

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Applications are Being Accepted for the Lawrence A. Ackerman Scholarship at the Fort Wayne Zoo

Fort Wayne, IN – The Fort Wayne Zoo is now accepting applications for the 2026 Lawrence A. Ackerman Scholarship, a one-time \$3,000 award for college-bound high school seniors pursuing careers in animal-related fields. The award has been increased by \$1000 from previous years.

Established in 1992 by his family, the scholarship honors the late Dr. Larry Ackerman. In his 30 years of service in private practice and as the Zoo's veterinarian, Dr. Ackerman became known for his professionalism, compassion, and generosity.

The scholarship aims to support students demonstrating character, commitment to animal stewardship, financial need, and scholastic achievement. Graduating seniors from Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley counties in Indiana are invited to apply.

“Like many seniors heading to college, I was applying for scholarships to help pay for my schooling when I found the Lawrence A. Ackerman Scholarship. Winning the scholarship helped set me up for success to study and work in the animal science field,” says Kristi Murray, a scholarship winner in 2016 who completed her bachelors degree and now works at the Fort Wayne Zoo as a Zookeeper.

Interested students can visit www.fwzoo.com/scholarship to apply. The application deadline is March 1, 2026.

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About the Fort Wayne Zoo: The Fort Wayne Zoo is northeast Indiana's largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 650,000 guests annually. The Zoo is home to Red Panda Ridge, named #6 in USA Today 10 Best Zoo Exhibits for 2024. In 2021, the Zoo was voted Visit Indiana's "Summer Bucket List Top Attraction" and is consistently named one of the nation's Top Ten Zoos for Kids by national media outlets.

As a conservation leader, the Zoo invests in local, regional, and international efforts to protect wildlife and their habitats. The Zoo cares for more than 1,500 animals and participates in 41 cooperative species survival plan programs and 42 taxon advisory groups, which are critical to supporting threatened species.

As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Zoo receives no tax dollars for daily operations, unlike most accredited zoos where those dollars fund approximately 40% of their annual operating budgets. The Zoo's mission is made possible thanks to support derived from admissions, memberships, donations, group picnics, special ticketed events, and other visitation-related activities.