

Return The Call Of The Wild

Can You Hear Us Now?

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The **Return the Call of the Wild** cell phone-recycling project initiated at the Philadelphia Zoo by the Docent Council is pleased to return to the AZAD convention in Washington as recipients of an AZAD Education Grant. The purpose of this paper is to share with you the progress we have made during the past year and to encourage other zoos to begin cell phone recycling programs.

Background

Our project had its birth in February of 2004 when a casual conversation about our desire to sponsor a docent outreach program joined forces with a docent effort to get the zoo to recycle phones. We realized that such a project would be a perfect way to fulfill the mission of the Philadelphia Zoo:

To advance discovery, understanding, and stewardship of the natural world through compelling exhibition and interpretation of living animals and plants.

To be first in modeling and promoting a responsible and caring attitude toward all living things, inspiring learning and action beyond our gates.

To inspire guests to action and leadership in support of conservation.

With this mission in mind the **Return the Call of the Wild** project was launched. Little did we know at the time, that this initiative would become larger than we imagined.

Our paper last year (Proceedings Book, 2004) delineated our beginning efforts to choose an animal we wanted to support, develop a poster to advertise this program and have on-site collection boxes constructed. The Philadelphia Zoo Education Department was a real partner in this developmental phase. After constructing a collection box big enough to hold the committee members was discarded as being too large, the maintenance department came up with three smaller boxes on wheels. These were painted by one of our keepers with pictures of animals giving their calls. They are eye catching and able to move around the zoo on wheels to “attend” functions where guest may be bringing in used phones.

This was the progress we had made by the time we attended last year’s AZAD conference in Philadelphia and presented our paper. At that time, we were encouraged to apply for the education grant offered for the first time by the AZAD Educational Committee. Our application was submitted in November and we were notified that we had received the \$500.00 grant in January!

How we are proceeding

“If you build a ballpark they will come” is an expression we all know. We had built boxes for used cell phones, but we didn’t know how people were going to be aware of our ongoing project at the zoo. Therefore, our challenge has been to develop advertising methods to educate the public on the importance of recycling and to let guests know where they can participate in this program. Our goal is also to have off-zoo collection sites. With this in mind, we realized that we needed an educational brochure to formalize and advertise the program.

Right after the convention, we began by putting together a tri-fold containing the information that could educate the public. Since this is a zoo wide initiative, we needed zoo approval to advertise anything that included their name and logo. After the text was approved by all, we then worked with the graphics department to come up with a professional brochure featuring a picture of the douc langur, a face that would get anyone’s attention! The brochure explains that:

An estimated 130 million cell phones are discarded every year in the United States

Cell phones contain many toxic substances, such as arsenic, cadmium, cobalt and lead.

In landfills, toxins often escape into the environment, contaminating natural resources and polluting wildlife habitat

These poisons can travel through animal and human food chains, causing birth defects, neurological damage and cancer

In addition, it details that recycled cell phones:

Protect wildlife habitat.

Help keep the environment cleaner.

Reduce toxic waste in landfills

Provide free cell phones for victims of domestic abuse

Help protect the critically endangered douc langur monkey

Finally, it recognizes our effort by stating that this is a Philadelphia Zoo volunteer Docent Council initiative to raise awareness about how recycled cell phones can help save wildlife.

It took us many months to go through this design process. When the final copy was approved we weren't sure how we were going to afford the printing costs at \$1.00 a copy. At that time we had not received the money from the AZAD grant. With the zoo's backing and with their understanding that we really had NO money to go forward with our project, the graphics department conveyed our dilemma to their printer. Shortly thereafter we received word that the printer, Pearl Pressman Liberty, donated the cost of printing 3,600 copies of our brochure! These brochures are designed for distribution by the zoo and docents to businesses, schools, and public places such as libraries that might participate in off-zoo collections of cell phones.

We still felt we needed one more piece of advertising to inform individual in or out of the zoo of our project, something smaller than the brochure. With the help of the AZAD grant, we are awaiting the arrival of 10,000 2X2 "calling cards" with a picture of the douc langur and **Return the Call of the Wild** at the Philadelphia Zoo. These can be freely distributed by docents to get our message out there.

Going public

With the zoo boxes, posters, and brochures in place, we were really ready to take our project to the public. The kick-off was a TV media event featuring the president of our zoo, Pete Hoskins, and Ally Marshall, the granddaughter of one of our docents, in recognition for her efforts in collecting 92 phones at her elementary school. We received airtime on two TV channels that evening, from which we have had many inquiries about the project.

We were also highlighted in the Zoo's summer issue of Members News as a way for members to participate in the recycling effort. In addition, the zoo's conservation department featured **Return the Call of the Wild** in their quarterly emagazine, WildlifeMatters. By April we were up and running on the zoo's website under Conservation as well as What's New at the Zoo. Finally, **Return the Call of the Wild** is featured on our recycler's website: eco-cell.com. This company has also provided a personalized sticker featuring the douc langur for the cardboard collection boxes. To make these even more eye catching, the Monday docents had a painting day to create jungle designs on the boxes.

Our efforts are paying off! The box on wheels at the zoo entrance is filling up magically by guests who must have heard the word. Docents are taking cardboard boxes to businesses in their communities and bringing in phones. The zoo is including a copy of our brochure in all of their mailings to zoo sponsors and groups that would like to book parties or functions at the zoo. We have several large businesses that are participating in the campaign. In particular, PECO, the Philadelphia Electric Company, has an ongoing collection. APS Wireless,

with 17 branches in the New Jersey, Delaware, and Philadelphia area is wholeheartedly supporting our conservation effort by displaying collection boxes at their sites.

With all these phones coming in the docents have been busy sorting, counting, and packing them up. The Philadelphia Zoo's shipping department has been very helpful in providing us with shipping boxes as well as lifting, carrying labeling, and weighing the boxes before they are picked up by UPS.

Reaching out

Last year our docents chose the douc langur, a breathtakingly beautiful species of primate and one of our most endangered animals, to support as our outreach program. The Philadelphia Zoo is the only zoo in the United States now exhibiting these monkeys, so we have a special attachment to them. Our mom and son are real attention grabbers. Qui Tu, born in 2001, loves to play with children's toys, especially ones that make lots of noise to help him say, "I am in charge" and establish his dominance as a male. One of the most unusual and amusing behaviors of mother and son is blind man's bluff. They'll run around in their exhibit with their eyes closed, using their hands to feel for things. You can also tell when they are happy. They click their legs together. "We call it happy legs," says Ann Halko-Angemi, their keeper. You might also see both doucs soak their leaf-eater biscuits in their water tub before eating them. Anna says Qui Tu learned this preference from his mom.

The recipient of our recycling proceeds is the Endangered Primate Rescue Center (EPRC) in Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam. The main focus of the EPRC is as a refuge for primates confiscated from hunters and pet traders. The center works to establish small populations of the most endangered primates of Vietnam. The founder, Tilo Nadler, was inspired to start the operation in 1993 when he provided temporary housing for two Delacour's langurs confiscated from poachers. Now, it is home to more than 100 primates of numerous species and subspecies, including several which are found only at the EPRC and nowhere else in captivity in the world. Because success relies heavily on the conditions in which the release animals are kept in captivity, the EPRC goes to great lengths to provide sufficient housing and natural food sources designed to mimic wild groups and their natural habitats as much as possible. The ultimate goal is to release these populations back into safe habitats. Although Vietnamese law protects many animals, hunting and deforestation pressures remain high even in such protected areas as national parks, so release at this time is difficult.

Donations from foreign zoos and private organizations maintain the daily operation of the EPRC. Contributions from the Docent Council recycling project in partnership with the Philadelphia Zoo help subsidize the feeding costs of the primate center.

Summing up

As of the end of May, we have collected 1453 phones and \$2222.00. Our original idea was a brief collection period during the summer of 2004. Little did we know that it would take until the spring of 2005 to be fully up and running. Now we envision this project as a permanent one at the zoo, one that we continue to view with excitement and pride at our efforts. We hope that other zoos will be able to replicate our project and we are always here to be your mentors.

Works Cited

Philadelphia Zoo MemberNews, Summer 2005

Eoc-cell.org

www.philadelphiazoo.org