Guidelines for Media Covering Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Zoombezi Bay, The Wilds, Safari Golf Club
Updated April 29, 2020

Media Inquiries
All media inquiries should be directed to the Director of Communications at (614) 645-3579. The Director of Communications, currently Jen Fields, will answer questions and assist in arranging interviews. Every effort will be made to respond to media requests within a reasonable timeframe. If you need immediate assistance and are unable to reach the Director of Communications, please call (614) 724-3405 to speak with a receptionist.

Interviews with Columbus Zoo, Zoombezi Bay, The Wilds or Safari Golf Club staff are established by the Director of Communications, who may handle the interview directly or designate another member of the staff to speak on a given subject. The most efficient means of scheduling an interview is to speak with the Director of Communications. Media calls made directly to other employees of the Columbus Zoo or its entities will be routed back to the Director of Communications for consideration.

Access Inside the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium supports an efficient, service-oriented effort to respond to both public inquiries and media request for information and/or assistance relating to the organization. We welcome the responsibility to keep the public informed and to encourage their involvement in one of their community resources. We acknowledge the vital role the media serves towards this effort. The goal of this policy is to ensure:

- the safety of the staff, animals and the public
- an efficient and accurate response to media and public inquiries
- response to media requests without negatively impacting our visitor experience
- the timely completion of staff duties

Animals are observant, perceptive and intelligent and possess senses far beyond the capability of humans. They are creatures of habit, and can be sensitive to changes in their routine, unfamiliar equipment and people, unusual noises and excessive commotion of any type. Unlike people, we cannot reassure them with explanations. Because they are wild animals, they can be dangerous and unpredictable when they are exposed to unfamiliar surroundings or changes in their routine.

For this reason, the Animal Care staff has the prerogative not to allow media access if, in their judgment, it would jeopardize the safety and health of the keepers, the animals or the public. This is not inconsistent with the organization’s policy for animal transports, surgical procedures, quarantine holding, animal births and maternal bonding, or other situations that are out of the norm. When media access is not possible, we may arrange for a staff member to shoot video and/or photos for distribution to the media.

In general, all areas of the organization’s property are off-limits to the media except by special arrangement with the Communications Team. The Communications Team will consult with Animal Care staff (manager level or above) to determine what level of access may be allowed under any given set of circumstances. This also applies to public areas that are barricaded to the public during an emergency, animal transfer or other irregular activities.
If it is deemed appropriate for media to have access to non-public areas, Animal Care staff, in conjunction with the Communications Team, may determine a safe distance or vantage point from which media can work. Animal staff will reserve the right to restrict the movement of media personnel or to ask them to leave at any time. As a general rule, access is not allowed in some areas, such as the primates, because of the potential for introduction of diseases. Access may also be denied in areas due to human and/or animal health and safety.

It is the goal of the Communications Team to provide a service to the media and to ensure their time spent at the Columbus Zoo, Zoombezi Bay, The Wilds and Safari Golf Club is as productive as possible. The Communications Team will act as liaison between media representatives and the staff to determine the levels of allowable access, confirm media appointments, and to determine appropriate spokespersons. Contact with staff for background information, sound bytes, scheduling, etc. will be made by contacting the Communications Team to ensure accurate and timely response to media representatives.

**Reporting Live at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium**
Members of the media are welcome to conduct live broadcasts at the Columbus Zoo. Locations will be determined by the Communications Team based on animal, guest and employee safety and other factors. Any cabling run through grounds must be away from high foot-traffic areas and taped down to minimize hazards. The Zoo's main parking lot is also available for live shots.

**Parking at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium**
Unless instructed otherwise, while on media business, media outlets are asked to park vehicles at the Business Office of the Columbus Zoo located on Jerry Borin Trace. Upon arrival media will be stopped at a security checkpoint. Once parked, the receptionist will then connect the member of the media with the designated representative from the Communications Team and access to Zoo grounds will be given.

**Zoombezi Bay, The Wilds and Safari Golf Club**
Requests for access to Zoombezi Bay, The Wilds and Safari Golf Club, including live shots, should be directed to the Director of Communications at (614) 645-3579.