AZA Grants Prestigious Award to Karen Sausman, President Emeritus of The Living Desert

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Silver Spring, MD (Vocus) September 21, 2010 -- The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) has awarded its highest award for professional excellence, the R. Marlin Perkins Award, to Karen Sausman, President Emeritus of The Living Desert for her outstanding contributions to the zoo and aquarium profession.

“AZA is proud to honor Karen’s lifetime achievements with the R. Marlin Perkins Award,” said AZA President and CEO, Jim Maddy. “Her passion and commitment to conservation and education as well as to the American and international zoo community makes her a remarkable role model.”

The award, named for its inaugural recipient, R. Marlin Perkins, was first granted in 1978. It recognizes those who have a distinguished record of honorable service to the association throughout their careers, are strongly committed to education, conservation, science, recreation, and the welfare of animals, and further these causes within the zoo and aquarium profession. Only one recipient can be honored in any given year, and Karen Sausman becomes the 19th to be so honored in 33 years. Recent recipients include Jack Hanna, Director Emeritus of the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and Ted A. Beattie, President and CEO of the John G. Shedd Aquarium.

“Karen Sausman is part of a group of pioneers who transformed a rough-and-tumble community of fiercely independent zoos and aquariums into a professional organization of science- and conservation-based institutions,” said Stacey Johnson, President and CEO of The Living Desert. “And she was building a first-class institution, The Living Desert, simultaneously.”

Sausman envisioned and built The Living Desert, a premier zoological garden in Palm Desert, CA, that features desert conservation through preservation, education and appreciation. In addition, she has been deeply involved in the breeding programs for many endangered species, including the Arabian oryx, Cuvier’s and Mhorr’s gazelles, and sand cats.

Sausman has long been a leader in the zoo community, having served on the AZA’s Ethics Board, and was the first woman elected to the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA), now AZA, Board of Directors. She also served on the Board of Directors and as President of the World Association of Zoo’s and Aquariums (WAZA), and as a founder and longtime member of the Board of the International Species Information System (ISIS). Most recently, Karen Sausman was a key player in establishing the Amphibian Ark and integrating it with the work of WAZA, in making the Year of the Frog an international success.

“Karen’s 40 years of dedicated service to the conservation of our planet began at a very early age and is evident in everything she has touched,” said William Conway, Senior Conservationist of the Wildlife Conservation Society and a previous Perkins Award recipient. “Her insight on how important it is to get a child to care about
the conservation of our planet’s plants and animals is fundamental.”

Also an accomplished artist and writer, Sausman’s work has appeared in peer-reviewed journals, respected popular press magazines and books. In addition to multiple paper presentations at AZA conferences, she was the first editor of the AAZPA Newsletter and edited the book Zoological Park and Aquarium Fundamentals for the Association.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting an institution dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. For more information, please visit www.aza.org.

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