Pioneer in Aquarium Design, Chuck Davis, Honored with AZA Award for Professional Excellence

The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) has awarded its Wendy Fisher Award for Professional Excellence to Chuck Davis, FAIA, a founding partner and currently senior principal at Esherick Homsey Dodge and Davis (EHDD) Architecture, for his outstanding contributions to integrative aquarium and zoo design.

Silver Spring (Vocus) September 28, 2010 -- The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) has awarded its Wendy Fisher Award for Professional Excellence to Chuck Davis, FAIA, a founding partner and currently senior principal at Esherick Homsey Dodge and Davis (EHDD) Architecture, for his outstanding contributions to integrative aquarium and zoo design.

“Chuck’s pioneering work in aquarium design has touched countless zoos and aquariums across the country, providing a richer and more engaging visitor experience,” said AZA President and CEO, Jim Maddy. “AZA is proud to recognize Chuck’s lifetime architectural achievements with the Wendy Fisher Award.”

In 2004, AZA established the Wendy Fisher Award for Professional Excellence to honor those AZA Commercial Members who have demonstrated outstanding character, leadership, professional excellence and distinguished service to AZA and fellow Commercial Members, and are strongly committed to education, conservation, science, recreation, and the welfare of animals. The award is named for its first recipient, Wendy Fisher, founder of Mailworks™, who exemplified these qualities by being an active Commercial Member for over 20 years and was involved in a number of AZA Committees. Only one recipient can be honored in any given year, and including Fisher herself, Davis is only the third recipient of the award.

During a remarkable career spanning more than five decades, Davis has created a noteworthy and diverse portfolio consisting of institutional, private and academic projects, including several award-winning buildings. His enduring legacy, however, is in aquarium design. Recognized as an expert in this building type, Davis is credited with precedent-setting methodology based upon his integrative, complex and thoroughgoing approach for the Monterey Bay Aquarium, his first aquarium project.

Davis’ vision for the Monterey Bay Aquarium was not only to design a great aquarium, but also to build a technically superior facility. In the process, he took Monterey’s regional story – of sardines, canneries and John Steinbeck – and reinvented a locale; creating a “place” which references the past - but does not revere it - while looking to the future. In 1988 the American Institute of Architects gave its prestigious Honor Award to the aquarium and EHDD for its design. The project’s technical innovations have since become the industry standard for best practice design of aquariums.

“Over the past 25 years, there has been a proliferation of aquariums throughout the world, and many of them look and feel like the Monterey Bay Aquarium because they have been influenced by its design,” said Julie Packard, Executive Director of the aquarium. “Chuck’s design changed the way people think about aquariums, which allowed the Monterey Bay Aquarium to change the way people think about the ocean.”

The impact of Davis’ work on the world of aquariums and beyond has been long-lasting and has inspired and
influenced related projects, including the Florida Aquarium, Aquarium of the Pacific, John G. Shedd Aquarium, National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, and Los Angeles Zoo.

To see a short film showcasing the accomplishments of Chuck Davis, originally played at the 2010 Association of Aquariums and Zoos Conference in Houston, TX during Chuck's acceptance of the Wendy Fisher Award for Professional Excellence, please visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AMhJyNB7Gk.

Founded in 1924 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 a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. To learn more, visit www.aza.org.

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