

Emily Sexson – Education Specialist – 05/25/17 – Senior Programs

Lee Richardson Zoo attracts people from all over the world. During our 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration I was able to meet visitors from South Africa who described Kansas and the zoo as “lovely”. About a month before this interaction I spoke with a couple on the phone who were needing information as they were planning a trip from New Zealand and wanted to make sure they’d be able to visit the zoo. Our distance learning education programs are utilized by schools across the globe, reaching as far as Australia. The Lee Richardson Zoo’s mission is to connect people with wildlife, inspiring appreciation and understanding of the natural world through conservation, education, and engaging experiences. We hope that any visitor, from near or far, takes a bit of our mission home with them.

While visitors may come from thousands of miles away, it’s our local community that keeps the zoo thriving. It’s common to see families walking through together, couples holding hands strolling through, and fitness lovers jogging or riding bikes. The zoo is a hub of the community and we’d like to provide resources for all members of our community to enjoy. Garden City has a growing population, and a portion that is growing includes senior citizens and retirees. When I speak to seniors and retirees in our community, many remark that they haven’t been to the zoo in ages. Others mention that they used to go with their families, but now their kids have kids of their own. Lee Richardson Zoo invites seniors to re-visit, and enjoy memories of the past while discovering the advancements we’ve made over the years.

Lee Richardson Zoo and the Finney County Senior Center, are partnering together to promote more educational and recreational activities for the adult citizens of Garden City and surrounding areas. The first Wednesday of the month, education staff at the zoo will be offering a program for those aged 55 and older. The programs will offer a look at a variety of zoo related topics with a guided tour on grounds immediately following. Attendees will also have the opportunity to meet some of the zoo’s animal ambassadors. Each session will last approximately one hour. No registration is

necessary, and there is no fee to attend. The Senior Programs will run throughout the year, and walking tour portions will be available as weather permits.

The next program will take place June 7<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM and the theme is “Bird is the Word”. Combining native visitors and zoo residents, the Lee Richardson Zoo is home to more birds than any other group of animal. These birds are from all over the world, and each has its own interesting behaviors and appearances. The program will introduce participants to the diversity of birds as well as provide information on how we can help birds locally. All ages are always welcome at the zoo, but adults 55 and older looking for a social opportunity that offers educational insights as well as a walk in the park are encouraged to join us for our upcoming Senior Programs. For more information, please contact Emily Sexson at 620-276-1250 or [Emily.sexson@gardencityks.us](mailto:Emily.sexson@gardencityks.us)!