

CASE STUDY: ACCESSIBILITY

Lincoln Park Zoo – Accessibility Initiative

About Lincoln Park Zoo

Lincoln Park Zoo is a world class zoological institution located in Chicago. Rich with architectural treasures as well as award-winning immersion animal habitats, the zoo operates one of the largest zoo-based conservation and science programs in the country. The not-for-profit zoo attracts about 3 million visitors per year who enjoy more than 200 species.

Problem

Few customer services, interpretive and educational programs existed for people with disabilities.

Solution

As Associate Director of Education, Terrie Nolinske, Ph.D. designed and directed the Universal Access initiative, which consisted of the following:

- Universal Access Advisory Board of community partners and disability experts
- Accessibility audit of all public spaces
- Transition Plan for Universal Access
- Materials in alternative formats (e.g., video with open captioning, Braille)
- Disability Awareness Training and resource manuals for staff and volunteers
- Inclusive Hands-on Zoo programs with multisensory accessories
- Inclusive customer services (e.g., scooters, magnifiers, large print maps)

Results

New audiences visited Lincoln Park Zoo, which was awarded the *2001 Accessibility Award* from the American Association of Museums and the National Organization on Disability for its comprehensive initiative related to accessibility. The Transition Plan became a model for other zoos and aquariums.

Testimonial

“You have made us so aware of how to be more accessible, more accommodating to our visitors with disabilities. We thank you and our visitors thank you!” *Troy Baresel, former Chief Financial Officer, current Vice President Guest Services, Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago, Illinois*