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Media Contact:

mediarelations@fwzoo.com

260.427.6800

Fort Wayne Zoo to be Featured on The Kelly Clarkson Show on April 21

Fort Wayne IN – **The Fort Wayne Zoo is thrilled to be featured on “The Kelly Clarkson Show” airing April 21 on NBC. Please check for your local listing for scheduled air times.**

In the segment “What I’m Liking” the Zoo’s Teens for Nature Program will step into the spotlight, sharing how this volunteer leadership program and its efforts inspire the next generation to be stewards of nature in their communities. In this interview, Gianna Porfilio, current Animal Care Specialist at the Zoo and recent Teens for Nature graduate, Grace Schoegler, discuss their experiences in the program.

“I was lucky enough to be part of the Teens for Nature Program and volunteered each summer from 2011-2015. I have always loved animals and wildlife, but this program opened my eyes to just how impeccable the work is. Today, as an aquatics Animal Care Specialist, I am feeding penguins, giving eye drops to sea lions, training an alligator, and telling conservation stories that make an impact here in Indiana and around the world. But the most rewarding part of my job is being able to inspire teens to create their own way of inspiring others.” Says Gianna Porfilio, “Being on The Kelly Clarkson Show and having a national platform to showcase this program and the young people who dedicate their summers towards becoming great leaders is the opportunity of the lifetime and it was so much fun!”

The Kelly Clarkson Show also made a \$1,000 gift to support the program as part of the segment.

Teens for Nature is a fun and immersive summer volunteer program where participants between 7th to 12th grade can learn, grow, and make new friends all while making a big impact at the Fort Wayne Zoo. Sessions are comprised of two consecutive weeks, Monday through Friday, throughout the summer. Once teens complete their two-week training, they are eligible to volunteer for any teen or adult volunteer shift at the Zoo year-round. Last year, those enrolled in the Teens for Nature program volunteered nearly 20,000 hours of time to support the Zoo’s mission.

During the summer session, each teen volunteers for positions such as:

- **Teen Counselor:** Assists with our Kids for Nature Summer Camps
- **Zoo Crew:** Interacts with guests and lead educational activities
- **Conservation Crew:** Participate in hands-on conservation projects
- **Teen Animal Care Specialist:** Reserved for returning third-year volunteers (or beyond), work alongside the Animal Care Team to interact with animals, prepare diets, and participate in animal husbandry and enrichment.

The public can also support the work of these young conservation leaders through donations made to the Teens for Nature Program at fwzoo.com/donate.

For more information on the Zoo's adult and teen volunteer programs, visit fwzoo.com/volunteers.

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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 10Best 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.

The Zoo is a conservation leader, investing annually 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.