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Lincoln Children’s Zoo is home to over 400 animals. Some small like the pygmy marmoset and some large like the camels. They all have their own characteristics and personalities that make them who they are and a part of the Zoo family. Every one of them also has at least one Lincoln child who calls them their favorite. All of these animals have one thing in common: They are all cared for by the amazing zookeepers at Lincoln Children’s Zoo.

The old U.S. mail delivery saying “neither rain, nor sleet, nor gloom of night” is highly fitting for the caretakers of the animals at the Zoo. Zookeepers arrive each morning, 365 days a year, to greet their animals with food, supplements, care and love. When many stay home due to blizzard conditions, zookeepers find a way in. “They are resolute; they love their animals and they will always find a way to get here,” said president & CEO John Chapo.

The same care a parent gives their child is the care a zookeeper gives their animals. To many zookeepers their animals are family. They deliver presents on their birthdays and holidays and celebrate milestones together. Some ask if the Zoo animals are like pets to the keepers. They will be quick to say no. They will say they are here to care for the animals for the purpose of conservation and the opportunity for tens of thousands of children and adults to experience the wonder of nature.
Zookeepers at Lincoln Children’s Zoo have their fans. There are children who come to the Zoo who dress up as them and want to be a zookeeper. “The bond our guests have with our zookeepers is incredible—it’s one of the reasons that make Lincoln Children’s Zoo special and different,” said Chapo. The love zookeepers have for their animals carries over into a bond with those who visit. Children know the zookeepers on a first-name basis. They come the Zoo just to see them at the penguin show or the Animal Encounter Stage.

In the words of John Chapo, “I recently celebrated my 30th year at Lincoln Children’s Zoo. I’ve had the opportunity to be part of amazing experiences. I’ve been around the world because of this job. But one of the things closest to my heart is the connection millions of people in our community have made with our Zoo and our animals. I can say with great confidence the connection and interaction that our Zoo is known for wouldn’t be possible without every one of our zookeepers.”

The love the zookeepers have for their animals is contagious. It spreads through the Zoo and the community. It is the reason why so many people love Lincoln Children’s Zoo today and will continue to love it in the future.
By Ryan Gross

In 2011, the animated feature film *Rio* debuted in theatres. The film introduced the world to Blu, a Spix’s macaw from Rio de Janeiro. The movie was loved by millions and was an avenue for children around the world to meet and get to know the amazing macaws. In late 2015, three hyacinth macaws, similar to the now-extinct Spix’s macaw, found a home at Lincoln Children’s Zoo.

When Tortoise Trek opened on Labor Day weekend in 2015, multiple species of tortoise roamed the grounds and a blue and gold macaw and a scarlet macaw were perched high in the sky. Three hyacinth macaws had yet to make their debut at Tortoise Trek. The three hyacinth macaws, Bernie, Zelda and Whitney Houston, were getting acclimated to their new Zoo before they joined the other macaws and tortoises.

The hyacinth macaw is the largest species of macaw and the three new inhabitants of the Zoo are no exception. A special indoor habitat was built for the three new birds to accommodate them during the colder months. Over the winter months zookeepers worked with Bernie, Zelda and Whitney Houston to get them ready for their debut in 2016 at Tortoise Trek.

Aside from their great size, these hyacinth macaws have great personalities also. Jake Beierman, one of their zookeepers, began calling them the tornadoes because of their loud vocalization and their ability to tear through almost anything the keepers put in their habitat. This behavior isn’t abnormal for hyacinth macaws. In the wild they often find branches, trees and other objects and use their beaks to break them apart.

“We try to simulate the behavior by hiding treats and food in boxes as a source of enrichment. They absolutely love it when we give them enrichment items like that to tear apart,” said zookeeper Meyer.

When the hyacinth macaws are outside they are perched above the ground where the tortoises walk and close to the pathways so guests can get an up-close look at them. “With Tortoise Trek we wanted to create an animal habitat where multiple species could live together and where our guests could be part of their environment,” said president & CEO John Chapo. Tortoise Trek is one of the most immersive environments the Zoo has created. “You really get a sense of how amazing and how large a hyacinth macaw is when you are walking through Tortoise Trek,” said Chapo.

Bernie can be found at Tortoise Trek and is now also part of the show lineup at the Animal Encounter Stage. Zelda and Whitney Houston will join Bernie at Tortoise Trek in the coming months.
Fascinating Facts

- Can eat 20,000 leaves of bamboo in one day
- Communicate with chipmunk-like sounds
- Excellent tree climbers

Hello, my name is

Tenzing
(the red panda)
THE RAIL CONNECTION
In the early 1960s, Arnott Folsom was busy raising money and planning for the new Lincoln Children’s Zoo. He was laying out the Zoo grounds and deciding which animals would go where. While construction was going on inside the Zoo’s fence, a part of the Zoo was already open outside. The Iron Horse Railroad, the track for the Zoo’s train, would open nearly two years prior to the rest of the Zoo opening. To get the train up and running as soon as possible, Folsom hired local youth to help lay the track. One of those youth was J.D. Ayres.

In 1963 at 16-years-old, Ayres went to work for the Lincoln Parks Department. He thought he would be mowing lawns, similar to his friend who worked for the department the previous year. On Ayres’s first day at his new job he was assigned to hand dig a trench called the Babbling Brook. When he asked what the trench would be used for, the job foreman said it would connect the flamingo pond to the sparkling waterfall. Ayres was quite confused by this answer. His foreman would go on to say that they were working on what would someday become the new zoo in town.

It was the next week on the job that Ayres would get assigned to work with Mr. Folsom laying the track around the new zoo. His title was Chief Engineer, which Ayres says was just a cool title that didn’t mean much. He would spend his days laying the track by hand. “There was no heavy equipment used, we would shovel the ballast into wheel barrows and roll them to the work site to be leveled for the roadbed,” said Ayres. After the ballast was leveled, the track gauge was placed on top of the rail heads and spikes were used to secure it to the cross ties. “Everything was custom built to match the scale of the rails and ties,” said Ayres.

Fifty-one years later, Ayres looks back at his first summer job with fond memories. “I was 16 building a railroad by hand just as railroads were built in the past century,” said Ayres. He was always fascinated by trains. At the age of 6 Santa Claus brought him a small electric train set. “I was fascinated by trains since I was a little boy so this was a dream come true,” he said.

“I remember Mr. Folsom stopping by the site to see how things were going. He would give the entire site a 360-degree eyeball survey then pull a few weeds and disappear. Some days we would see him working on the flower beds or talking to the carpenters. He was a hands-on kind of guy,” said Ayres.

Today, Ayres now volunteers his time at the Zoo as a Train Engineer and Conductor. He can’t be missed wearing his iconic train engineer uniform. He loves telling the stories of laying the track and working with Mr. Folsom. He often refers to Mr. Folsom as “the man” and calls him Lincoln’s Walt Disney.

What makes J.D. Ayres’s story special is like so many people in this community he has a deep-rooted connection to Lincoln Children’s Zoo. He understands Arnott Folsom’s vision and how important the Zoo is to the community. He fondly remembers his first ride on the Zoo’s train in 1964 and always will. It’s fitting that today, he is the one who is giving thousands of children their first ride on the Zoo’s train—one that they too will never forget.
A new resident is calling Lincoln Children's Zoo home this year. A life-size triceratops fossil has been added to the newly renovated Stego’s Dino Dig, buried beneath the sand of the iconic Stego. Stego has been part of the Zoo since opening in 1965 and is a favorite for children and adults to visit. “Adding the triceratops below Stego is great for the Zoo as it will allow our guests to relive fond memories and create new ones,” said president & CEO John Chapo.

Children will use tools such as brushes and small shovels to uncover the large triceratops. A map will help label each bone as they uncover different portions of the dinosaur. “Not only is this a fun addition for our young guests to the Zoo it is a great learning opportunity too,” said Chapo. He added that children will see the humerus bone on the map and then unearth it to see what it actually looks like. “Stego’s Dino Dig is what our Zoo is all about—opportunities for children to get up-close and experience today’s nature but also nature of the past,” said Chapo.

The area will also include new covered seating for parents to watch children as they play and discover what’s below the sand. Aside from uncovering the life-size triceratops, children will have the opportunity to find other prehistoric surprises. Sitting above the covered area watching over guests of the area is be another dinosaur. This dinosaur will not be made of bones like the triceratops but will resemble an actual living one.

The Zoo worked with Big Bamboo Studios to build the two dinosaurs. Big Bamboo Studios is a Nebraska company known for their rock work in Cabela’s and across the globe. Owner Thom Hunt and his son Jamie donated much of their team’s time to the project. “Community partners like Big Bamboo Studios make our Zoo special and an incredible place for families to visit,” said Chapo.

Stego’s Dino Dig is located in Zooville Square near the Safari Café. Stego’s Dino Dig is possible through support from Richard P. Kimmel and Laurine Kimmel Charitable Foundation Inc. and in honor of Theodore F. Hubbard.
RED PANDA RUN
SATURDAY, AUGUST 20
RACE BEGINS AT 8:30 A.M.

REGISTRATION:
- REQUIRED FOR AGES 2 TO 18 YEARS
- INCLUDES RED PANDA RUN SHIRT, MEDAL & ZOO ENTRY
- REGISTER BY AUGUST 5 TO RECEIVE THE RED PANDA RUN SHIRT
- REGISTRATION NOT REQUIRED FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN 1 & UNDER

REGISTER AT LINCOLNZOO.ORG
ROCK WITH THE CROCS
Lincoln Children's ZOO

Family Music Festival | Thursday, July 28 | 6:30 – 8 PM
Tickets available online or at the Zoo
Members: $7  |  Non-Members: $13
(INCLUDES ZOO ADMISSION & ONE FREE TRAIN RIDE)
ZOO CALENDAR

WE WILL SEE YOU AT THE ZOO

JUNE

SAT 11  
TRAIN BIRTHDAY PARTY
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Lincoln Children’s Zoo
Celebrate the 53rd Birthday of ZO&O. Each hour we will randomly select a child to be our kid conductor on the train.

SUN 19  
FATHER’S DAY CELEBRATION
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Lincoln Children’s Zoo
This Father’s Day at the Zoo all dads receive one free train or free admission! Bring dad out for a fun day at the Zoo!

SAT 25  
BREAKFAST WITH THE PENGUINS SOLD OUT
8 – 10 a.m. | Lincoln Children’s Zoo
This is your chance to feed a penguin! Your ticket includes a buffet breakfast, photo time with Pacific the Penguin (the Zoo’s mascot) and a once in a lifetime opportunity to feed the Zoo’s penguins.

JULY

MON 4  
RED, WHITE & ZOO!
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Lincoln Children’s Zoo
Celebrate the Fourth of July at the Zoo! Active and retired military get free admission and the entire family can explore the Zoo and learn about animals that are native to America.

SAT 16  
BREWS AT THE ZOO
6 – 11 p.m. | Lincoln Children’s Zoo | 21+ Event
It’s time for adults 21 and over to enjoy some tasty craft beers and amazing music at the Zoo! This year’s event features live music by local folk country singer/songwriter Evan Bartels, cover band Loose Affiliation and craft beers from Zipline Brewery, Empyrean Ales, Thunderhead Brewing, Lucky Bucket Brewing and more! Tickets include Zoo admission and three drinks. Tickets can be purchased at the Zoo or online at LincolnZoo.org

AUGUST

SAT 20  
RED PANDA RUN
6 – 9 p.m. | Lincoln Children’s Zoo
The Red Panda Run is a family fun run that starts at 8:30 a.m. and is great for any age! After you cross the finish line inside the Zoo, you can explore and meet over 400 animals that live there! Participants will receive a Red Panda Run T-shirt, medal and Zoo admission. Registration can be completed at the Zoo or online at LincolnZoo.org

THANK YOU

Thank you Nebraska Lottery for sponsoring another successful Garden Party this year! Garden Party is an annual fundraiser to support the Zoo animals.
I’ll see you at the zoo!

-Hops the Wallaby

Get $10 off your tickets @ zipline brewery • thunderhead brewing • empyrean ales • lucky bucket brewing • & more!

Beer brats & burgers on the grill • fresh kettle chips

Tickets on sale at the zoo or lincolnzoo.org
All proceeds benefit Lincoln Children’s Zoo

July 16 Live music by cover band Loose Affiliation and local folk country singer/songwriter Evan Bartels 6-11 PM