



TRAILBLAZERS HANDBOOK

2026-2027

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Welcome
2	Our Team
3	Program Overview
4	Service Projects
5	Time Commitment
6	Expectations
10	Benefits
11	Phoenix Zoo Policies
24	Appendix A: Membership Benefits

WELCOME

Welcome to the Phoenix Zoo's Trailblazers Youth Advisory Council, an exciting initiative designed to empower young individuals like you to make a meaningful impact at our Zoo and in the community! This Participant Handbook outlines the purpose, responsibilities, and expectations of the Trailblazers program and will serve as a reference for you and your parents/guardians.

As a Trailblazer, you are a representative of your home community as well as the Phoenix Zoo. You have been selected because of your ideas and your support for the Zoo's mission to advance the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world.

By participating in the Trailblazers program, you are embarking on an exciting journey of personal growth, community service, and wildlife conservation. Your contributions will leave a lasting legacy at the Phoenix Zoo and will inspire other young people to help make a positive change in the world.

We look forward to your active involvement and enthusiasm in fulfilling the purpose of the program. Your voice matters and your actions will make a world of difference!

Nina Loughman



Youth Engagement Manager
Phoenix Zoo

OUR TEAM



Nina Loughman, Youth Engagement Manager
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I have been with the Zoo for three years which builds upon 10 years of experience in the classroom as a high school teacher and two years at Arizona State University running a student leadership organization. I hold a master's degree in public administration, and I am excited to be behind the creation and management of exciting programs for teens and young adults here at the Phoenix Zoo!



Ryan Jones, Programs Coordinator
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With a background in marine and conservation biology and eight years of informal learning at zoos, I always aim to keep things exciting and engaging. I recently finished my master's degree in biology. When I'm not orchestrating animal adventures, you might find me reminiscing about my days as a zookeeper working with snakes, tarantulas and vultures.



Joshika Singh, Co-Officer
Senior, Arizona College Prep High School

This is my third year as a Trailblazer and I am so excited to work with all of you! I am beyond passionate about conservation and animal welfare! My dream career is an emergency small and large animal veterinarian. Outside of my love for animals and the environment, I enjoy playing my guitar, doing theater, and spending time with family and friends! Trailblazers has only made me more passionate than ever, and I can't wait to help it do the same for you!



Ryan Manolo Cepeda, Co-Officer
Senior, Seton Catholic Preparatory High School

This is my second year as a Trailblazer! Last year I helped my team create behavioral enrichment for the Zoo's tamarins and I am excited to help lead the Council this year. Outside of the Zoo, I am on a robotics team and am involved in my school's marching band.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Phoenix Zoo's Trailblazers program is a yearlong leadership and service program for high school students. Participants meet one Saturday each month from September through May to learn about conservation, develop leadership skills, and complete service projects that support the Phoenix Zoo and the local community.

Meetings include a variety of activities such as workshops, discussions, guest speakers, behind-the-scenes experiences, field trips, and hands-on conservation projects. Throughout the year, Trailblazers work together to identify needs, develop solutions, and complete projects that have a lasting impact on the Zoo, wildlife, and the community.

Mission Statements

Phoenix Zoo Mission

The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation advances the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world.

Trailblazers Mission

To develop young leaders, engage them in shaping the Phoenix Zoo's youth programming, and empower them to actively participate in conservation efforts.

Youth Engagement Mission

Our mission is to build the next generation of conservation stewards and advocates by providing young people from all backgrounds the opportunity to connect with nature and participate in meaningful educational, professional, and career-building experiences.

Program Goals

The Trailblazers program is designed to:

Build Conservation Literacy and Awareness

Deepen understanding of current environmental issues and local wildlife challenges.

Foster Leadership and Communication Skills

Develop confidence, initiative, teamwork and the ability to communicate ideas clearly and respectfully.

Promote Active Citizenship and Service

Provide participants with real-world opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills through service projects, conservation actions and community engagement.



SERVICE PROJECTS



Trailblazers don't just talk about how to get youth connected with the natural world and involved in conservation; they lead by example! Below is an outline of the process and expectations for the service projects. Specific project options will be shared prior to orientation.

- Trailblazers will be divided into teams of roughly 3-5 members.
- Teams will work on the same project from September 2026 through May 2027. Projects have been sourced by the Youth Engagement Manager and align with the mission of the Phoenix Zoo and are open-ended to allow student teams to make the project their own.
- Trailblazers will have the opportunity to choose from a “menu” of potential projects. Trailblazers will be placed on a project based on their expressed preferences and every effort will be made to give students their first-choice project.
- Each team will have a Team Lead who is responsible for meeting monthly with the Co-Officers to communicate progress, challenges, needs, etc. to keep the project moving forward.
- Teams will have dedicated time to work on their projects during each scheduled monthly meeting. However, teams will also need to communicate outside of these meetings to work on their projects. The Youth Engagement Manager, Programs Coordinator, and Council Officers will serve as project mentors/supervisors to help teams stay on track and to help them get in touch with Zoo staff and other partners.
- The end-of-year ceremony on May 5, 2027 will include a project showcase where teams will formally present their projects to their families, project mentors, Zoo staff and community partners and sponsors.

TIME COMMITMENT

Trailblazers must commit to the program for a full year and attend all required monthly meetings. Additionally, it is expected that Trailblazers will need to work on some projects outside of these scheduled meetings (estimated 2 hours a month).

Required Dates

August 15, 2026: Orientation 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
September 26, 2026: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
October 17, 2026: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
November 14, 2026: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
December 5, 2026: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
January 23, 2027: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
February 20, 2027: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
February 27, 2027: Teen Career Conference 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
March 6, 2027: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
April 3, 2027: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
May 1, 2027: Monthly meeting 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
May 5, 2027: Project showcase and end-of-year celebration 5-8 p.m.

Attendance Policy

Council members are expected to attend all required meetings unless there is a valid and unavoidable reason for their absence. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they must notify the Trailblazer Officers via GroupMe as soon as possible and preferably in advance. Notification should include the reason for the absence. Excessive absences can hinder the Council's ability to achieve its goals. Members with a pattern of excessive absences may be subject to removal from the Council.

Optional Events/Opportunities

Throughout the year, additional events and opportunities may arise. Participation in these events is optional, but highly encouraged. Information about these opportunities will be shared with the Council as soon as possible.

Program Progression

Council members who remain in good standing may continue to serve on the Council through their high school career until graduation and do not need to reapply each year. After graduating from high school, Council members are encouraged to stay connected with the Phoenix Zoo through our Adult Volunteer Program and/or participate in other young adult programs.

EXPECTATIONS

Uniforms

Council members will be provided (1) program polo and an official Phoenix Zoo name tag during orientation. Council members are expected to wear their polo and name tag (on the right-hand side) during every required meeting and other instances where they are representing the Youth Advisory Council in an official capacity. Council members should not wear their program polos or name tags while on Zoo grounds if they are not representing the Council in an official capacity. Lost or damaged items should be reported to the Officers.

There is no specified dress code for bottom attire. Council members should wear bottoms that are an appropriate length and style but also comfortable for walking around Zoo grounds and performing the duties of their service projects. Council members must wear closed-toed shoes such as sneakers, athletic shoes or boots. Open shoes, Crocs and sandals are not permitted.

Clocking in/out

Council members are responsible for tracking their time on Zoo grounds through the Zoo's volunteer management software, Volgistics. Each Council member will be provided login credentials which they are asked to memorize. Upon arriving for a meeting, Council members will "clock in" and before departing the Zoo, Council members will "clock out." Council members will use Volgistics to track their service hours as part of the Trailblazers program.

Communication

Effective communication is crucial to our success. The primary and preferred methods of communication are **Google Classroom** and **GroupMe**.

Council members are expected to regularly check these platforms for updates, to access shared resources, collaborate on documents, and to communicate with other Council members, program staff and Officers. If you have opted out of utilizing these communication platforms, it is the Council member's responsibility to reach out to program staff via email. Program staff will use email for more formal/personal direct communication. It is important for Council members to practice checking their email regularly and notify the Programs Coordinator of changes to their contact information.

Communication will primarily be directed to Council members, not their parents/guardians, to help develop professional and accountability skills. However, a monthly newsletter will be emailed to participants, parents/guardians, Zoo staff, and project mentors to keep everyone informed about the Council's activities and accomplishments.

EXPECTATIONS

Communication



Trailblazers Google Classroom
Class Code - vudkob64



Trailblazers GroupMe
Invitation Request Link

Working with Adults

Trailblazers will have the opportunity to work closely with Zoo staff and adult volunteers throughout the program. This is a great opportunity to start developing a professional network and to learn how to engage with others in a professional manner.

All Zoo staff and adult volunteers have undergone background checks and program staff working directly with Trailblazers will be trained on how to engage and support youth appropriately.

It is important for Trailblazers to maintain professional boundaries with adults. Exchanging personal phone numbers or becoming "friends" on social media with adult staff or volunteers is not permitted. All communication between program staff and Trailblazers will occur through Google Classroom, GroupMe or email and will remain within the professional context of the volunteer program. If a Trailblazer is interested in connecting with another Zoo staff member to grow their professional network, they may request an introduction through the Programs Coordinator or Youth Engagement Manager and an introduction will be made via email.

EXPECTATIONS

Code of Conduct

The Trailblazers Youth Advisory Council is committed to creating a respectful, inclusive, and positive environment where all members can collaborate effectively to achieve our mission. This Code of Conduct outlines the expectations and guidelines that every Council member is expected to follow.

Respect and Inclusivity:

- **Respect for All:** Treat all Council members, Zoo staff, and visitors with respect, courtesy, and kindness. We value diversity and embrace differences of opinion.
- **Inclusive Attitude:** Foster an inclusive atmosphere where everyone feels welcome, valued, and heard, regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or abilities.

Professionalism:

- **Commitment:** Attend meetings and actively engage in Council initiatives and projects.
- **Punctuality:** Be punctual and arrive on time for Council meetings. Notify the Council Officers in advance if you cannot attend or if you will be late.
- **Responsibility:** Fulfill your assigned responsibilities and commitments promptly and to the best of your ability.

Collaboration and Communication:

- **Teamwork:** Work collaboratively with fellow Council members, Zoo staff, and community partners to achieve common goals.
- **Effective Communication:** Communicate openly, honestly, and respectfully. Listen actively and consider different perspectives.
- **Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information shared within the Council meetings and discussions.

Positive Behavior:

- **Positive Role Model:** Act as a positive role model for other youth and Zoo visitors by upholding the highest standards of behavior.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Address conflicts or disagreements constructively and seek resolution through dialogue and mediation, involving the Officers or Youth Engagement Manager when necessary.

Safety and Responsibility:

- **Safety:** Prioritize the safety of yourself and others during Council activities and Zoo visits. Follow all safety guidelines and instructions provided by Zoo staff.
- **Conservation Ethic:** Promote ethical behavior towards animals, nature, and the environment. Respect and adhere to all Zoo policies related to animal welfare and conservation.

EXPECTATIONS

Social Media and Online Conduct:

- **Responsible Online Behavior:** When representing the Council or the Phoenix Zoo online, ensure that your actions and words reflect the values and mission of the Council and the Zoo. Do not engage in cyberbullying, harassment, or any harmful online behavior.

Compliance with Policies:

- **Adherence to Zoo Policies:** Familiarize yourself with and adhere to all Zoo policies (included later in this Handbook), including those related to safety, conduct, and visitor guidelines.

Consequences of Violations: Violations of this Code of Conduct may result in corrective action or, in severe cases, removal from the program.

Reporting Violations: If you witness or experience a violation of this Code of Conduct, please report it promptly to the Youth Engagement Manager or designated Zoo staff member. All reports will be treated confidentially and with the utmost seriousness.

Feedback and Growth

Reflection and feedback are core components of the Trailblazers program. We want all Trailblazers to have a “growth mindset” and be open to supportive feedback to help them develop. Trailblazers will receive feedback regularly from peers, the Programs Coordinator, the Youth Engagement Manager and other Zoo staff or volunteers. Feedback is not disciplinary coaching or corrective action. It is a tool used to strengthen behaviors, words and actions.

Corrective Action

The Phoenix Zoo’s Youth Engagement team has developed a process for addressing unacceptable behavior to help maintain a safe and respectful environment. Depending on the severity of the situation, program staff have the discretion to bypass the corrective action steps below and may immediately dismiss a Trailblazer from the program.

- **First Offense** - Verbal counseling and documentation of the incident.
- **Second Offense** - Verbal warning and a written report of the incident followed by supportive coaching.
- **Third Offense** - Temporary suspension from activities and required conference with Youth Engagement Manager, Programs Coordinator, the Trailblazer, and the Trailblazer’s parent/guardian.
- **Fourth Offense** - Dismissal from the Trailblazers program.

BENEFITS



Phoenix Zoo Membership

Trailblazers are classified as “Teen Volunteers” and will receive a Non-Regular Volunteer Phoenix Zoo Membership. Memberships will be distributed at the September meeting and will expire in June 2026, but can be terminated early if needed. Some of the benefits of a Teen Volunteer memberships include:

- Teen Volunteers entering the Zoo as guests may bring up to three guests (free admission) with them. A membership card will be provided for all volunteers.
- Teen Volunteers receive a 50% discount on additional general daytime guest admission tickets.
- Teen Volunteers receive a 35% discount at Zoo food venues both during their normal work hours and hours off work.

See Appendix A for a full list of membership benefits and regulations.



Letters of Recommendation/References

Trailblazers have the valuable benefit of requesting letters of recommendation or references from program staff. These letters can provide strong support for future educational or employment opportunities.



Volunteer Service Hours

Time spent during regular monthly Trailblazer meetings can be counted as volunteer service hours. Trailblazers may request program staff to sign-off on service hour forms or write letters testifying hours of service completed.



PHOENIX ZOO POLICIES

In addition to the expectations and policies outlined above, Trailblazers must abide by all Phoenix Zoo policies and strive to embody the Phoenix Zoo's core values and the "WILD" factor.

- 12** Core Values, "WILD" Factor and Organizational Commitment
- 13** Safety Policy
- 15** Proprietary Information and Technology
- 18** Bullying Policy
- 20** Harassment Policy

Core Values

- **Collaboration**- We encourage a spirit of cooperation and teamwork by working together to build supportive relationships to meet our common goals.
- **Respect**- We demonstrate compassion and service for each other and our guests, and ensure the highest standards of care for our animals.
- **Accountability**- We demonstrate integrity, fairness and professional standards, and are committed to managing and operating the organization as a credible, successful and self-sustaining enterprise.
- **Initiative**- We assess situations independently and look for solutions with a willingness to take appropriate action.
- **Fun**- We are engaged in our work, bringing energy, enthusiasm, and a desire to create enjoyable experiences for all.

The “WILD” Factor

The WILD Factor is our Guest Service initiative that ensures that all guests receive amazing service while visiting the Zoo.

Welcome All Guests

Wave, say “Hello!”, offer assistance, and be fully present and engaged during every guest interaction.

I am the ACNC!

Be confident, carry yourself with pride, watch your non-verbal behavior, and remember every point of contact with a guest is an opportunity to make a positive impression.

Look for Solutions

Trash on the ground? Pick it up! Have a great idea? Share it! Look at the Zoo through the “Eyes of the Guest”!

Deliver Excellence

All of us have both the authority and responsibility to exceed our guests’ expectations and seek opportunities to create memories.

Organizational Commitment

The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within our organization and as leaders in our community by valuing the contributions of staff from diverse backgrounds and experiences, celebrating the diversity of our guests, promoting equity in our organizational policies, processes, and programs, and ensuring that we provide experiences that are accessible and welcoming.

Safety and Reporting

The Phoenix Zoo is firmly committed to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment. All employees and volunteers are expected to be safety conscious on the job at all times. If you suspect unsafe conditions or hazards, ZooTeens should immediately notify the Youth Engagement Manager, Programs Coordinator, or contact Park Rangers directly.

In the event of an accident or injury, contact the Youth Engagement Manager, Programs Coordinator, or Park Rangers directly. All accidents must be reported on the day of occurrence, and all appropriate forms must be filled out. It is of the utmost importance to receive treatment for injuries, to complete the appropriate report, and to ensure follow-up treatment is provided when appropriate.

Phoenix Zoo Park Rangers

ZooTeens are strongly encouraged to save the direct line to the Phoenix Zoo Park Rangers into their phone in the event of an emergency.

(602) 568-8807

Restricted Areas

Due to the health and safety of animals, staff, volunteers, and guests, there are certain areas of the park that are off limits. Volunteers should not be in these areas unless escorted by staff and with permission from the Area Supervisor. These areas include, but are not limited to:

- Animal exhibits, behind stanchions or guardrails
- Animal Ambassador Resources/Amphitheater animals
- Animal Care Center
- Conservation Center
- Nighthouses of all collection animals
- Nutrition Services

Guest Safety

If you encounter a guest who is in physical distress (in pain, bleeding, overheated, etc.), immediately contact the Programs Coordinator or Park Rangers and remain with the guest until a Park Ranger arrives. Park Rangers are the only personnel authorized to treat guests in need of first aid.

Unwanted Guest Behavior

If you encounter a guest engaging in unsafe acts, violating barriers, or acting in a manner that is abusive to any plants, animal, or other guests, ask them to please stop. If they persist or are uncooperative, contact Park Rangers.

Safety and the Animal Collection

As a volunteer of the ACNC, you may be faced with unique safety issues related to the animal collection. The following guidelines are intended to ensure a safe environment for our employees, volunteers, guests and the animal collection at the Zoo.

Only the Living Collections team is permitted to feed the animal collection. Additionally, it is important to remember not to touch the animals. Zoonotic (animal to human) diseases can be very serious and occasionally can be fatal. The only exception to feeding and/or touching collection animals is if you are participating in a Backstage Adventure or animal discovery where this is specifically allowed.

It is important to remember that loud noises can startle an animal and cause it to attack or charge. Be cautious to provide a safe and quiet environment for the collection.

Escaped Animal Emergency Procedures

Animal escapes can occur. It is important to recognize that escapes are possible at any time because of the combination of human nature, animal behavior and facility design and maintenance. To ensure the safety of all guests and staff, as well as to better enable the appropriate response team in cases of animal emergencies or escapes, it is important for all Zoo staff and volunteers to follow the designated Escape Animal Emergency Procedure.

- **Code Red** – designation for a dangerous animal escaping from its primary enclosure or an unauthorized person within a dangerous animal's enclosure. A Code Red species escape requires the public to be directed off-grounds immediately.
- **Code Blue** – designation for a non-dangerous animal that is not controlled by staff and is outside of its primary enclosure.

I see an animal outside its exhibit - What do I do?

1. Remain calm.
2. Call ZooTeens program staff on the ZooTeens radio.
3. Report – Your name and current location, what animal is out, where you last saw it, and the direction of the animal's movement.
4. If the threat is imminent to your location, make your way to the nearest safety shelter. Direct nearby guests to follow you.
5. Standby for additional instructions on the ZooTeens radio and GroupMe.

I just heard there is an animal escape - What do I do?

1. ZooTeens program staff will radio all ZooTeens immediately and send a message via GroupMe explaining the code (Red or Blue).
2. Follow instructions from ZooTeens program staff. Instructions will generally follow the steps below.
3. If the animal is a Code Red species, make your way to the nearest safety shelter. Direct nearby guests to follow you.
4. If the animal is a Code Blue species and you are near their location, let nearby guests know that a non-dangerous animal is loose and that you need their cooperation.
5. Continue to listen for announcements until the situation has resolved.

Items Prohibited on Zoo Grounds

For the health and safety of guests, park visitors, collection animals and wildlife, the following items are prohibited. All staff and volunteers are expected to follow these rules. There may be times when you need to politely inform a guest that items are prohibited or should be carefully disposed of, or you may notify Park Rangers about a problem.

This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

- confetti
- balloons
- glitter
- silly string
- fake flower petals or leaves
- uncooked rice
- bird seed
- straw/hay
- paper lanterns
- live animals
- sparklers/fireworks
- weapons of any kind
- whistles or other devices that make loud sounds
- flashlights
- inflatable toys
- Frisbees, balls or objects that guests may be tempted to throw
- hula hoops
- selfie sticks
- toy weapons
- drones or any other flying objects
- bicycles, tricycles, scooters, skateboards
- wheelies
- hover boards, segways
- rip sticks
- roller skates and roller blades

Smoking Policy

The Zoo is a smoke-free environment that complies with the guidelines of city and state regulations. This includes electronic cigarettes.

- City of Phoenix Ordinance PCC 24-42 restricts smoking and open flames in desert preserves, which includes Papago Park.
- Smoke-Free Arizona Act ARS 36-601.01 restricts smoking in enclosed buildings and company vehicles.

Smoking is not permitted by any Zoo guest, volunteer, vendor, or employee within 20 feet of any enclosed Zoo entrance or structure.

Guests should be politely reminded that the Zoo is a smoke-free environment and informed that they may return to their enclosed vehicle to smoke. If you are uncomfortable with approaching guests regarding this or run into difficulties with a guest enforcing this policy, please alert Park Rangers or Zoo staff.

Heat Illness Prevention

Summer and the heat bring some special safety considerations. Heat exposure can be dangerous so watch for signs and symptoms of heat illness. No matter where you work, if it gets hot enough and/or humid enough, you could be affected.

Signs of Medical Emergency

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
Generally develops when a person is working or exercising in hot weather, sweats a lot and does not drink enough fluids (dehydration) or loses too many electrolytes.	Occurs when the body fails to regulate its own temperature and body temperature continues to rise unchecked. This is a medical emergency.
• Headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting • Weakness and moist skin • Mood changes such as irritability or confusion • Upset stomach or vomiting	• Dry, hot skin with no sweating • Abnormal thinking, behavior mental confusion • Slurred speech • Loss of Consciousness • Seizures or convulsions

Preventing Heat Related Illness:

- Dress for the heat by wearing light, loose-fitting, breathable clothing.
- Wear a hat and sunscreen.
- Carry and drink plenty of cool water, even if you are NOT thirsty. When your mouth feels dry, you need to drink more water. Try to drink about one cup of water every 20 minutes.
- Remember to replace your electrolytes. In addition to plain water, drink sports drinks or electrolyte packets added to the water. Electrolyte packets are available in the Ranger Station.
- Take short, frequent breaks in cool, shaded areas to allow the body to cool down.
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments.
- Avoid beverages with caffeine. These make your body lose water.
- Keep an eye out for fellow volunteers. They may not notice as quickly as you that they are in trouble

What to Do for Heat-Related Illness:

1. Contact ZooTeens program staff or Park Rangers immediately. 911 may need to be called immediately
2. While waiting for help to arrive, move the employee/volunteer to a cool, shaded area
3. Loosen or remove heavy clothing
4. Provide cool drinking water
5. Fan and mist the person with water

**Heat related illnesses can sneak up on you suddenly.
Be aware of the symptoms and warning signs!**

Propriety Information and Technology

Confidentiality Policy

As an employee/volunteer of the ACNC, you will learn and see exciting things, such as new animal exhibits, animal care, programs and other such things. You may also learn things about your fellow employees, donors and volunteers. While you may want to share this information with family and friends, this information must remain private and confidential.

Release of Information

This policy relates to the release of proprietary Arizona Center for Nature Conservation (ACNC) information to the public including media. In order to provide the most consistent and accurate information to the public, all official information released regarding ACNC business must originate from ACNC's Communications department.

Such information (including, but not limited to animal news e.g. births, deaths, transportation, etc.) should never be released to guests, the media, or the public without first being released by Communications. We understand you may want to share your excitement or sentiments, however, these events are confidential until the information is officially released or cleared and approved by Communications.

Photo / Video Usage

Photographs and video are an important part of the media conversation (print, web and social). They give a face to the story. However, photographs and video can be easily misinterpreted without the proper context. When posting photos or video to the Internet, including your personal pages (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, etc.) refrain from posting photos which violate the ACNC Confidentiality Agreement. These would be images that show animals in transport, undergoing medical procedures (all stages), or any images that may deviate from AZA recommendations, ACNC behind the scenes guidelines or animal handling/feeding guidelines, unless otherwise approved by Communications.

Media Inquiries

Any member of the media who calls, emails, contacts you via social media or comes on-site should be immediately referred to the VP of Marketing, Communications & Events, Linda Hardwick. You can reach her by calling 602.914.4363, extension 7212. Media representing their employers are not allowed on-site without the Communications department's assistance or prior arrangement.

Likewise, unless prior arrangements have been made with Communications, ACNC employees, volunteers and consultants should not be interviewed (formally or informally) regarding any ACNC business. It is Communications' responsibility to ensure that any employee or volunteer who is interviewed is prepared with specific talking points in advance. Additionally, if you receive a non-media related interview request, please inform Communications before proceeding. Student requests can be made through the ACNC's website by visiting the "Contact" page and clicking on the relevant link.

Social Media

Be aware that whenever you are near a guest, speaking to a guest directly, are in a publicly viewable space, etc., that any of your actions could be shared on social media. Smart phones, portable cameras and other devices make it very easy for a guest to take photos, video (including live streaming video) or otherwise gather information and share it immediately with the rest of the world.

Social media offers many ways to take part in global conversations related to the work we are doing at ACNC and the things that we, and you, care about. The choice to participate on social media and in these discussions is yours. If you do, please follow these guiding principles when discussing or sharing images related to the ACNC:

- Respect proprietary information and confidentiality. If the information or images have not been officially released by Communications, do not share it. If you have questions about what has or has not been released, please contact Communications.
- A failure to comply with the ACNC Release of Information Policy by an employee, volunteer, or consultant may lead to disciplinary action up to and including removal from the ZooTeens program.

Social Media Rules of Participation when discussing the ACNC:

- **Pass it along.** Feel free to post, share, re-tweet, etc. any information that has been publicly released on phoenixzoo.org, our official Blog or ACNC/Phoenix Zoo/official Social Media pages (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X, etc.) If you have ideas, articles, videos or images that you would like for us to share, please send your idea to the Youth Engagement Manager.
- **Be transparent.** Your honesty—or dishonesty—will be quickly noticed in the social media world. If you are blogging about your work at ACNC, use your real name, identify that you work for ACNC, and be clear about your position. If you have a stake or involvement in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. You also should always disclose that you are sharing your opinion, not that of the ACNC unless you are acting as a representative of the ACNC on an official social media outlet of ACNC.
- **Be aware.** Make sure your efforts to be transparent don't violate ACNC's privacy, confidentiality and legal guidelines for external communication. Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy and ACNC confidential information. When connecting with co-workers on social media, be aware of whom you are connecting with and your personal privacy settings. Depending on your settings, by becoming a “friend” with a coworker or fellow volunteer on social media you are possibly making what you post available to even more people if the co-worker “likes,” comments on or shares your content. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and be sensible. If in doubt, please contact the Youth Engagement Manager.

- **If it gives you pause, pause.** If you're about to submit something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'post.' Take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure out what's bothering you, then fix it. If you're still unsure, discuss it with the Youth Engagement Manager.
- **Write what you know.** Write and post about your areas of knowledge, especially if you're discussing the ACNC and our animal collection or other specifics. If you publish to a website outside ACNC, such as a personal blog, please use a disclaimer something like this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent ACNC's positions, strategies or opinions." Also, please respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, and ACNC Confidentiality Policy—if you have any questions about these, please contact the Youth Engagement Manager.
- **Perception is reality.** In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with ACNC's values and professional standards. Essentially, every employee and volunteer is an extension and representative of the ACNC brand; your content should reflect that.
- **Did you make a mistake?** If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If something has escalated, inform the Youth Engagement Manager immediately.
- **Create some excitement.** ACNC is making important contributions to the world, to the future of wildlife, education, nature, and to public dialogue on a broad range of issues. Let's share with the world the exciting things we're learning and doing—and open up the channels to learn from others.
- **A word of caution:** If the content related to ACNC is ugly, offensive, demeaning, untrue, inhibits the strategy of a marketing or PR campaign, or violates ACNC policies, you will be asked to remove the statement, image or video.

This policy does not prohibit actions supporting or limit your rights under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1991, the Labor Management Relations Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Arizona Civil Rights Act, the Arizona Employment Protection Act, the Arizona Wage Payment Act, any other federal or state statute.

Bullying Policy

The Phoenix Zoo – Arizona Center for Nature Conservation takes all forms of harassment seriously; a term more commonly known for children and adolescents is bullying. In order to make sure all teens understand what bullying is, we have added this section to our harassment policy for ZooTeens.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose to cause harm. There are three main forms of bullying that we recognize.

Types of Bullying

Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean or hurtful things. Verbal bullying may include:

- Teasing
- Name-calling
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm

Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying may include:

- Leaving someone out of an activity or conversation on purpose
- Telling other teens not to be friends with someone, verbally or digitally
- Spreading rumors about someone, verbally or digitally
- Embarrassing someone in public, verbally or digitally
- Taking unflattering photos of another teen, without their consent
- Sharing unflattering digital photos of another teen without their consent

Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying may include:

- Hitting, kicking, slapping and/or pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping or pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's things
- Making mean or rude hand gestures

Where and When Bullying Happens

Bullying can occur during or outside of scheduled meetings. It can also happen through social media or via text messaging.

Bystanders

- A bystander is someone who sees or knows about bullying or other forms of violence that is happening to someone else; they can either be part of the problem (hurtful bystander) or part of the solution (helpful bystander).
- Bystanders have the power to play a key role in preventing or stopping bullying – without putting themselves at risk or becoming a bully themselves. Some bystanders directly intervene by discouraging the bully, defending the victim, or redirecting the situation away from the bully. Other bystanders get help by rallying support from peers to stand up against bullying or by reporting the bullying to a trusted adult.

Reporting Bullying

ZooTeens must understand that bullying of any type will not be tolerated. If you ever feel that you are a victim of bullying, please make sure you contact the Youth Engagement Manager as soon as possible. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigative process, to the extent possible, consistent with adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action.

If you are discussing an instance of bullying with a supervisor, a ZooTeen should be prepared to answer all of the same questions as in our regular employee/volunteer harassment policy.

Consequences for Bullying Behavior

Coaching and/or corrective action are used to help modify or redirect behaviors.

Corrective action may be needed depending on the severity of the situation.

Parents/guardians may be contacted depending on the severity of the situation. In extreme situations, removal from the ZooTeens program may result.

Whistleblower Policy

If the bullying does not stop, please keep the Youth Engagement Manager informed.

When circumstances or conditions exist that may create a potential conflict of interest, the volunteer should report the situation to Human Resources. A whistleblower as defined by this policy is an employee or volunteer of ACNC who reports an activity that they consider to be illegal or dishonest to one of the parties specified in this policy. Please exercise sound judgment when making an allegation. It is the policy of the ACNC not to allow retaliation for reports of misconduct by others made in good faith by employees. The whistleblower policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the ACNC prior to seeking resolution outside of the program. Employees are expected to cooperate in internal investigations of misconduct. Allegations that prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be reviewed as a serious offense.

Phoenix Zoo Anonymous Whistleblower Hotline: 1 (844) 370 – 0008

Website: <https://lighthouse-services.com/phoenixzoo>

Harassment Policy

The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation (ACNC) is committed to a work [or volunteer] environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment [or volunteer] opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, the Zoo expects that all relationships among persons in the workplace will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment.

It is the policy of the ACNC to ensure an environment without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (with or without sexual conduct), age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law. The ACNC prohibits and will not tolerate any such discrimination or harassment.

Unlawful Harassment

Harassment, including discrimination, is illegal under federal, state, and local laws. For the purposes of this policy, harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In addition to sexual harassment, it is illegal and against the policies of the ACNC for any employee or volunteer to harass another employee or volunteer based on ethnicity, race, national origin, religion, age, disability, pregnancy, or any other reason protected under the law. Such harassment may include (but is not limited to) derogatory remarks, epithets, offensive jokes, the display of offensive printed or visual material, offensive physical actions that reasonably interfere with an individual's work performance or create an abusive work environment or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or status.

Harassment will not be tolerated. All employees, volunteers, supervisors, and managers must comply with this policy and the law. Failure to do so shall result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Complaints of sexual harassment shall be thoroughly investigated by the ACNC with due regard for the privacy and confidentiality of all persons involved. Any employee or volunteer who refuses to cooperate in an investigation of a harassment (or discrimination) complaint may be subject to disciplinary action. If the investigation reveals that the complaint is valid, prompt and appropriate corrective action will be taken. As circumstances warrant, the harasser may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

False charges of harassment made intentionally or with malice will be treated as harassing conduct and may subject the charging party to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The ACNC has a zero-tolerance policy against any reprisals or retaliation against any employee for making complaints of unlawful discrimination. Failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

What to Do if an Incident Occurs

- If you are offended by inappropriate verbal or visual behavior while volunteering, it is recommended that you tell the person harassing you that you are offended by the behavior and/or remarks and that you want it to stop. Be firm, polite, and clear. Do not ignore the behavior. Physical contact should be immediately reported to your supervisor or Human Resources.
- If the behavior does not stop, report the behavior to your immediate supervisor, the Human Resources Department or the Phoenix Zoo Anonymous Whistleblower Hotline: 1 (844) 370 – 0008 (<https://lighthouse-services.com/phoenixzoo>). Be prepared to answer who, what, where, when, and how, so management can properly investigate and address the improper behavior.
- The ACNC recognizes that the question of whether a particular action or incident involves a purely personal social relationship, without a discriminatory employment effect, requires a determination based on all facts in the matter. Given the nature of this type of discrimination, the company also recognizes that false accusations can have serious effects on innocent individuals. The ACNC trusts that all employees and volunteers will act responsibly to establish a pleasant working environment free of discrimination. The ACNC encourages any employee or volunteer to bring questions he or she may have regarding discrimination to the Human Resources Department.
- The ACNC prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or participates in an investigation of such reports. Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigative process to the extent possible and consistent with adequate investigation, including appropriate corrective action.

Appendix A - Teen Membership Benefits

Teen Volunteers receive a Non-Regular Volunteer Phoenix Zoo Membership. Memberships will expire in June but may be terminated early if needed.

You must show valid photo ID with your membership card for entry and at all locations throughout the Phoenix Zoo to receive membership benefits.

DAYTIME ADMISSION

- Teen Volunteers may bring up to three guests with them for free.
- Guests must be accompanied by the Teen Volunteer upon entrance.
- Guests can only receive your membership benefits and discounts if you are with them. Otherwise they will be charged regular rates.
- Please keep your nametag in your pocket if you are enjoying the Zoo as a guest and not during a volunteer shift. If you are wearing your name tag while “off duty” guests may believe you are working and have misconceptions of your role and behavior.

FOOD SERVICE

- Receive a 35% discount on food purchases.
- The discount applies to the Teen Volunteer only.
- To receive the discount, you must show your Phoenix Zoo name tag. If you are not working or in uniform, you must show your name tag and photo ID; otherwise, you will not receive your discount.

RETAIL

- Receive 35% off regular priced items. This does not include already discounted or specialty items unless otherwise specified.
- The discount applies to Teen Volunteer only.
- To receive the discount, you must show your Phoenix Zoo name tag. If you are not working or in uniform, you must show your name tag and photo ID; otherwise, you will not receive your discount. Or you will receive the 10% discount when you show your membership card and photo ID.

PHOTOGENIC

- Receive a free digital copy of your daytime or ZooLights photos taken at the main gate and the camel ride.
- Photos need to include the Teen Volunteer
- Free digital copies does not apply to paid events or the Santa Photos during ZooLights or Bunny photos in the spring.
- Discounts on all printed hard copy and digital packages at paid events.

ATTRACTIONS

- Receive free admission into attractions including Carousel, Stingray Bay, Safari Cruiser, Giraffe Encounter, and Camel Rides.

Appendix A - Teen Membership Benefits

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- Access to the Zoo one hour before opening to the general public.
 - Free or discounted special event tickets, such as ZooLights.
 - Discounts on WILD Birthdays, programs and camps.
 - Free stroller and wheelchair rentals. Member discount on Electric Scooter rentals.
 - Receive a 50% discount on additional general daytime guest admission tickets.
 - Free or reduced admission to more than 150 zoos and aquariums across the country.
- A complete list of participating organizations can be found in the Membership section at phoenixzoo.org.

ADDITIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- All Teen Volunteers receive a 50% discount off of any membership package. Teen Volunteers may use this discount to purchase an additional membership or a gift membership for someone else.
- This discount is for Teen Volunteers only and may not be extended to family or friends when purchasing or renewing their own memberships.

Membership FAQs

Q. Who can use the membership benefits?

A. You and your guests. Your guest must be with you to receive the benefits. Membership card and photo ID are required upon entry and at all locations throughout the Phoenix Zoo to receive the discounts. Otherwise, you and your guests will be charged regular rates.

Q. What if I want a physical membership card?

A. The Zoo transitioned to digital membership cards on the PassPlay app to help reduce plastic waste. If you would like a physical membership card, one can be requested for a \$10 fee. You can request a card by calling the Contact Center at 602.286.3800 or visiting the Guest Services Lobby or the Membership Booth.



LEGEND

- ATM
- Restrooms
- Cash to Card Kiosk
- Souvenir Photos
- Drinking Fountain
- Stroller Rental
- First Aid and Lost & Found
- Vending
- Food & Drink
- Wheelchair Rental
- Headphone/ Quiet Zone
- Gift Shop



ACCREDITED BY THE
ASSOCIATION
OF ZOO &
AQUARIUMS



Cashless - cards & mobile pay only.

Please stay on designated paths.

Do not climb on or throw items into habitats.

Concessions, Experiences and Zoo hours may vary.

Animals on view are subject to change without notice.

Do not feed the animals. They receive a healthy, balanced diet from their zookeepers.

Some experiences at the Zoo provide opportunities for direct contact with our collection animals absent a physical barrier. Please be advised that on occasion, some of those animals may be administered dietary items that could be allergens to our guests.

Accessibility information is available at
Guest Services or go to "Plan Your Visit"
at phoenixzoo.org

The Phoenix Zoo is a smoke-free facility, including electronic cigarettes.

Recycle bins are located throughout the Zoo to recycle your plastics, aluminum and paper.

Consumer Image Policy - Thank you for visiting the Phoenix Zoo. During your visit you will see many photographs of our animals and staff. We encourage you to take photographs for personal use only. We do not allow professional photographers to take photographs for commercial use without prior written consent. The commercial use of photographs, video and other media may harm the animals and the Zoo. Professional use is prohibited.

Trailblazers 2026-2027 Handbook

Acknowledgement

By signing below, we acknowledge that we have received, read, and understand the Phoenix Zoo Trailblazers 2026-2027 Handbook.

We understand that the handbook outlines the expectations, policies, procedures, and responsibilities of participating in the Trailblazers program and is intended to help provide a safe, positive, and rewarding experience for all Trailblazer participants, guests, staff, volunteers, and animals.

We agree to uphold the standards of conduct and expectations described in the handbook and understand that failure to do so may affect participation in the program.

If we have questions about any information contained in the handbook, we understand that we should contact the Youth Engagement Manager for clarification.

Trailblazers Name (Printed): _____

Trailblazers Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____



TRAILBLAZERS
PHOENIX ZOO YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL