

“Mane” EVENT

CONNECTING CONSERVATION & COMMUNITY

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The Houston Zoo successfully connected two divergent worlds
GRAPHIC DESIGN + ANIMAL WELFARE
through a unique program called, the “Mane Event”

GOALS

Zoos are often looked to as resources for raising awareness and reaching diverse audiences through their programming. The Houston Zoo had the goal to connect two divergent worlds - graphic design and animal welfare - and did so through a unique program called, the “Mane Event.”

In October of 2012, the Houston Zoo partnered with the University of Houston's graphic communications program (UH GAP, which includes both alumni and students). The goal of this partnership was to help promote awareness of the Zoo's conservation programs through a poster competition.

METHODS

U of H graphic design alumni were asked to submit a poster entry that called attention to one of twelve conservation programs the Houston Zoo supports. The most beautiful and effective designs for each of the twelve programs were selected by a panel of judges, and were then displayed at the “Mane” Event poster show, hosted by the Houston Zoo. Guests at the event had the opportunity to donate a small amount to vote for the “People’s Choice” announced at the end of the night. Additional funds were generated by selling large, framed copies of each design, as well as smaller versions of the winning posters. The ten remaining winning posters were then auctioned at the Houston Zoo's Conservation Gala a few days later. All proceeds from the “Mane” Event and poster auction supported conservation programs at the Houston Zoo, as well as provided scholarship funds for University of Houston students to continue their education.

In addition to the professional entries to the show, a student portion was included that highlighted conservation posters created by University of Houston Graphics Communication seniors.

OUTCOME

The “Mane” Event created an opportunity for graphic design professionals and students to come together to learn from each other's work as well as educate themselves on the Zoo's involvement in conservation initiatives around the world. In partnering with the University of Houston's alumni and student groups, the Houston Zoo was able to reach a large, untapped community, not typically exposed to wildlife conservation.

The poster show was a great success in promoting conservation awareness in the local graphic design community, as well as raising funds for the Zoo's conservation programs, and would be an easily adaptable program for any institution wanting to tap into a new group of supporters.

The success of the “Mane” Event has proven that zoos are able to reach varying audiences through creative programming and collaborative partnerships which results in increased funding and enhanced understanding of our core mission: connecting people and conserving wildlife.