

# A Note from the IZE President

**Kathy Lehnhardt**

Curator of Education | Disney's Animal Kingdom

I recently returned from the PAAZAB Conference in Africa. As President of the IZE Association, I was asked to be the keynote speaker to support the conference theme of 'Learning in Zoos and Aquariums.' I found it amazing to select learning as the central focus of a major conference. This would be like AZA, EAZA or even WAZA selecting "learning" as their primary conference theme. This focus certainly elevated conservation education as a critical field in zoos and aquariums.



In my presentation, I detailed my personal journey in the field of conservation education and how it has progressed over time. For those of us who have been in the field long enough, we have seen the start-up of new education departments and the hiring of professional educators, the rise of programming that caters to our daily visitor and, of course, the dawn of evaluation of exhibits and programs. If asked, does learning occur in zoos and aquariums? I would say yes, but only if there is evaluation data to back it up. I would ask you which statement is stronger?

We reach a lot of people with our education programs.

OR

Children who take our program have shown:

- A 57% increase in their knowledge of local environmental problems.
- A 65% shift toward a more positive attitude toward wildlife.

Clearly, the second statement is stronger with the inclusion of measured statistics. It "proves" that we have evaluated participants to our program and demonstrated that learning occurred.

The PAAZAB conference theme was selected by Dr. Cliff Nxomani, Director of the National Zoo in Pretoria and his committee members. For those who know him, Dr. Nxomani is quite a forward thinker and truly dedicated to promoting education in his facility and across Africa. He selected this theme, not without some resistance, because he wanted to move African zoos and aquariums forward as educational institutions. The line-up of speakers for the plenary sessions included professional educators from several African institutions, Kirsten Ellenbogen, President of the Visitor's Studies Association and Evaluator at the Science Museum of Minnesota, and Ian Signer, International Trainer and Curriculum Specialist. These professionals truly demonstrated the depth of knowledge and understanding in our field. We need all these players—professional educators, evaluators and trainers—to ensure that learning happens. One of the goals of the conference was to plant the seed of a multi-institutional project that uses evaluation as a tool to determine learning across African institutions. I wish them great success in this endeavor and look forward to publishing some of their findings in a future IZE Journal.

I am grateful to Dr. Nxomani for taking the risk to promote education and evaluation as a conference theme and I can only hope that other conference leaders in the future will follow in his footsteps.

# Editorial

**Loran Wlodarski**

Science Writer | SeaWorld Orlando



Photo © Martina Roll

I cannot possibly express how honored I am to have been selected as the new IZE Editor. But as the saying goes, everything old is new again.

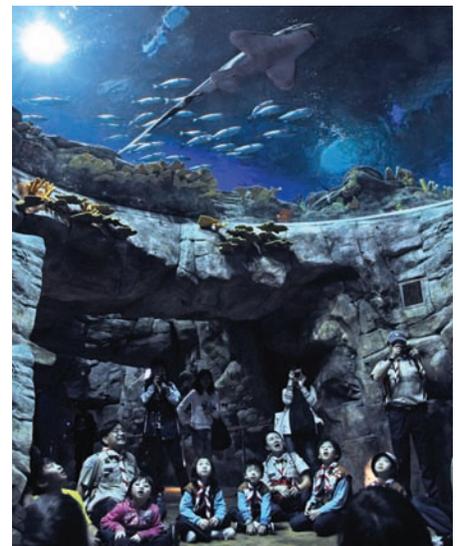
If you've been with IZE for a while now, you just might recognize this "blast from the past"...



Back in 1999, I designed, formatted and printed the IZE Newsletter—it was one of the earliest jobs I ever did as Science Writer for SeaWorld Orlando. Now, many years later, I'm back!

A lot has changed in that time but one thing hasn't—the high educational value and quality of IZE articles, like the ones found in the 2011 IZE Journal.

I am excited to begin work again on the 2012 IZE Journal, so I look forward to reviewing articles for next year's edition. Please begin considering your new article ideas and don't hesitate to write with any questions or comments you may have.



Cover photo © Isabel L-I-sabel: // @ceanpark.com.hk