

Zoo to You column for Garden City Telegram

By Kristi Newland, Zoo Director

16 August 2017

Topic: Kindness and Dedication Make the Zoo

Saturday I found out we had three baby red panda cubs born at Lee Richardson Zoo that morning. I also found out a friend had moved to hospice care the day before. Needless to say, the day was a flood of conflicting emotions. During this rollercoaster ride, a saying popped into my head. "I shall pass this way but once; any good that I can do or any kindness I can show, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." I can't say exactly what sparked that specific quote to come to mind; it could have been inspired by either or both events that day, reflecting on a good life of a kind person, or the good works of the people connected to the zoo.

No matter where we are, or what's happening around us, the circle of life goes on for all of us. It's what we do along the way that counts. In 1927 local members of the Izaak Walton League, a national conservation organization started what has now, through continued community support and progress, become Lee Richardson Zoo as we know it today. That act of kindness that happened so long ago had a ripple effect. By building on what they started and continuing to provide a quality experience for guests, along with a high quality life for the zoo residents, Lee Richardson Zoo, after 90 years, continues to connect people with wildlife, draw visitors to Garden City, and give the community an easy way to have a hand in conservation around the world. The benefits of the zoo can be experienced in many ways: by being inspired to care about others (wildlife in this case) through making a personal connection with an ambassador of an endangered species, learning to be more independent and creative by playing in the Nature Play Space, or growing in understanding of the natural world by attending a zoo educational program in person or via distance learning technology, are just a few examples.

Acts of kindness don't have to result in starting a zoo to benefit a community and wildlife. Zoo visitors who put a quarter in the feed machine at the duck pond are part of the good works that coin goes on to do in conservation projects through the zoo. Volunteers at the zoo who help with events, filing, animal introduction watches, or education programs can all be proud of the impact the zoo has and their contribution to it. In fact, anyone who has supported the zoo over the years can feel a sense of pride in contributing to the growth of the population of an endangered species through the birth of three red

panda cubs at Lee Richardson Zoo. The zoo is a collective representation of the kindness and dedication shown by many, to benefit many, human and animal alike.

I'm sure my friend won't mind being mentioned here as she is a very kind person and very involved in the zoo profession herself. She understands the impact of kindness and dedication on the quality of life on this planet. Kindness, of course, isn't limited just to those involved with Lee Richardson Zoo. Donating blood, "filling the bus", and many other worthy efforts abound. So, no matter where you are on your path through life, thank you for your kindness along the way. It makes the world we share a much better place.