer 2020)
- Oversaw program for gathering community input on updating zoo master plan
- Led foundation board committees to make Wild Wines and Zoo Brew events the most successful yet

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Overhauled Conservation Initiatives and Successfully Implemented New Strategic Plan

- Established conservation travel grant for staff funded by Zoo Foundation
- Founded partnership with Arkansas Game and Fish Commission on repopulation/propagation of Eastern Collard Lizard
- Organized city-wide Green Restaurant initiative after eliminating one-time use plastic straws and bags entitled “Don’t Monkey with Straws”
- Instituted that zoo parking fees would be used to pay for conservation initiatives as a “carbon offsetting”

Successfully Implemented Accreditation Standards and Maintained AZA Accreditation

- Implemented new regulations related to safety requirements for Asian elephant program
- Regained accreditation in 2017
- Added new Safety and Training Coordinator as part of new safety requirements for AZA
- Implemented critical new animal welfare standards and created an Animal Welfare Coordinator role

Assistant Director/Acting Director, Little Rock Zoo

June 2015 – December 2016

Selected Achievements/Contributions:

Spearheaded project development of short and long-term goals to create a value-added guest experience; increased revenue and customer satisfaction

- Steered project to open new Arkansas Heritage Farm exhibit including private fundraising, design, and strategic marketing; kept all departments on track for on-time project completion
- Directed plan to increase guest satisfaction; increased overall zoo revenue by more than 20%
- Overhauled Guest Services division to provide better customer service
- Completed \$1.5 million in upgrades in or under budget and on time; raised \$1 million in grants in less than under a year

Enhanced safety and security for guests, staff, volunteers and animals; brought zoo into compliance with new AZA safety standards

- Oversaw transition of Asian elephant program from free to protected contact; oversaw upgrades to elephant facility to bring into compliance with new AZA safety standards
- Overhauled Emergency Procedures Manual to match recommendations of the AZA Special Committee on Safety; currently implementing Incident Command Management (ICM) system
- Diagnosed areas for safety improvement and led team to assess equipment upgrades, maintenance improvements and protocol changes; improved dangerous animal escape program
- Chair firearms team and overhauled trainings and protocols
- Implemented a new Code Blue policy for guest emergencies; began Code Blue drills

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Upgraded technologies and implemented data-driven decision making policies that improved overall zoo operations

- Implemented use of DonorPerfect online data tool to manage and track members and donors
- Adopted software for work order management that improved output
- Moved special event ticket sales online to gain revenue advantage
- Galvanized effort for electronic record keeping for ADR's (Animal Daily Records)
- Moved zoo to adopt a new Point of Sale software system to improve revenue collection and operations

Director of Marketing & Development, Little Rock Zoo

Executive Director, Arkansas Zoological Foundation

April 2005 – June 2015

Led development of all strategic communication plans for the Little Rock Zoo including marketing and public relations plans, social media and crisis communication plans. Led team of staff and volunteers that organized all special events of the zoo and the Zoo Foundation. Served as Executive Director to the Zoo Foundation. Responsible for all fundraising and for leading board members to solicit funds. Led all zoo government relations efforts. Designed capital campaigns and other fundraising efforts including planned giving and annual giving. Responsible for all legal compliance of the nonprofit. Project managed strategic planning for long-term zoo growth. Served as director in absence of zoo director.

Selected Achievements/Contributions:

Exceeded overall fundraising goals; successfully led teams of volunteers and staff to set fundraising goals and achieve them

- Raised average of \$500,000 to \$1 million annually in private donations, grants and sponsorships including the zoo's two largest gifts in its 90-year history (\$1 million and \$3 million)
- Doubled or tripled net revenue for Wild Wines and Zoo Brew; led volunteer committees for events
- Grew Arkansas Zoological Foundation from its beginning in 2005 to a nonprofit with million dollar assets; led board member teams for fundraising, board recruitment, special events and other tasks
- Led project management for a new Zoo Facility Master Plan in 2014; designed RFP, liaised with contractor and ensured complete and final delivery of product

Established positive name recognition for zoo and created and directed strategic communication plans; overhauled zoo special events to make them widely successful

- Polished public speaker and presenter able to talk on-camera professionally and with ease
- Rebuilt community relationships through positive communication campaigns and personal efforts
- Experienced crisis manager familiar with navigating large-scale stories involving elephants or animals deaths; experienced with state's Freedom of Information Act law
- Recognized by colleagues as one of the best special event planners in the state for transforming zoo special events like Boo at the Zoo into experiences that earn revenue and attract wide audiences
- Led zoo to regain AZA Accreditation in 2012 when zoo director was on leave; participant in five AZA accreditations; key leader in four of five inspections and hearings

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Other Work Experience:

Adjunct Instructor, Webster University

July 2010 – Current (when called)

Instructor for MEDC 5300 Strategic Communication course and MEDC 6000 Seminar in Media Communication course. Lead students in assigned tasks and help them complete an end-of-semester thesis.

Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Contract Government Relations Specialist

January 2005 – April 2005

Organized government outreach efforts to the 85th General Assembly, Regular Session, of the Arkansas State Legislature for the Arkansas Public Policy Panel. Developed talking points, materials for distribution and other collateral. Assisted organization with overall strategies for grassroots organizing and meeting with members of the assembly.

Deputy Field Director, Democratic Party of Arkansas

March 2004 – November 2004

Supervised branch offices in more than a dozen counties and trained staff to communicate campaign message. Organized hundreds of volunteers to help with get-out-the-vote efforts on Election Day.

Wesley Clark Presidential Campaign

August 2003 - February 2004

Managed grassroots leaders with online communication tools for volunteer activism, spread campaign message using online blogs and other volunteer tools, traveled to primary states to help organize field offices.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Emphasis: Strategic Communication & Rhetoric
Graduate Teaching Assistant & Debate Team Instructor
Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO, 2003

Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies

Emphasis: Interpersonal and Organizational Communication & Public Speaking
Debate Team Captain and Honors College Graduate
Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR, 2001

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Selected Safety-Related Trainings

Safety Seminar and Workshop for AZA Accredited Zoos, Hosted by the AZA Special Committee on Safety
Omaha, NE March 2016 • Basic Firearm Safety Training • Rifle Firearm Safety Training • Shotgun Firearm
Safety Training • Zoonotic Disease • Blood Borne Pathogens • Toxic Plant Identification • Safe Workplace
Practices • Fire Safety Training • Fire Extinguisher Training • Natural Disaster Preparedness • Antivenin •
Snake Bite Protocol • Safe Housekeeping • Tornado Safety • Severe Weather Safety • Cart Training and Safety •
Code Red Review & Drills • Code Blue Review & Drills • Avian Flu Update and Discussion • Emergency
Management • Heat Stress/Working in the Heat • Violence in the Workplace • Safe Lifting

Other Professional Training

Intro to PCI • Harassment • FLSA Training • Reasonable Suspicion Training • Emotional Wellbeing: Putting
the Pieces Together (EAP) • Generation Gap: Managing the New Workforce (Millennials) • Recycling

Selected Continuing Education

AZA Principles of Elephant Management I (2019) • Diversity & Inclusion Workshop, Just Communities of
Arkansas, (October 2016) • Nonprofit Accounting for the Non-Accountant, Arkansas Coalition for Excellence •
Understanding Nonprofit Tax Compliance, Internal Revenue Service Department of Tax Exempt and
Government Entities

Awards & Recognition

Recognized for work as Board Chairman of Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival, 2016
High Profile Feature August 7, 2011 *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*
Margaret A. Dankworth Management Scholarship/Association of Zoos & Aquariums
Professional Training Program: Managing for Success. February 8-13, 2010. Wheeling, WV
Arkansas Business Publishing Group 40 Under 40, 2008
United States Tennis Association Caption – Southern Region – Sectionals Division Champion Fall 2019
Numerous awards for marketing and advertising materials

Selected Volunteer Participation

Arkansas Minority Film & Arts Association 2019 – current

Board Chair, Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival (2012-2015) – led organization in total rebuild. Resolved
\$500,000 of debt and established festival as an Academy Award Qualifying festival – one of only 32 in North
America. Grew donor, volunteer and supporter base and established qualified board leadership.

Committee Chair, Rotary Club of Little Rock Police and Fire Awards (2013-2016) – led committee of volunteers
to organize annual awards banquet to recognize the City of Little Rock's bravest and brightest firefighters and
police officers. Doubled sponsorship revenue and overhauled program to make it fun and poignant.