Learning Group_ Infusing Empat...ctices into Animal Fact Sheets

📅 Fri, Apr 19, 2024 2:25PM   🕐 49:24

👤 **00:05**

Good morning, everybody. Welcome to our event today. We'll just go ahead and get started in just about a minute or so let some folks pop in in case they have a meeting. In the meantime, while we're waiting if you want to go ahead and drop in the chat your name and what organization you are joining us from that would be fantastic

👤 **00:48**

go ahead and get started in just about 30 seconds or so.

👤 **00:59**

Okay, um, good morning

👤 **01:08**

Awesome. All right, yeah, feel free to keep introducing yourself in the chat. It looks like the participation in the waiting room has slowed down. So I'm gonna go ahead and get started. Welcome, everybody to today's learning group event on infusing empathy practices into animal factsheet. My name is Emily Bernhardt, I use she her pronouns. And I am the empathy network specialist over at and Park Zoo and the moderator for today's event. Now before we go ahead and get started, in case you are new to the network, or if this is your very first event with us, we are the advancing conservation through empathy for wildlife network. And we are a network that creates and shares effective practices to foster empathy for animals and people, leading to conservation actions. And we define empathy as a stimulated emotional state that relies on the ability to perceive, understand and care about the perspectives of another person or animal. Now we as a network are a group of 27 AZA accredited zoos and aquariums, with about 250

staff at those zoos and aquariums who are active in the network. And then we also have over 100 affiliates worldwide at over 70 organizations. Now, we also have some other events coming up after this one. So next week, we have an open meeting with our steering committee. And then later this month, we have an onboarding session. For anybody who's in the network, we're new to the network can attend, it'll be an hour and a half. And it's just basically designed to kind of give folks a launchpad into getting started with this work, foundation to empathy practices and where to find things on the website. And once I stop screen sharing, I'll go ahead and drop our events calendar link into the chat so you can access these events and register for those if they are interesting to you. Now today, we're going to hear from three different zoos and aquariums throughout the network. We're going to start off with Courtney and Lauren from Henry Vilas Zoo and Aquarium who kind of started the animal facts sheet trend within the network. So it'll be really exciting to hear from them. And then we did have a bit of a schedule change. So Brooke, who was from Zoo Montana is no longer able to make it today. So Sarah Panciroli from Woodland Park Zoo is going to be talking about our process for getting our animal facts sheets off the ground and what that looks like. And then we're going to hear from Wilson Sherman at the Oakland Zoo, as he talks about what the process for getting their factsheet standard look like as well. After each presenter has gone, we're going to have some breakout rooms where folks can self select which speaker they would like to talk more to ask them questions, learn more about the processes for developing those spec sheets. And then after we have some time in those smaller discussions, we'll come back together for about 10 or so minutes before the event closes to do any cross pollination and a Q and A. All right. So I'm gonna go ahead and stop sharing my screen and turn it over to Courtney and Lauren.

C Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) 04:26

All right. Hello, everybody. So my name is Courtney Cordova. I am the Education Specialist here at the zoo.

⚲ 04:34

I'm Lauren Saltzman. I'm the volunteer coordinator at the zoo. We have another radio out. I'm going to fix that.

C Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) 04:39

And I'm going to start with it. So, today, we're going to talk a little bit about the updates that we've made to our design. And I know a lot of people have seen our fact sheets before they've been a resource for the network for a little bit. So we want to talk about kind of what we did and what we're now doing and how it kind of updated hadn't changed things. And then just how we utilize this tool, how we implement it, how we train people. And then kind of our next steps of what what we want to do with factsheets and what else we are planning. So a little bit about us, we started utilizing this tool in 2021, when we switched over to having more exhibit Docents. So historically, we had cart docents, so they had physical bio facts in front of them. And were able to kind of, you know, show things and and let people touch things. And we put a pause on that during the pandemic, just because of touch and wanting to make sure everyone stayed safe. So we kind of came up with this new volunteer role that our volunteers really latched on to and really seem to enjoy. But with this new volunteer role, not having anything

physical to touch and interact with it meant that we were really relying a lot more on their interpretive skills, and, and needs firm fact sheets and need for information. So we designed these in house. So Lauren here, designed them, not totally copycatting a red panda network. Actually, that was really good. But we utilized Canva, and designed them that way. So it's kind of a tag team effort between the volunteer department and education. So I kind of helped out with the interpretive strategies and thinking through those things. But Lauren has really spearheaded this and developed a lot of them. She's been amazing. But at our zoo, you know, we're really empathy focused. So when we were thinking about factsheets, we really wanted to focus on empathy, and how we can better just show people what those practical empathy interactions look like and give a lot of examples. And this was also part of our interpretive framework for our interpretive master plan. So any interpretive message we have here at the zoo, we wanted to have an empathy focus, and be kind of in the empathy framework. So these info sheets are definitely a key step in being able to do that successfully. So we're gonna kind of compare and contrast the old versus the new. So again, a lot of people might be familiar with our first iteration of these fact sheets, but we've made some positive changes and learn after utilizing them for the past few years, what was helpful, and maybe what wasn't so helpful. So I'll learn to let you take it away and kind of showing people what we mean. So

07:15

if for some reason you haven't seen the the fact sheets before, what we are operating off of before was literally a piece of paper that was laminated, it was printed off of a Word document. And when when I got here in 2019, that was what we were using. So when we switched over from pandemic, I was really looking at it closer because we had started this interpretive master plan. And a lot of the things we were asking our volunteers to do was looking at more of that empathy piece, that interpretation piece. And it didn't mesh with what we had on those sheets. And it wasn't helpful. So yes, I did very much enjoy the the red panda Rangers info sheet that they had sent us. And I thought, wow, this is really eye catching and interesting. And I can pick up this information really quickly. And it's written in a way that most people can understand. So that's really what we were going for. So this was our original sheet. Again, I wanted to make it a little bit more, I guess, something that was interesting, something that our volunteers would come in and say, I want to spend my free time looking at this and reading through it. And when we first started, you can see we have this section up here that says, Well, if champions help us save the world. And that's because we were switching over from that cart method, we really wanted our wildlife champions to understand their role, why it was important, and always just have that messaging there for them. And as we've moved on, that's become more ingrained in what we do. So it's less important to have that on our info sheets. Now. In addition, the old ones had a lot more basics about empathy building. It had some basic guides here. And let me see if we have the second page we do. We also had an exam, we had a lot of examples, we have a lot of a lot of empathy examples where someone could literally read off of the sheet and adjust it, you know, age appropriate vocabulary and things. So it definitely served its purpose. It was a really great way to get started. But what we found over the year and a half, two years that we were using these, there were certain sections that were becoming less used, because people would get that training in other places. So we've updated our sheets. These are the new ones, you can see that we've we've done away with that messaging because that's already inherent in what we do. So we've replaced a lot of it with symbols that are a lot easier to find, especially because the signage that we've been updating around the zoo also has symbols that people can can quickly get those conservation action items and things like that. We've added a lot more things like we've added what does your family look like? Sometimes we added What does a day in the life of an orangutan look like? Or you know what does that say? Time looks

like compared to what we would be doing. So trying to take examples from people's everyday life, we do still have things like you can see, we've still continued doing that we all need rest, we all need play. But there's a lot less repeat stuff in our new sheets. And we have also added an interesting little section a prospective section. So we did have like weights, heights, lengths, things like that. But when you are talking to people, they don't, they can't really imagine that. So in this case, we have that our lions weigh anywhere from a professional wrestler to to commercial treadmills. I know that one of our one of our rock hyraxes weighs 20 average potatoes. And I know that our orangutans climb about the height as if you went into the Madison state capitol looked up at the dome and saw the top and that's about the average. So those kinds of things really help people get a better sense of how high, how tall, how big, how heavy, that kind of stuff. We've also made it a lot easier to find the take action sections so that we can get to those quicker. And we've added a lot more about what our care looks like. We've added a Keeper Corner to all of our sections, so our keepers have messaging that they can give for all of those info sheets, and making sure that we also talk about, you know, that specific care that we give to our animals. And then of course, in addition, we have the kind of the generic facts and information to that we can add on to it. But there's a lot more to these new sheets. And we're really excited about using them. Some of the things that we've been adding, like, again, we've added those carrying messages from our keepers, those perspectives. But then we've also been really trying to work with our volunteers on how can you start off with conservation messaging, and that seems to be a really difficult part for people to get to and their talks. You know, they're great at talking about what our animals love their favorite toys, all that. And then once they get to the conservation messaging, they've either lost their guests, physically or mentally, or they're a little nervous to talk about that. So we're actually going to be doing a training coming up specifically on conservation messaging that Courtney is going to run so we can kind of get people used to that. Yeah. So

C Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) 12:21

something we definitely looked at in our interpretive master plan, was our conservation messaging, kind of creating a matrix to see what are we asking guests to do? And how can we be consistent in those asks, and definitely something that we want to continue working on and developing, and I'm sure you'll hear more from us about that as we learn. So implementation, so what this looks like practically, we start with a empathy and interpretation training, which again, is accessible on the ACE network as a resource in the training section. But we have all staff and any volunteers that's doing an interpretive role, do this training. So again, like Lauren said, this is kind of instilled in just like, This is how we talk about things at the zoo. It's just practical. It's not something we're necessarily teaching people. It's more just like, at this point, a lot of our volunteers are familiar with it, a lot of our staff are very familiar with it. We like to provide it as a resource. So what it looks like, is one here, it's just a laminated piece of paper with a little clip on it easy to take with you easy to have next to you, as you're going out and not just volunteers, but zookeepers also utilize these quite a bit. So it's nice for them during keeper chats, especially to have this as a resource of Oh, yeah, how old are they? Or you know, those questions that people ask that are really easy to forget. We also have better impact training, just to touch a little bit on that.

   13:45

Yeah. So we use the better impact software for our volunteers, and you can provide learning modules through that. So what we started doing was, I just finished up a otter and a camel

training. So really, I have like, hey, here are three different resources. Here's an article to read. Here's an example of a keeper talk for a camel. And here's a story about camels for kids. Look at these things, and then take this little quiz below. And then it's not required right now for someone to then go talk about camel, they have to take this. But we were finding that when people were starting to talk about animals, sometimes they really want that one thing that says yes, you are ready to talk about this animal. And so for a lot of them taking that little quiz and saying yay, I passed the otter quiz. Now I know that I'm ready to talk about otters that just helps people feel more ready. So it's something that we're certainly expanding on. And I think we're really, really excited about. Yeah, and then the other

C Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) 14:39

part of these factsheets is making sure they match up with our interpretive master plan, and the type of language and questions in conservation action messages that we are trying to consistently ask across the zoo. So our next step for our fact sheets are doing some bio fact fact sheets. So Lauren's working on one for snake skin that I have clear, so that way you In our volunteers can have physical bio facts, but then have the fact sheet alongside that. Also having topics rather than just having an animal. So we could see, there's one about like DORMANCY or other things like that. So just thinking through, beyond just here's otters, right? We are working on that conservation action training, which I'm excited to see how that's going to help us develop and make people feel more confident with conservation actions, and then also evaluation. So we are overall working on evaluating our interpretation here at the zoo. So a lot of guest surveys, and also utilizing that recap tool. So and then here's an example of, you know, this is what about venom, so more of a topic rather than a specific animal. So just really extrapolating out and doing things even further with our fact sheets. So again, I know we're gonna jump into questions at the end. But also, here's our contact info. And we're always happy to share these resources. If anyone wants them. Feel free to reach out

16:01

to us, but I will stop sharing my screen and moving on to the next round.

16:23

All right, can everybody see that?

16:29

Yes, we can I accidentally muted you. I'm sorry.

16:31

Thank you. Hi, everyone. I'm Sarah panciroli. And I'm the coordinator for the anti gravity team. And today I'm gonna talk to you a bit about our sheets and objects.

16:54

Waiting for this timing to get.

17:04

There. So this project really took off, when at the end of last year, the advancing empathy team made a position statement on empathy for our zoo. And this position statement, really reaffirm that empathy is a key priority and strategy. And we also know that zoos and aquariums inspire visitors feel empathy, through understanding and perceiving the lived experience. And so, Sarah,

17:31

I'm sorry to interrupt you. We're getting some feedback that your audio is a bit choppy. Maybe turn your camera off. Overwhelming the computer? Sorry, no,

17:43

no worries at all. Um, is this sounding a little bit better for everybody? It is, yeah. Okay, great. Um, so yes, basically, the last piece of this is that you know, that when people feel this empathy, it can motivate conservation actions for them.

18:12

And sorry, again, just waiting for my slide to change. So what we call out a little more explicitly in this statement is that we really wanted to encourage our staff and volunteers to truly learn everything to know about our animals. So we wanted them to know first about our animals, of course, and their personal stories and learning from their perspectives and what makes them individuals. We also wanted to share about how we care for our animals, we spend so much time and care to make sure that the well being of our animals is great here at the zoo. And so we wanted people to know a little bit about what kinds of things that our animals are getting for enrichment and what kind of care we exhibit for them. And we also wanted people to know how they could support these animals in the wild. So we wanted them to know things about what the species is impacted by consumer choices, and we wanted them to know about any conservation efforts that we're working on. So of course, if we expect our staff and volunteers to know all these things about our animals, we first needed an easy place where they could go and learn about this information. And this motivated us to develop a few goals for our team. So we wanted to make an easily accessible repository of empathy focused, zoo animal stories. And with that, we want it staff and volunteers to be able to share these stories using using positive and hopeful language. And then once they were equipped with this information, we would hope that this would give every visitor multiple opportunities to learn about and develop empathy for animals and motivate those conservation actions for them to take. So this basically, it helped us create the animal story site, which is our take on animal factsheets This is a screenshot about what the site looks like. And it's actually hosted on SharePoint. This is an internal

document for Woodland Park Zoo and staff volunteers only. And having it on SharePoint was really great because we could monitor who got access to it. And we also use SharePoint a lot as a zoo. And so we are able to kind of spread this out through the wider community. And when you scroll down through this SharePoint site, the first thing you kind of see is this explore by biome section. And this is basically a part of the page that shows people the different sections of our zoos and all the animals that are contained within them. And of course, if you were utilizing the site, you could just search up any animal you want to learn about. But this layout kind of seemed a little bit more organizationally, it just made more sense for us. And it's also helpful. So if you're an interpreter, and you want to learn about a specific section at the zoo, you can go and click on that section, and then see all the different animals. So let's say I was going to interpret the tropical rainforest, there is a tropical rainforest icon where that little frog is in the bottom right corner. And when you click on that, that then opens up to the tropical rainforest sub site of the page. And it kind of lays out all of the different animals that you would see in that section. Of course, we only have five here right now. And we're in the early stages of this story site. And so hopefully, one day this will be filled with all the animals. But let's say you wanted to learn a little bit more about Jaguars on a given day, you could click on that Jaguar icon, and that will then take you into the individual page of that species. And that's the same for and other of those animal icons. So on the page of all of the species, we are trying to have a format where you can learn about the natural history of the species, we have a section for how to create empathetic connections, we talk about how we care for those animals. And we talk about conservation. So as you can kind of see on the left side, these are just screenshots of a page, it's a little harder to see when you're not scrolling through. But this just gives an idea of how it's laid out. And on the right side, you also see we have a section for animal stories. And this is just a place where we can really call out the individual animals. So people can get to know them better, and then also maybe tell them apart. So I also wanted to share a little bit about how we started gathering information for this project. Because I think that this is almost the hardest part when starting out. I've only been working at the zoo for a little over six months. And I'm also pretty fresh to the zoo field. So this means I was lacking a lot of the connections with keepers that I think would have been pretty helpful in developing these stories. But on the other hand, keepers don't necessarily have time to sit down and talk about every single animal. And so we really had to think outside the box when we wanted to start developing these stories, and making sure all of this information was accurate. So I started with looking into a lot of onsite resources, I went to keep our chats and learned about how we can discuss our animals. And I also just poked around at exhibit signage. So I could know how we're talking about natural history. I relied heavily on social media for collecting information. We have a fantastic blog site that talks all about the personal stories of writing. And we also have partnered with a local news channel. And they've made a docu series on some of our creatures. So that was really helpful to dig through to. And of course, scouring instagram, youtube and any other platform. I talked with our education teams who work closely with keepers to deliver keeper chats. They of course, have a wealth of knowledge about our animals, meeting with PR teams, and they're the ones who are publishing a lot of this information. So it's been so great to be able to connect with them. And they'll send me some resources that they use when sharing about our hands. And now that we're starting to kind of put this document out into the open, we're reaching out to the wider zoo community to try and gather stories. For example, I've met with some docents who've been working for 40 years at the zoo. And so talking to those people about stories has been so helpful. Um, so now that we've kind of started in this process, it's been really great to see what's working and maybe what's not working. First and foremost, I've discovered it's extremely important to be respectful of information. We obviously really care about how our animals are being portrayed, and we want them to be portrayed in the best light and accurately and so I've made sure that all of our information Is Woodland Park Zoo sourced. And if it's something about natural history that I might not be able to find, I make sure that that

is from a verified source. We also want to make sure that every single story is focusing on empathy, even for our bugs and creatures like that. And so we just take the time where if we can't necessarily highlight the individual story of every animal and species group, we still want to make sure we're highlighting ways for people to connect with them. We've realized that stock time is a huge consideration here. This project just takes a lot of time. And I think it's important to know going into that, and it's been really helpful for us to just reach out to different departments. And it's been really nice to see how many people are willing to help out. I've also discovered that it's very helpful to keep track when doing these stories. I have a huge spreadsheet that covers which animals I've been talking about which ones I will do next. I have spaces for like any updates that I might need to go back and keep track of. So I can make sure that information is up to date. And then for events on this project, I would say that, just do it. If you're feeling a little bit overwhelmed of how to even start something like this. Even generating a few pages, I think for us was really helpful and getting some buy in from the naysayers and showing them like we can make these stories. And this is what they could look like. And then more people start to get involved. We've got about over 200 species at the Woodland Park Zoo, and we've built out about 30 pages so far. So we've got a lot of work to do. But already, I feel like I'll make a story for a certain animal and have a conversation with a guest about it. And I feel equipped to be able to tell them about all the different things and help them connect to that. So it's been really rewarding to see that every little bit does help. But that is basically the process of our stories, I have put my contact info here. I'm totally happy to talk about SharePoint if you've ever thought about hosting stories on that site. And thank you to everyone on the panel to how it has really served as inspiration as we get this project going for ourselves. So thank you.

27:27

Awesome, I'll go ahead and share my screen. Can everyone see that? Okay. Yes, we can. Thank you. Okay. Hi, everybody. Thanks for being here. My name is Wilson Sherman. I am the Program Manager of Community Engagement and belonging here at the Oakland Zoo in the San Francisco Bay area. I'm going to talk today about our empathy Guide, which is a digital resource for connecting zoo educators with empathy information, and especially that information about individual animals. I'm going to first explain sort of the inception of the project, how it came about. I'm then going to show what the project looks like in practice. And then I'm going to describe a little bit more in depth, the specifics of my process of creating this. So to start, I'll just share briefly about my background. I started here at the Oakland Zoo as an intern in the with zookeepers, and I moved from that role into being a zoo camp teacher. And one of the things I noticed was that one of my favorite things to share with guests, and my campers was some of that more personal knowledge that I had about the animals from my time as a keeper. And the other thing I noticed was that that information was largely inaccessible to my fellow educators. At the Oakland Zoo keepers have very little interpretive responsibility. And that case, there wasn't when I started a culture of sharing individual names or personality information. So anyone who did have that information, got it, just through a personal connection to a zookeeper and then kind of spread around that way. So that meant that for someone like a seasonal zoo camp teacher who had a wealth of animal knowledge, they wouldn't necessarily have those stories, that those were empathy eliciting stories to share with their campers. So my goal here was to kind of bridge this gap between the animal care and learning and engagement departments with the empathy guide. So here's what it looks like. It's a website. Also. It's unlisted. So it's an internal resource only. You can access it on a computer or on a mobile device. I'll get into kind of the specifics a little bit later on how I made it. We have this is the homepage will not we've got an about empathy website, which has a lot of

information, largely sourced from resources that I found via the network from Seattle Aquarium, Woodland Park Zoo, but this is sort of that theory. Critical underpinning of this work, which is around the role of empathy in connecting people with wildlife and inspiring conservation action. And it also links to kind of more resources for further reading, things like that. So then we've got this find animals section and a lot like what Sarah just shared, you can find animals, either if you want to look through a list of individual species, you can or you can go by section of the zoo. If we imagine that we click on the African savanna section. Nothing fancy, you just have a list of every species in that section of the zoo. So let's imagine that we click on the Warthog. Again, these are just screenshots, I've kind of compiled things together. But this is what it would look like about Alice the Warthog. And now I'm going to show sort of how we're using some of those empathy best practices in the information that we share here. So the first is sort of introducing the animal using personal names and pronouns so we can find out her name her sex, when and where she was born. And when she came to the Oakland Zoo, how much she weighs, and then an ID information so we can tell Alice apart from her friend Frenchie via their tasks. We then have a story that highlights choice and agency. So I have a quote from one of her zookeepers about what she's like, which is a little bit more of a timid Warthog. And then there's this nice story about a love song, the zookeeper taking seven months to train her to accept voluntary injections. So that's a little bit about her background and sort of a story about our connection to her. We do provide some of those personal and natural history facts. This empathy websites, it's separate from the Oakland Zoo has like an existing if you go to our website, on the public facing website, we have every species that we have, and some of that natural history and conservation information. So I didn't want to recreate all of that. So we just linked to that. Right up top here. So if you wanted to find out more about war hogs in the wild, you can go there. But we also sort of circled back to that, in this caring for warthog section. So for every species, we have almost every species we have like caring for this animal bit, which shares something unique about their care. And in this case, what they shared was about how we're hogs are naturally very intelligent and extremely strong, which means that this comes into how the exhibit is designed and what type of enrichment they provide the Warthog. So then you have a story about Alice throwing 100 pound Christmas tree into the air. But this is also a place where we can talk about what the keepers do to keep their skin healthy and things like this. So now we're getting to the process. So I'm going to first talk about how I went about creating buy in for this project. I'm talking about how we collaborated to create all those messaging. I'll cover the specifics of the website building and how we've been training folks to use it and promoting it and a little bit about how we evaluate it success. So the first step was to create buy in. And here I'd say that you need to have a lot of empathy, and empathy for the stakeholders involved. So when I started this project, there was very little, there wasn't a culture of sharing animal names, there was, in many cases, an explicit rule against it. And there's a lot of interest in it. I knew from being a part of the learning and engagement team that folks wanted to share this kind of information. But there was resistance from leadership and things like that. So I spent time talking with folks leading our animal care department leading our education department about what exactly were the concerns here. And what we boiled it down to is that it wasn't really a concern about sharing Animals Names, and many people saw the value in that. But it was actually a concern about two things. The first was a concern about making animals the butt of a joke. And the second was about inspiring people to want animals as pets. So once we had named those specific concerns, we were able to kind of go forward and frame and address those issues. The other big step here was building awareness about empathy and its role in inspiring conservation action. And this is somewhere where it was super helpful to have the empathy network and the advice of a lot of the folks here. And to be able to like say to my colleagues, like hey, this isn't just something that I want to do to share Animals Names. It's actually part of this broader movement. There's a lot of other zoos working on similar stuff. So those were big

steps in creating buy in. I also spent a lot of time talking with the people who I thought would be using the guide in the end about what they wanted to see what would be accessible, things like that. So the next step was to go about actually creating the content. So I started by interviewing primary keeper so though gonna do is organized around strings of animals, each string has a supervising primary, we decided to just speak to those folks, because at first I was doing like a mix of different zookeepers. And what we found is that people have different perceptions of the animals, you know, and someone might disagree with how someone else characterized it. And so that's why we focused on just one person for each group of animals. And, again, why we cited them as like, this is what Stacy says about the camels, rather than trying to make a kind of objective statement about that camels personality. So I interviewed every zookeeper this took a long time, because like Sarah said, it's hard to track down zookeepers. And I really made an effort here to be as accessible as possible. So we, I asked them from the forefront, how would this be most comfortable for you to share this information? I offer, I often, like worked alongside them. So I'd flush press record on my voice memos, put that and help them out with whatever they're doing. So a lot of my transcripts are like, you know, there's lots of background noise and things like that. But I just did whatever I can to fit it into there. But up themselves. But I interviewed all of them about all of their species in in the I'm looking for poking at specific stories, they mentioned things like that, I then took that content, typed it up, made it a lot tighter, shared it back with the person who said the quote, so that they could provide input or adjustment. We then shared all that content with the zoological managers who are over a set of strings. So those folks did a round of review. This was really interesting, because there's, you know, I think someone at some point said, Oh, the draft smells bad, like this one draft is especially smelly, because he's an adult, male, whatever. And, and I thought that was funny and interesting. And then, you know, different people would catch at different points, like, we don't really want to characterize him that way, let's just say he has a unique odor. So I learned a lot in that process. And then once all those folks have looked it over, we shared it with our marketing department. Again, it's internal, not external, but they still wanted to just make sure there were no serious things that they didn't want us to be discussing.

🧍 37:20

So once I had created all that content, that was all in Google Docs, but we realized that constantly updating documents and sharing out, you know, because things change all the time, obviously, with such a large collection of animals, so to be constantly updating and redistributing individual documents felt daunting. So we decided to create a website, I use Google Sites. This was super easy for collaboration, I could not have done this without a couple of my colleagues who put a lot of work into building out the website. But it was none of us had used it before, it was quite easy. It's a lot like Google Docs or anything else. And it was easy for us to collaborate on it. Also Google Slides also has an option to like basically make it unlisted. So I don't think that there's no way for you to go onto Google and look up Oakland's your empathy guide, like this website won't pop up. You can only access it if you have a link shared with you. So those are some of the benefits of Google site. Then I got into kind of training folks on it and promoting it. And we did well first, after I had created the initial website, I piloted it just among our core team of like full time educators. So those folks used it and gave me feedback on it and found typos and things like this for several months. And then we launched it out to the broader docents, zoo, Camp teachers, teen volunteers, and entire zoo staff. So we did a my colleague, Sarah Bowser, and I lead a lunch and learn is what we call them, we lead a training about empathy. And then that's where we launched the website. And now there are QR codes that link to the website in a lot of education spaces. So that's how folks come to the

website. In terms of evaluation, one cool thing about Google Sites is that you can use Google Analytics. So I get feedback on what websites people are using and how often they're using it, how long they're spending things like this. So what we can see up top here is the views over since I've launched the website, so it's pretty cool. This is before this isn't that pilot, I'm pretty consistent use. This is on the day of that lunch and Lin, big spike in usage. And then from there on, we see pretty consistent usage of the website. So that's one thing that tells me that it's working is that people are using it. I can also look at what pages people are using. And this is sort of a lesson learned. Or perhaps a drawback is that you know, one of the goals with empathy is really to focus on those lessons. charismatic species that might not be getting a lot of attention. But what I see here is that the main, the, the websites that people are accessing most are the lion and the wolves and the Gibbons, the elephants. So the bughouse isn't the top of this list, which is unfortunate, but something to learn. A couple of specific things that I wanted to mention. That choice to situate the knowledge in the keepers voices was really important to us. So attributing those quotes directly to who said it ameliorated issues around like, I don't know if it's an objective statement that Josh is curious, because we were saying this is what his keeper says. So that helped a lot. And sort of acknowledge that a lot of this wisdom is coming from those folks. The other choice that we've made was to kind of lean into difficult conversations with this website, which is something that we might not do in like a traditional factsheet. But but we sort of said, as long as we're having this internal resource, we want to give folks language for these questions that come up, that might be uncomfortable to talk about. But just because it's uncomfortable, we still want to prepare them for that. And so stuff like, how do we interpret the baboons? You know, violence or fighting are things that can be perceived to people to be really intense? What would you say about that? Um, what what does he keep her say about why a cat is pacing, or whatever it is, you know, difficult stories around where animals have come from. And we've put those things in the website. And we're not trying to tell the, the educators know that that that shouldn't necessarily be like the first thing they bring up to a guest. But we want them to be prepared with the language that zookeepers like to use in those cases. Next steps are sort of creating systems for ongoing maintenance and staying up to date with the constant changes. And I'd love to do more evaluation of how this impacts people's actual practice. But I do get a lot of feedback that people use it all the time, not just in my department, but also marketing, you know, it's going into a lot of our social media captions. Someone from development told me that they used it to talk to a donor recently. So there's been a lot of good feedback about this. Thank you.

42:21

All right. Thank you all, for sharing out about your projects, we have a little over 15 minutes left in this event. So I'm going to go ahead and open up the breakout rooms. Courtney, Lauren, Wilson, and Sarah, I've already pre assigned you to rooms. But everybody else you'll be able to self select which presenter you'd like to talk to ask questions from and just kind of learn a little bit more about the ins and outs of their projects. Or if you have any challenges, if you're working on something similar, that you want to kind of bounce off to other folks in that breakout room, this is also a great space to utilize that. So it'll be in those rooms for about 12 or so minutes for those conversations, and then we'll come back for some last updates. But you should see that those rooms are open now. So feel free to join whichever one you would like. If you don't see the rooms popping up on your screen, but still want to participate in those conversations, let me know and I can manually assign you to arrive.

We have about five minutes left. So that's probably about enough time for about one or two questions if there was anything that folks wanted to ask that did not get answered or addressed in your breakout room conversations.

43:59

And one question, Will Wilson touched on it? I think a little bit of a curious for the other folks. Did you guys see resistance from kind of higher management in telling these these stories that make the animal seem more personable? Because I also hear that there's a large fear of anything that we say or do that may want someone to have this animal as a pet, you know, and it's hard to balance that endearing and relate them the things people understand. And then also say that No, no, like, so how did you guys overcome that? Or what was your journey with?

C Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) 44:42

Yeah, I can share a little bit first, we've been really fortunate that we've had a lot of really good buy in from the beginning with empathy at our institution, which has also allowed us to, you know, start these things a lot earlier and see how they're working and progressive. And, you know, in the past the three years that we've had these fact sheets, we have not I found that to be the case at all, people because they understand the animal more as an individual and care about the animal, they're a lot less likely to want to say I'm gonna pluck that up and take it home with me. And we also navigate a lot of those conversations with our volunteers and talk about how do we talk about this appropriately? How do we get people to understand and care, because when people are having that feeling of I really want this animal to be my pet, they're having an empathetic response. They're saying, I care so much. I want to take care of this. So how do we just refocus that empathy and be intentional with it. And that's really what our fact sheets, what our interpretive messages are doing. So in our three years of utilizing this and having empathy as a very core structure, in our conversations with guests, we really have not seen an increase in people wanting to take animals as pets. And if anything, we've seen quite the opposite.

45:50

I can add, also that there's also like some very clear ways that empathy can be exactly a counter message to wanting a pet. So that's where I leaned in, especially for those species where we were most concerned. So like squirrel monkeys, it was like, oh, one cool thing about ways that squirrel monkeys sense the world and move through it is that they leave their pee everywhere and smell that on the branches. And that's how they navigate their exhibit. And we accommodate that by cleaning their exhibit slowly and not cleaning everything out all at once. Because that confuses them. And if you get a squirrel monkey as a pet, they are going to pee all over their hands and rub it all over everything in your home. So it's like a very or, or like our cotton top tamarins like, they are really cute. The pet trade is really devastating to them. The reason that we are able to breed cotton top tamarins is because they were raised by their parents, and they learned culturally how to raise babies. They can't do that when they're taken

from the wild. So in those cases, we linked our empathy messaging directly to the pet trade. And I think that in those cases, empathy can actually decrease someone's interest in having one as a pet.

46:57

Yeah, I would second what Wilson said, we have, like a conservation section at the end of all of our pages that we're building out. And that's where we can explicitly say things about what the animals experiencing in the pet trade, and what happens if you take that home, or maybe if it's too much for you, and release that in, and then the conservation issues that that can cause. And so having a space where you can just lay that out is really helpful for those stories. And then, of course, if there are any concerns from keepers, that's why we've been going around the way of making sure that all the information we use is something our zoo has already put out. So we're all talking consistently about how we portray our humans.

C Courtney Cordova (Henry Vilas Zoo) **47:40**

I will also add that we talk a lot about social media and our conservation actions as well. Because a lot of times people are like, I'm gonna have a monkey as a pet. Like that's a pretty extreme case. But a lot of times people will see these things on social media and be like, this is okay, that's so cute. I really love animals. So we have a lot of conversations with guests around appropriate social media and what that looks like and what ways that they can avoid those types of messages and media as a conservation action to help protect animals.

48:11

Thanks all for your answers. I just also dropped a link in the chat to our exotic pet literature review learning group that kind of talked on this question a little bit more is when you're struggling to get by in kind of on that, because of that concern. So there's the recording that's linked there, as well as the actual literature review itself, if anybody wants to engage with that more, and I definitely know that that's a question that is not isolated to one organization. So we can definitely continue to have conversations about that, if that's of interest to folks. So great question, Kim. All right, I do want to recognize that we are at time. So thank you all for attending today. And I hope this led to some good connections and conversations. If you have five minutes to fill out that feedback survey that went in the chat earlier, that would be incredibly helpful to make sure we can continue to create relevant and engaging events for y'all. And we will be posting the recording for this event, any supplementary materials on the website within the week. That have a wonderful rest of your day. And thank you all for coming.