

Dear IZE Members,

At the Business Meeting of the 18th IZE Conference 2006 I officially take over the position of IZE Past President previously held by Annette Berkovits. With great pleasure I handed over the IZE organisation to our brand new IZE President Stephen McKeown, head of the Education Department of the very supportive Chester Zoo UK.

The time when I led IZE as President was the professional highlight in my thirty year career as a zoo educator. Together with my excellent board we were able to improve the IZE organisation greatly.

Maybe the biggest professional improvement was the realisation of an IZE Central Office in Bern. Thanks to the yearly attendance of IZE board members to the WAZA Conferences, the relationship with this top zoo body was and still is very good. In 2004, they warmly accepted my request to facilitate and pay the costs of a central office. Three months later Silvia Geser was selected to start the IZE Central Office from scratch. Silvia took over the membership and financial administration from Gerda Vest Hansen, who was the very dedicated IZE Treasurer for more than ten years. Silvia is now the 'spider in the web' for all kinds of work related to the administration, the IZE Journal, the elections, the archive, the mailings, the organisation of the IZE Conferences, etc.

Also important was the realisation of the IZE Grants for educators from developing countries to attend the IZE Conferences which are held in places like Hong Kong and Pretoria. The participation of the IZE Grant winners proved to be enriching to the conferences. Often their participation is an important starting point for a long-term relationship with colleagues from all over the world.

Of great value for IZE is the improvement of cooperation with WAZA, EAZA, ARAZPA, AZA, SEAZA, PAAZAB, AMACZOOA, ALPZA and CBSG. This all resulted in much more acceptance and respect for IZE. Today it is almost a privilege to become a board member of IZE.

In 2006 many things were organised. There was an election resulting in an almost complete board with only two vacancies, which soon will be fulfilled. About 120 participants joined the extremely successful and very well organised 18th IZE Conference, hosted by the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa. During that conference many ideas were brought up to improve IZE even more in the coming years.

Yes, Stephen McKeown stepped in as President during an exciting time. The coming decades will be crucial for humans. When educators and other communicators are not able to create an urgent awareness that a sustainable way of life is the only key to survive...we will be extinct.

So please, give Stephen and all the IZE Board Members all your support and dedication. Only together can we save our future and the future of planet Earth.

For me it was an honour to serve you as President.

With warm regards,

Chris Peters;
IZE Past President