



## **ZooAmerica Continues Milton Hershey's Vision**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, chocolate magnate Milton S. Hershey envisioned building a model community that would be an ideal place to live and work. From the start, the town drew visitors, who were lured by both the smell of chocolate in the air and the appeal of an industrial town designed to enhance worker life.

Among the many attractions Mr. Hershey created in "his" town was a zoo. In 1905, Franz Zinner, who ultimately became the first zookeeper of Hershey Zoo, offered Mr. Hershey 12 prairie dogs to keep as an attraction at the town's park (which is today **Hersheypark**). By 1910, there were eight more species – angora goats, black bears, deer, fox squirrels, opossums, peacocks, pheasants and zebus – and Hershey Zoo was formally launched. These early efforts would lay the foundation for today's **ZooAmerica** North American Wildlife Park.

In the era before television, zoos played an important role in educating the public about animals and environments different than central Pennsylvania.

Mr. Hershey was reported to have been very interested in the zoo ... and a frequent visitor. He often had his driver drop him off at one side of the zoo so he could walk through the facility, enjoying the exhibits and watching the guests' reactions, before being picked up on the other side.

After Mr. Hershey's death in 1945, the zoo continued to incorporate new animals and exhibits. But Hershey Zoo closed in 1971, when **Hersheypark** officially became a themed amusement park. In 1978, it was redeveloped as **ZooAmerica**, a themed zoological park that featured animals native to North America.

Today, **ZooAmerica** is an 11-acre, year-round, walk-through zoo that showcases more than 200 animals of more than 60 different species native to North America. Animal habitats are built around five geographic regions – Southern Swamps, The Great Southwest, Eastern Woodlands, Big Sky Country and Northlands. With a mission of conservation, **ZooAmerica** is proud to be one of only eight zoos in Pennsylvania accredited by the prestigious Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

In addition to being open daily for visitors to enjoy, **ZooAmerica** offers a variety of educational programs. These programs include “Animal Tales,” Girl and Boy Scout days, habitat and species programs, and guided tours. Each offers a variety of unique experiences, including live animal demonstrations and discussions.

One of the Zoo’s newest programs is its After-Hours Tour, providing guests of all ages the special opportunity to have personal interaction with animals and **ZooAmerica** naturalists. Participants go behind the scenes to feed animals and to explore and learn about different buildings and exhibits in the Zoo, including its Animal Health Center.

Another program co-sponsored by the Zoo is “The Falconry Experience by **The Hotel Hershey**,” through which guests learn about the history of birds of prey, raptor conservation and the important role falcons play in the wild. It also offers participants a unique opportunity to get close to these majestic birds for a photo. The Falconry Experience includes free admission to **ZooAmerica**, where guests can view even more birds of prey in the Zoo’s collection.

Following in the footsteps of Mr. Hershey, **ZooAmerica** continues to honor its obligation to protect its occupants while educating the public about them. Through promoting conservation and caring for a variety of endangered species, **ZooAmerica** has been at the forefront of protecting the environment within the entire destination of Hershey and educating visitors of all ages about the importance of wildlife.