

The Emerging Nations Program: How AAZK members and AAZK Chapters make a difference

Jennifer Bridges
Emerging Nations Membership Team Leader

International Outreach Committee

The International Outreach Committee (IOC) is a component of the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) that works to provide training opportunities, continuing education, and resources to the Latin American (LA) zoological community. One of the many programs provided by the IOC is the Emerging Nations Sponsorship program. Through this program, AAZK Chapters or individual AAZK members throughout the United States and Canada can sponsor LA zoo personnel for a one-year AAZK membership.

The Emerging Nations sponsorship gives sponsored LA zoo professionals the same benefits as our Professional Membership, which provides access to all of the resources available on the AAZK website including professional development material, AAZK National conference information, AAZK

Committee Program resources, and a monthly copy of the *Animal Keeper's Forum* (AKF) magazine. This sponsorship provides the LA zoo community a connection with zoo professionals across North America and gives access to resources that can be shared across zoo facilities in Latin America.

Capacity Building Programs conducted on-site in LA countries by the IOC allows LA zoo staff to sign up to be a part of the Emerging Nations Sponsorship program. Each spring, e-mails are sent out to all AAZK members giving Chapters and AAZK members an opportunity to become sponsors. There is a one-year commitment for five Emerging Nation sponsorships and sponsors are given the opportunity to renew the following year. If interested, sponsors also have the option to connect with the LA zoo personnel they are sponsoring.

The Emerging Nations Sponsorship program began in 2018 with a trial run of 10 sponsored memberships. This year, despite an increase in cost to sponsor five Latin American keepers from \$50 to \$75 (part of the across-the-board cost increases for AAZK membership), we had a record number of 38 sponsorships, with some Chapters donating two packets, for an incredible total of 202 sponsored memberships! That is 202 LA animal care professionals from Chile, México, Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Belize, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela joining the AAZK family!

IOC programs, including the Emerging Nations Sponsorship program, continue to grow so keep an eye out for ways to get involved or send us an e-mail at ioc@azk.org.



ENEYDA ALONSO

Keeper, Zoológico Benito Juárez, México, AAZK EN Member since 2020.

The EN membership has helped me because I have had the opportunity to attend the online conference and participate in online presentations, be up to date with information from the monthly AKF and learn about the work my colleagues from other institutions are doing.



ARELIX SANTIAGO

Keeper, Fundación Zoológico de Cali, Colombia. EN member since 2021; 2021 LATG recipient.

I love the translated articles and the magazine because it provides knowledge about a variety of species and how keepers in other places are doing things; it helps me with my job. The AAZK membership helped me understand that we need to actively participate and give our time and knowledge to conservation programs; we are part of the change. Thanks for the membership.



ANTONIO ROMERO

IOC Committee, AAZK EN Member since 2022; 2022 LATG recipient.

Since I became an AAZK member, I have been a part of the IOC helping with AKF article translations and trying to make them more accessible to my Latin American colleagues by sharing scientific information about animal welfare in our native language. Through this, we've been able to provide amazing ideas and improvements at our institutions, helping animals thrive under our care.



CESAR GÓMEZ

Lead Trainer, Bioparque Ukumari, Colombia, AAZK EN Member since 2024.

As a biologist, my AAZK membership is a valuable tool to learn from colleagues on topics such as training and safety, which are my areas of professional development. This membership gives me access to a network of professionals dedicated to animal care, conferences, as well as Zoom presentations, and up to date educational and professional resources. AAZK is one of my main information sources.

We would like to give a special thanks to all of our 2024 Emerging Nations Sponsors:

AAZK San Diego Chapter
Akron AAZK Chapter
Alice Schellenberger
Audubon NOLA AAZK Chapter
Baton Rouge Zoo AAZK Chapter
Cape May County Zoo AAZK Chapter
Chattanooga AAZK Chapter
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden
Columbus AAZK Chapter
Dallas AAZK Chapter
Donna Sherwood
Ed Hansen
El Paso Del Norte AAZK Chapter
Elmwood Park Zoo AAZK Chapter
Georgia AAZK Chapter
Greater Cleveland Chapter
Greater New Jersey AAZK Chapter
Greater Orlando AAZK Chapter
Greater Philadelphia AAZK Chapter
Green Bay AAZK Chapter
Hilary Colton
Jeffery Taylor
Katie Adamson Conservation Fund
Lion Country Safari AAZK Chapter
Los Angeles AAZK Chapter
Milwaukee AAZK Chapter
Norah Farnham
Phoenix AAZK Chapter
Point Defiance AAZK Chapter
Polar Bears International (PBI)
Potawatomi Zoo AAZK Chapter
Riverbanks Zoo AAZK Chapter
Rocky Mountain AAZK Chapter
Seneca Park Zoo AAZK Chapter
Staten Island Zoo AAZK Chapter
Tom Aversa
Tucson AAZK Chapter
Yvette Kemp



RAFAEL SANCHEZ

Trainer, EN member since 2019; 2019 LATG Recipient.

The membership and being able to read the AKF have helped me keep up to date. I even recently submitted my first article so am excited to see it in print!



CESAR DAVID GIMÉNEZ

Keeper, Ecoparque de Buenos Aires, Argentina, AAZK EN Member since 2021.

This membership helps me constantly learn and provide better care for the animals I work with. It also puts me in touch with people from different parts of the world who are in the same field as I am.



ROGELIO PEC

Behavior Coordinator, Zoológico de La Jungla IRTA, Guatemala, AAZK EN Member since 2021.

AAZK membership helps me develop my knowledge about different species as well as learn about experiences from keepers in other countries. It also gives us the ability to share practices that benefit the work being done with animals under our care thus improving their quality of life.



CARLOS EGUIBAR

Veterinarian, Zoológico Mi Mascota, México, EN member since 2022.

The sponsored membership allows me to share significant information every month with our zoo staff. The material that you provide is really important as we are able to apply it to the animals that are in our care. Thanks for your support!



MIGUEL CONTRERAS

Keeper, Zoológico del Parque Met, Chile, EN member since 2024.

I am grateful for the opportunity to receive a sponsored AAZK membership because I know the AKF has interesting articles that will be beneficial to my work. I'll also be able to be in contact and up to date with advances and contributions realized by colleagues at other institutions, knowledge that I'll be able to share with my coworkers. This membership also opens the door to encouraging us to share what we are doing.



CRUZ PENA

Vet/ Supervisor, Bioparque Sahuatoba, México, EN member since 2023.

I like that the sponsorship is offered so that I can expand and share knowledge with colleagues from other zoos and learn about topics such as hand rearing.