



**CONFERENCE:** Nov. 15-18, 2021  
**TRADE SHOW:** Nov. 16-19, 2021

[IAAPA.org/IAAPAEexpo](https://IAAPA.org/IAAPAEexpo)



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# A Stimulating Experience

*Excitement for Some,  
Anxiety for Others*

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**Diane Lochner, PGAV Destinations**

**Tamera Brown, St. Louis Aquarium**

**Norman Burns, Conner Prairie**

**Brandon Thom, Adventure Island**

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*Moderator*

**DIANE LOCHNER**  
*PGAV Destinations*

## TAMERA BROWN



*Executive Director*  
**St. Louis Aquarium**

## NORMAN BURNS



*President & CEO*  
**Conner Prairie**

## BRANDON THOM



*VP of Operations*  
**Adventure Island**



# Challenge

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**Inclusivity & Accessibility Global Concern**



**Striving To Create Inclusive Destinations**



**Attractions Can Be Overwhelming**

# Objective

Attraction leaders will share their experience with **planning and implementing programs and facility improvements** to help those individuals with **cognitive disabilities** enjoy their experience at these great destinations.

# Case Studies



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A Certified Sensory  
Inclusive Facility



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DEAI Action Plan



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A Certified  
Autism Center

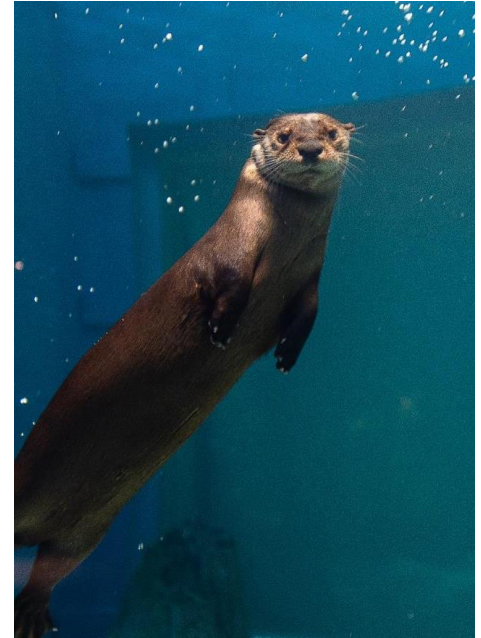


ST. LOUIS AQUARIUM  
AT UNION STATION



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# ST. LOUIS AQUARIUM OPENED 2019







# DESIGNED FOR ACCESS

For anyone that requires additional accommodations in order to have a positive experience at the St. Louis Aquarium:

- Nursing Mothers
- Deaf or hard of hearing
- Visually impaired
- Limited Mobility
- Cognitive Disorders
- Service Animals
- Non-native English speakers
- Dietary Restrictions

Focus Group	Good (Phase 1)	Better (Phase 2)	Best (Phase 3)
All	<p>Easy-button items; majority done in-house</p> <p>Minimal to no cost to implement</p> <p>Sets us on par with existing facilities</p> <p>The minimum of what we should do</p>	<p>Utilizes more partnerships</p> <p>Costs require short-term planning/sponsorship</p> <p>Shows commitment to inclusion</p>	<p>Costs require long- term planning or sponsorship</p> <p>Establishes us as an industry (Aquarium) leader</p>
Nursing Mothers			
Hearing Impaired			
Visually Impaired			
Mobility Impaired			
Cognitive Disorders			
Service Animals			
Multi-lingual Visitors			
Dietary Restrictions			



# UNIVERSAL DESIGN COMMITTEE

- Comprised of representatives for different disabilities and needs
- Help provide direction on design and operational planning
- Successfully utilized during the Gateway Arch renovation





# REPRESENTATIVES

- St. Louis Aquarium
- St. Louis Office of the Disabled
- MindsEye Radio
- Autism Speaks STL
- Easterseals Midwest
- Great Plains ADA Center
- St. Louis Union Station
- Lighthouse for the Blind, STL
- Kulture City
- Paraquad
- DEAF, Inc.







## SENSORY INCLUSION CERTIFICATION

- Exposure to aquariums has a calming effect on all personality types
- Interactions with animals can enhance the social skills of children afflicted with sensory issues
- Sensory inclusion training provides the skills needed to create a supportive environment
  - provided by skilled professionals
  - 1 hour in duration
  - refreshed every year

# PARTNER WITH KULTURECITY

- First organization in Missouri
- First organization committed during development
  - Site inspection 2-3mos. prior to opening
  - Staff training incorporated into onboarding process
  - Provided sensory inclusion bags and Calming Corner furniture/activities





## OPERATION (PRE-COVID)

- If guest self-identifies; proactively offer sensory bags and calming area
  - Consider most direct route to calming area from any point
  - No rental; just photo ID until returned
- Consider wait times
  - Bypass entry lines on busy days?
  - Bypass interactive lines on busy days?
  - Manage other guests' reactions
- Paper towel dispensers rather than automatic hand dryers
- Stalls without autoflush (with signs)



# OPERATION (POST-COVID)

## Sensory bags

- Replaced reusable bags with gift shop bags (also cotton and reusable but guests can take with)
- Sanitize after each use
- Let “rest” for 3 days

## Calming corner

- Sanitize after use (team member stationed nearby assigned to monitor)





# WHAT'S NEXT?

- Special hours
  - Lower music volume
  - Lower mic volume
  - Station more team at touch pools to guide without mic
  - Fuller description of interactive train ride prior to boarding
- Recruiting for team
  - Reliable and knowledgeable
  - Great role model for families
  - Other gifts?



# CONNER PRAIRIE

STEP INTO THE STORY



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# CONNER PRAIRIE

STEP INTO THE STORY



TREETOP OUTPOST

WILLIAM CONNER HOUSE

LENAPE INDIAN CAMP

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

1859 BALLOON VOYAGE

1836 PRAIRIETOWN

1863 CIVIL WAR JOURNEY

WELCOME CENTER  
ENTRANCE & EXIT  
TO GROUNDS

## Walking Distances

Welcome Center to Lenape: .08 mi  
Lenape to William Conner House: .06 mi  
William Conner House to Prairietown Portal: .10 mi  
Prairietown Portal to Civil War Journey: .12 mi  
Prairietown Portal to Golden Eagle Inn: .08 mi  
Golden Eagle Inn to Welcome Center: .09 mi  
Welcome Center to Civil War Journey: .30 mi  
Welcome Center to Treetop Outpost: .30 mi

# Conner Prairie Guiding Principals

- **Mission:** Conner Prairie is a unique historic place that **inspires curiosity and fosters learning** by providing **engaging** and individualized experiences for **everyone**.
- **Vision:** Conner Prairie will **expand the boundaries** of our historical and natural resources by **exploring, celebrating,** and **improving the human experience**.
- **Values:** **Heart** for the **Past**, a **Head** for the **Present**, and **Eye** to the **Future**.



# Conner Prairie Guiding Principals

## Aspirational Goal:

Changing the way the world views and uses museums.



# Conner Prairie DEAI Promise

*Conner Prairie is a place where the doors are always open to a diversity of voices and limitless experiences.*

## DEAI Promise Statement Implementation



**Where We Want to Be by 2024:** Recognized as an Inclusive Organization both Internally & Externally



**Giving Back** – Access Pass, Free Outreach Programs, Fellowships, Prairieships, and Field Trip Scholarships

# Conner Prairie DEAI Promise

- Conner Prairie's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) action plan has allowed Conner Prairie's focus on inclusion to positively impact the well-being of the communities we serve.

# Conner Prairie DEAI Promise

Some of these initiatives include:

- **Memory Cafes** (Dementia and cognitive disorders)
- **Deaf Heritage Days** (sitewide programming with ASL interpreters and staff working hand-in-hand)
- **Work with the autism and disability communities** to create numerous programs (exhibits, family days, education fairs, etc.)
- **Hiring** employees and volunteers on the spectrum
- **Indiana's first fully inclusive playground** for children of all abilities to play side by side
- November/December 2019 AAM Museum magazine article Inclusion at the Heart of Well-Being



# Conner Prairie DEAI Promise

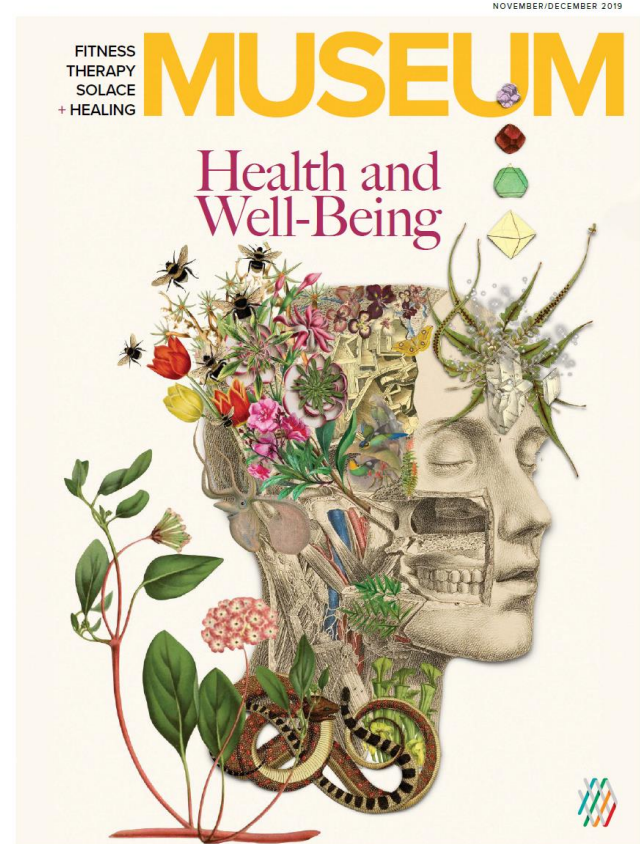
- November/December 2019 AAM **Museum** magazine article  
*Inclusion at the Heart of Well-Being*



## Inclusion at the Heart of Well-Being

Conner Prairie's focus on inclusion has led to community partnerships and programs that positively impact the well-being of its community.

By Norman Burns



# BACA and Jimmy's Exhibit

Our **DEAI approach** at Conner Prairie involves goals for **community based programming** and **employment opportunities**. Our partnership with **Behavior Analysis Center for Autism (BACA)** actually accomplishes both goals.

- Through our relationship with BACA, a young man has worked closely with our development and exhibits departments since November 2016. We gained a volunteers and dedicated family.
- In March 2019 Jimmy's art work was featured in a temporary exhibition called ***Through Jimmy's Eyes: Conner Prairie*** and was the centerpiece of a larger **March Disability Awareness Month** exhibition at Conner Prairie in **partnership** with the **City of Fishers** and the **Fishers Art Council**.



# Conner Prairie Memory Café

Conner Prairie created a **partnership** with **CICOA Aging and In-Home solutions** and **Dementia Friends Indiana** to begin hosting unique **Memory Café** programs on Conner Prairie's historic grounds.

Monthly programs have **different themes** with **purposeful activities** that help to **promote conversation** in order to **help recall lost memories**. Some of the most popular program themes have been:

- Holiday music, toys, and table top games
- Visits to the animal encounter barn
- Live jazz music and dancing
- Churning butter and making cornbread over the hearth.

**These programs are completely free to the public.**



Memory Café at Conner Prairie is a safe and welcoming space for individuals with Alzheimer's or any other form of dementia and their caregivers and loved ones.

EVERY FOURTH SATURDAY OF THE MONTH  
1PM -2PM

Upcoming Memory Café Days:

SEPTEMBER 25, OCTOBER 23, NOVEMBER 27, DECEMBER 18

In Partnership With:



This is a free program  
Register at [www.connerprairie.org](http://www.connerprairie.org) or  
email [vanvoorst@connerprairie.org](mailto:vanvoorst@connerprairie.org)

# Conner Prairie Memory Café

## Memory Café Testimonial

“In the spring of 2019 we took our Memory Café out to the Animal Encounters barn to visit some of the newborn lambs and goats. There was one particular gentleman who was fairly quiet the entire time before we got to the barn. He looked like he didn’t want to be there. However, once we stepped into the barn his entire demeanor changed. Once he stepped into the barn and smelled, heard and saw the animals, he became more social. He told me about the time he and his brother were riding the hay lift up to the barn loft, his brother fell and broke his arm.

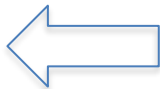
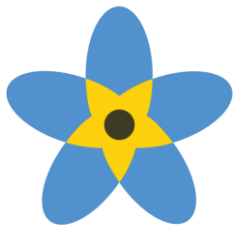
When we left the barn, he was smiling and thanked us for a good time.”

- Kelsey VanVoorst – Manager of Outreach and Community Engagement – Conner Prairie



# Dementia Friendly Practices

- In addition to the public programs, over 30 Conner Prairie staff members were trained in **'Dementia Friendly Practices'** between 2018 and 2019.
- This was a 90 minute training session that covered the signs of Dementia and Alzheimer's, and how one can be supportive of a loved one who may have the disease.



Staff who have attended the training wear a sticker with the Dementia Friends logo on their nametag in case any guest needs assistance or is curious about Conner Prairie's Dementia Friendly Practices.

# Sensory Friendly Programming

Conner Prairie has a variety of **Sensory Friendly Opportunities for guests** to take advantage of throughout the calendar year.

- The second Sunday of every month is **Sensory Friendly Sunday**. Admission is free from 10am-12pm. Any components of Conner Prairie exhibits that make loud noises or have bright lights are turned down and dimmed.
- There are **six quiet space boxes** spread around the grounds that can be utilized by anyone who may need a moment to decompress in a safe and quiet space.
- On December 11, 2021 Conner Prairie will host its second annual **Sensory Friendly Santa**. Guests can approach Santa at their own speed and have the opportunity to decorate their own holiday cookie.



# Deaf Heritage Day

In 2019 and 2021 Conner Prairie **partnered** with the **Indiana School for the Deaf** and **LUNA Language Services** to provide **Deaf Heritage Day**.

- The Indiana School for the Deaf provided a presentation in the Prairietown school house about the **history of the ISD**.
- **LUNA provided ASL interpreters** that were spread across Conner Prairie's property to speak with guests that took part in the special day.
- This even coincided with **ISD's Homecoming** weekend, and guests were given reduced admission to Conner Prairie



# Ag Adventure Playground

On June 16, 2020, Conner Prairie opened a new playground called **Ag Adventures Playground** at Estridge Family Park – a fully-accessible playground created in partnership with Unlimited Play.

- **Unlimited Play** is passionate about creating **play environments designed with people of all shapes, sizes, and abilities in mind.** Accessible playgrounds are transformative spaces where each of us is empowered to reach our full potential. When we can all play together, we make our community – and the world – a better place.







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# Sesame Place – World's First

- Team members receive periodical training in the following areas:
  - Sensory Awareness
  - Motor Skills
  - Autism Overview
  - Program Development
  - Social Skills
  - Communication
  - Environment
  - Emotional Awareness



*Other certified SeaWorld properties since Sesame Place's 2018 certification: SeaWorld Orlando, Aquatica Orlando*



February 12, 2019

This training certificate is awarded to

***Brandon Thom***

in recognition of completing 4 CE hours in the field of autism

*This certificate is awarded to professionals working with individuals with cognitive disabilities in the education, healthcare, and travel industries*

x   
SIGNED, Myron Pincomb, Board Chairman



## SENSORY LEVEL SUMMARY

1 = low sensory stimulation, 10 = high sensory stimulation\*

OPEN SEASONALLY

TYPE	ATTRACTIONS	TOUCH	TASTE	SOUND	SMELL	SIGHT
	Let's Play Together	3	1	4.5	1	4
	The Magic of Art	3	1	4.5	1	4
	Elmo The Musical LIVE!	3	1	4.5	1	4.5
	Neighborhood Street Party Parade	5	1	6	1	6
	Neighborhood Street Party Night Parade	5	1	6	1	6.5
	Elmo The Musical - LIVE - Halloween!	3	1	4.5	1	4.5
	The Not-Too-Spooky Howl-O-Ween Radio Show	3	1	5	1.5	4
	"Who Said Boo?" Show	3	1	4.5	1	4
	Neighborhood Street Party Halloween Parade	5	1	6	1	6
	1-2-3 Christmas Tree Show	2.5	1	5	1	5
	A Sesame Street Christmas Show	2.5	1	4.5	1	4
	Elmo's Christmas Wish Show	2	1	4.5	1	4
	Elmo The Musical LIVE Christmas Show	3	1	4.5	1	4.5
	Neighborhood Street Party Christmas Parade	5	1	6	1	6
	Dine with Elmo & Friends	3.5	5	3.5	5	3
	Christmas Dine with Elmo	3.5	5	3.5	5	3
	Dine with Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer	3	1	3	1	3
	Sweet Treats with Santa	3.5	5	3.5	5	3
	Meet the Sesame Street Character Photo Op	3	1	3	1	3
	Meet Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer	2	1	2	1	2.5
	Santa's Furry Workshop	2	1	1	1	2.5

## Online resource center:

- Sensory Guide
- Welcome Videos
- Designation Details
- In-Park Resources and Trip Planning



# Challenges... Successes...



# Questions?

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