

2024

# Annual Report

Cleveland Zoological  
Society

## Dear Friends —

Perhaps the best part of leading the Cleveland Zoo Society is the strong community support of the Zoo. This community includes our more than 45,000 member families, our more than 350 annual and special donors, our 50-person Board of Directors – and beyond. Those folks – all part of the 1.3 million people who visited last year – find joy in supporting and visiting the Zoo.

We see this on a busy summer day, walking to our offices amidst families and summer camp kids. We hear the impact a visit has when we host private golf cart tours and get one-on-one time with donors. We know educational events like Tails and Cocktails and the Steve Taylor Conservation Award lunch have become annual events for many of our friends who are eager to return every few months to learn more about the work the Zoo does for animal well-being, conservation across the globe, and visitors right here in Cleveland.

In 2024 our community support widened with a significant \$2.5 million gift from the State of Ohio for the design and construction of Primate Forest. We liked to think that now those even in Columbus and Cincinnati know the incredible work the Zoo does – and how the Northeast Ohio community counts on the Zoo as a community asset. We saw this community when we broke ground on Primate Forest in September. We were both proud to take a shovel next to our colleagues and friends at the Cleveland Metroparks, the Zoo, state officials, construction partners and more. Together, we are doing great things!

We are so grateful you are part of this community. Your philanthropic support, your friendship and your advocacy make Cleveland Metroparks Zoo the most visited destination in Northeast Ohio year after year. We are excited to see YOU at the Zoo in 2025!



**Sarah Crupi**

Chief Executive Officer  
Cleveland Zoological Society  
[Crupi@ClevelandZooSociety.org](mailto:Crupi@ClevelandZooSociety.org)



**Christine Myeroff**

Chair, Board of Directors  
Cleveland Zoological Society  
[cmyeroff@gmail.com](mailto:cmyeroff@gmail.com)



# MEASURING MEMBERSHIP

Its record-breaking 45,500+ member households demonstrate that the Zoo is not just a destination but a beloved tradition for Northeast Ohio families – and a valuable community asset. In 2024, membership brought in \$4.9 million in revenue.

Members had unlimited access to exciting developments at the Zoo. A new Andean bear at Susie's Bear Hollow, the quickly growing tiger cubs, and the gorilla family troop were among the year's highlights.

With discounts on popular offerings such as Asian Lantern Festival, Wild Winter Lights, and Summer Camp, members also enjoyed the Zoo's most memorable seasonal experiences.

PNC's continued, generous support made possible Member Appreciation Days, which featured fun giveaways and drew enthusiastic crowds. Animal trading cards have become a perennial hit – collectors lined up before the Zoo opened on each of the 12 giveaway days in 2024.

The Zoo Society published 12 ZooNews emails and four issues of *Z Magazine* for members in 2024. This content affords members insider looks at the Zoo's efforts in animal care, conservation, and education, and with an average open rate of 46%, it is clear that members find value and enjoyment in Zoo Society emails.

\$4.9M

MEMBERSHIP  
REVENUE

10,476

NEW MEMBERS  
IN 2024

82%

MEMBERSHIP  
RENEWAL RATE

10% of all membership revenue is earmarked for the Zoo's conservation work. Members helped the Zoo Society give over \$496,000 to secure a future for wildlife in 2024.



# : UNFORGETTABLE : EVENTS

Twilight at the Zoo presented by KeyBank celebrated its 30th year with another sold-out evening of live music and after-hours fun at the Zoo in 2024. There is no other party like it in Northeast Ohio, and it remains a can't-miss tradition for many attendees – as well as two of the bands. Armstrong Bearcat and Joe Bell & the Swing Lizards have played Twilight at the Zoo every year since 1994.

In September, the Zoo worked with Paul Abbey of local nonprofit Rooted in Trees, Zoo

horticulturists, the Holden Arboretum's Green Corps, and eighth graders from Urban Community School to plant the first-ever mini-forest in a United States zoo. The 850 trees and shrubs will grow rapidly in their 2,500-square-foot plot due to the dense planting method. This small but mighty space located just down the hill from Rosebrough Tiger Passage will not only represent the value of forests, it will become a functioning forest ecosystem on a tennis court-sized plot.

In June, the Zoo welcomed Marie Fidele Tuyisenge to Cleveland to receive the Steve Taylor Conservation Award. The award is funded by donors seeking to support early-career scientists; Marie Fidele is the fourth recipient and the first woman to be honored. Now pursuing her master's degree at the University of Dresden, Marie Fidele has a long history with the Zoo beginning with undergraduate-level mentoring through the Zoo's Memoirs Program at the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.



Urban Community School students planting trees in the Zoo's mini forest.





Laura and David Steffee and Judy and Andrew Evridge at Tails + Cocktails.



The Tanzania travel group stops for a photo.

Tails + Cocktails once again sold out its series of fascinating conversations with Zoo experts. In 2024, topics included the Zoo's browse feeding program, its impactful conservation work both regionally and globally, and its focus on the concept of "OneHealth" as a guiding principle for mission-aligned decision-making.

The Zoo Society's new travel program ventured to Tanzania and Rwanda to experience a panoply of wildlife and wild landscapes, as well as the work being done to protect them and the human communities that live alongside them. Stay tuned for more opportunities as this exciting program grows.

850  
TREES AND SHRUBS  
PLANTED IN THE ZOO'S  
MINI FOREST

5,500  
ATTENDEES AT  
TWILIGHT AT THE ZOO  
PRESENTED BY KEYBANK

600  
PEOPLE ATTENDED  
TAILS + COCKTAILS  
PRESENTED BY  
THE STEFFEE FAMILY



Twilight at the Zoo presented by KeyBank.



Marie Fidele Tuyisenge working in Rwanda.

# : PRIMATE FOREST : UNDERWAY

Fundraising for Primate Forest achieved remarkable success in 2024, raising over \$7 million and bringing the capital campaign total to \$20.1 million – the highest in Zoo Society history. Key to this success were the collaboration and teamwork of the Advancement Team and the enthusiastic engagement of the Zoo Society Board of Directors. Thoughtful communication with staff and donors, the successful launch of the Primate Forest website, and exclusive donor updates and events fueled the campaign’s momentum. While

there is much more to raise, the progress made in 2024 merits celebration as the Advancement Team looks ahead to more tours, events, videos, and communications to inspire donors in 2025.

On the eve of Primate Forest’s Groundbreaking in September, the Zoo Society hosted the RainForest Rendezvous to celebrate the legacy of the beloved space. It was wonderful to fill the space with friends, share fond memories, and toast to the future before construction began.

"Primate Forest will be a vibrant and inclusive community asset that elevates the often groundbreaking zoological work taking place right here in Cleveland. It will be one of the most notable tourist destinations for our region and once open, free and accessible to Cuyahoga County and Hinckley Township residents as part of Free Monday."

- **Brian Zimmerman**  
CEO, Cleveland Metroparks



Project partners joined leaders from the Zoo, Metroparks and Zoo Society, to break ground in September.





CZS CEO Sarah Crupi, CZS Board Chair Christine Myeroff, Metroparks CEO Brian Zimmerman and Zoo Executive Director Dr. Chris Kuhar at the RainForest Rendezvous event.

With its groundbreaking on September 10, Primate Forest saw an enthusiastic reception among media outlets as well as the community. Construction began promptly and progressed as expected through the end of the year, with deconstruction work complete and foundational construction underway, as well as new pedestrian walkways built. It has been a fascinating sight for Zoo visitors from week to week – the removal of the glass was particularly dramatic!

Central to the direction of Primate Forest is the concept of OneHealth, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of people, animals, and environment, asserting that the health of each depends on the health of the others. Primate Forest will embody OneHealth in many ways, from creating a home for gorillas that mimics their natural habitat to providing a place for Northeast Ohioans to connect with nature year-round.



Kunda and her mother Kebi Moyo.

\$7.1M

RAISED FOR  
PRIMATE FOREST  
IN 2024

2

PRIMATE FOREST  
DONOR-EXCLUSIVE  
NEWSLETTERS

150

150 DONORS TO THE  
PRIMATE FOREST CAMPAIGN

The charismatic gorilla troop will benefit greatly from brand new opportunities to explore and interact in the Gorilla Forest. Youngsters Kayembe, Kunda, and Jameela’s antics have already captured the hearts of the Zoo community locally and beyond thanks to Netflix’s “Baby Gorilla Cam”, and Primate Forest will offer many new ways for guests to observe their behavior. The innovative care they receive will also be front and center with “health management hubs” where gorillas and orangutans will voluntarily participate in health checks such as blood pressure readings and EKGs. The Zoo is a leader in gorilla health research and care with an impressive roster of scientists driving deeper understanding – and improved care – of these apes across zoos.

# : DONORS MAKE : A DIFFERENCE

The Pride Donor Circle grew by another leap in 2024, raising over \$100,000 more than it did in 2023, when it also achieved \$95,000 in growth. The acceleration of support over the last couple years is a testament to the strong relationship between the Zoo Society and its community of loyal donors. Morning and evening “Pride Donor Walks” that explore lesser-known aspects of the Zoo are a favorite perk among members, and in 2024 there were eight of these experiences – twice as many as in 2023.

The Pride Donor Circle provides critical operating funds for the Zoo Society, which allows the organization to focus its efforts on the mission of raising philanthropic funding for the Zoo. In 2024, Pride donors got a first-hand look at what these funds make possible. A Pride Walk that toured the Zoo’s welding and carpentry workshops gave attendees a rare glimpse into the thoughtful teamwork that unites Zoo tradespeople with Animal Care. The carpenters shared how they build hammock beds for the lions from wood and reclaimed firehoses, and

75

NEW PRIDE MEMBERS

8

PRIDE DONOR  
CIRCLE WALKS

268

GOLF CART TOURS



Pride Donor Circle members learned about the greenhouse.



Pride Donor Circle members tried their hand at carpentry with the maintenance team.





Summer Day Camp is an unforgettable learning experience for wildlife-loving campers.



Robert Marquez (ABCA) with Zoo Executive Director Dr. Chris Kuhar.

the welders showed guests their custom-designed puzzle feeders, a favorite enrichment item of the insectivorous aye-aye. The Pride Donor Circle's support of Zoo Society operating funds empowers its Advancement Team to raise funds for exceptional animal care like this, and in 2024 the Zoo Society provided \$407,000 to the Zoo for animal care.

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo's role as a provider of science education continues to prove invaluable to its community. In 2024, the Zoo served more than 90,000 people with its educational programs. 10,000 of these students came from Cleveland Municipal School District schools, and 59% of school visitors were from Cuyahoga County. Over 22,000 scholarships totaling \$105,000 were awarded, and 597 programs were provided for free thanks to the Zoo Society's philanthropic support. The Zoo's Education & Engagement Department

successfully piloted a workforce development program that will be a key focus moving forward as the team responds to its community's needs and priorities.

Funds raised by the Zoo Society activate positive change both close to home and across the globe. With over \$668,000 sent to conservation partners in 2024, donors supported the protection of key threatened species and the people who live alongside them in more than 25 countries. Central to the Zoo's conservation program is its commitment to leveraging its scientific expertise to help build the next generation of conservation leaders. Developing passionate up-and-comers in the field is an investment in the long-term success of conservation efforts, and in 2024, the Zoo reached almost 300 people through mentoring, coaching, and training programs.

**\$1.4M**

ANNUAL GIVING  
REVENUE

**\$407K**

PROVIDED TO THE ZOO  
FOR ANIMAL CARE

**\$668K**

PROVIDED TO THE ZOO  
FOR CONSERVATION

**\$164K**

PROVIDED TO THE ZOO  
FOR EDUCATION

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024

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Cleveland Zoological Society  
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Cleveland Metroparks Zoo  
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Brian Zimmerman  
Cleveland Metroparks, CEO \*\*

\*\*Ex-officio

# LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



Board of Directors visit the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago.

The Zoo Society Board of Directors led substantial committee work in 2024 – most notably the launch of a new Government Relations Committee that worked to secure \$2.5 million from the state of Ohio for Primate Forest. This was the second largest allocation of state support in Cuyahoga County. This committee welcomed legislators and their teams to the Zoo, wrote letters, made phone calls and attended fundraising events to introduce the Zoo's project to state delegates.

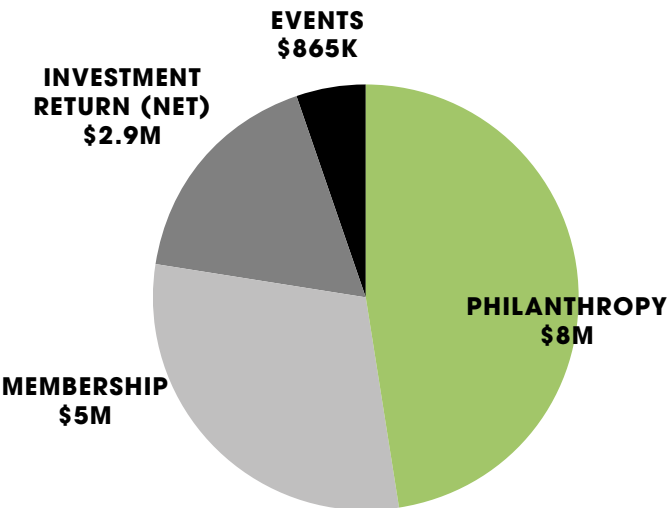
The Governance Committee finished a 10-month project with Business Volunteers Unlimited on leadership succession planning, committee structure and new bylaws that better define leadership roles and responsibilities as well as introduce the role of Immediate Past President. A newly formed Investment Committee conducted a thorough RFP process and hired PNC as investment advisors to manage the Zoo Society's more than \$17 million in assets. Collaboration with Cleveland Metroparks continued on many levels – finance, strategy, fundraising for Primate Forest – strengthening our collective work.

The Board also found time for fun in 2024. A retreat to the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago gave attendees a glimpse into gorilla research and conservation efforts. The RainForest Rendezvous cocktail party for donors and friends gave a proper sendoff to the 30-year-old iconic building before construction began on Primate Forest. Several speaking events, private tours and informal gatherings brought the Board together in celebration and collaboration.

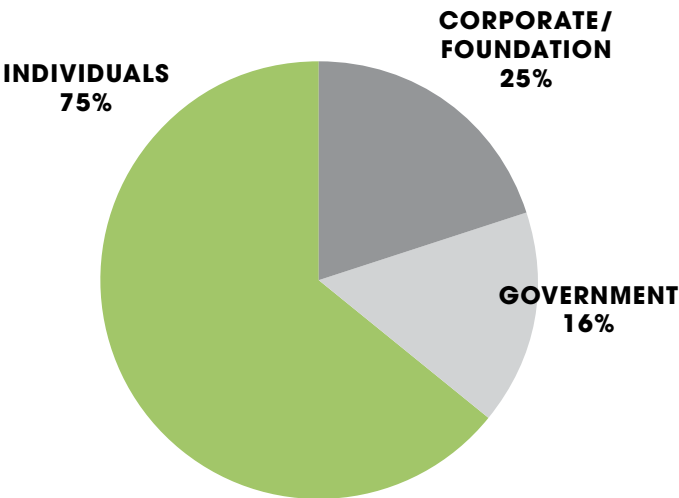


# 2024 Financial Snapshot

## 2024 NET REVENUE: \$16.9M



## 2024 GIVING BY CONSTITUENCY



## VALUE OF INVESTMENTS

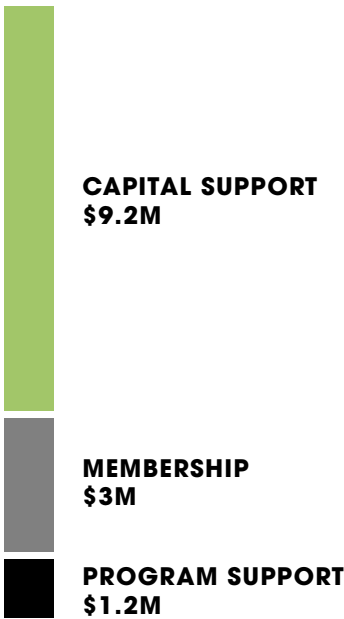
UNDESIGNATED: \$2.2M  
BOARD DESIGNATED: \$17M  
DONOR DESIGNATED: \$8.7M

.....

76%

Percent of expenses that go toward our mission

TOTAL SUPPORT TO CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO  
\$13.4M



# THANK YOU!

The Cleveland Zoological Society is proud to recognize the following donors and friends, whose generous contributions in 2024 help to make a positive impact on securing a future for wildlife and ensuring the continuing prosperity of Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.

## ANNUAL GIVING

### Champions

North East Ohio Network -  
Cuyahoga County  
Thomas F. Peterson Jr Charitable Trust  
PNC  
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### Patrons

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