



**Greater Northern Lehigh Chamber of Commerce
Business History Form for Business Spotlight**

Business Name & Address:

Lehigh Valley Zoo
5150 Game Preserve Road, P.O. Box 519
Schnecksville, PA 18078

Other Location:

N/A

Phone: 610-799-4171; **Fax:** 610-799-4170; **Website:** www.lvzoo.org

Management, staff and/or officers you would like mentioned:

Richard D. Molchany, President
Lehigh Valley Zoological Society

Product or Services:

Wildlife conservation, conservation science education programs aligned with Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content, and a family-friendly recreational resource for our community. Lehigh Valley Zoo is home to more than 294 animal ambassadors representing over 88 species. The Zoo's animal collection includes 24 species classified as endangered, threatened, or species of concern. Lehigh Valley Zoo is open to the public year-round. General attendance at Lehigh Valley Zoo grew from 63,000 visitors in 2005 to over 125,000 visitors in 2012 and over 35,000 students participated in our formal conservation education programs – Smart FUN! In 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 Lehigh Valley Zoo was voted Best Family Day Trip in The Morning Call's Readers' Choice Awards.

What is unique about this business?

In an increasingly urban society, what better place is there for children to develop compassion for animals and nature than at the Zoo? A child growing up in the concrete city might not know the joys of rolling over a log to discover what's under it, learn to slither like a snake or tuck like a turtle, or have a "nose to beak" encounter with a penguin. The purpose of education at Lehigh Valley Zoo is to inspire and cultivate an informed community of conservation stewards. Participation in a Zoo education program is a proven way to get children excited about science and environmental education has also been proven to positively impact literacy and math skills. The Zoo provides a unique and highly valuable learning experience; Zoo grounds are truly a living classroom where science comes to life and students of all ages can actually experience science first-hand taught by highly skilled conservation educators. In the last ten years, AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums formally trained more than 400,000 teachers, supporting science curricula with effective teaching materials and hands-on opportunities. 100% of the schools within Lehigh County participate in educational programming with Lehigh Valley Zoo. Lehigh Valley Zoo is listed as an educational improvement organization under the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC).

Lehigh Valley Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the international organization that sets the highest standards for zoos and aquariums. With more than 220 accredited members, representing the top ten percent of zoos and aquariums in North America, the AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation and a link to helping animals in their native habitats. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums enhance local and regional economies, collectively generating \$16 billion in annual economic activity and supporting more than 142,000 jobs. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums attract more than 179 million visitors every year. Approximately 50 million visitors are children, making accredited zoos and aquariums essential family-friendly, community-based assets.

Lehigh Valley Zoo is proud of its educational partnership with the joint Veterinary Technician Program at Lehigh Carbon Community College and Northampton Community College that allows the Zoo to provide an AZA-accredited facility that can accommodate students for regular training visits and get hands-on clinical experience with wild and exotic animals. Graduates of the successful joint Veterinary Technician Program are prepared to sit for the veterinary technician national board examination. Students that pass the exam may obtain certification. This program has received full accreditation from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

When and where was the business started?

As a non-profit organization, Lehigh Valley Zoological Society is nine years young, but as a treasured community landmark, our history spans over a century. Founded in 1906 by General Harry C. Trexler, a local industrialist, the Trexler Game Preserve has educated and entertained more than five million people. General Trexler played a significant role in saving the North American Bison from extinction by providing a place where both bison and elk could roam freely. In 1935, the County of Lehigh took ownership of the Preserve, and in 1974, construction began on the Preserve's 29-acre Children's Zoo. In 2004, the Lehigh Valley Zoological Society assumed management of the Zoo, as well as the daily management of the bison and elk herd in the picturesque 1,100-acre Trexler Nature Preserve.

Brief history or highlights through the years.

- April 6, 2013: Lehigh Valley Zoo will introduce *North American Trail*. The exhibit concept will showcase native North American species and educate Zoo visitors about animals that are part of their national heritage. Founding exhibit partners: Lehigh Valley Zoo, County of Lehigh, The Morning Call, and First Niagara.
- 2012: Lehigh Valley Zoo opened *Farm in the Zoo*, an interactive exhibit area where kids of all ages can celebrate Pennsylvania's number one industry – agriculture, and make a physical connection with domestic animals and learn how they are cared for on a farm. Founding exhibit partners: Lehigh Valley Zoo, County of Lehigh, The Morning Call, and First Niagara.
- 2012: Lehigh Valley Zoo held our Inaugural Wildlife Conservation Award Presentation. The Zoo's conservation award celebrates individuals and organization who proactively act on behalf of wildlife and nature to inspire the next generation of conservation stewards through conservation, education, and recreation.
- 2011: In partnership with The Century Fund and Spillman Farmer Architects, Lehigh Valley Zoo conducted vision workshops to develop a comprehensive master plan that will help chart the Zoo's future and strategically align our programs to create the next generation of conservation stewards.

- 2010: Lehigh Valley Zoo opened *Los Lobos – Mexican Gray Wolf* exhibit. The Zoo chose to be part of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's international recovery program for Mexican gray wolves because they are the most endangered wolves in North America. The Mexican gray wolves living at the Zoo are part of AZA's wildlife conservation program called a Species Survival Plan (SSP) to conserve a select and typically threatened or endangered species population. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is working with Lehigh Valley Zoo to reintroduce captive-born wolves into the wild. Founding exhibit partners: Lehigh Valley Zoo, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wolf Conservation Center, Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP), County of Lehigh, and The Morning Call.
- 2009: Lehigh Valley Zoo dedicated the *Jaindl Penguin Exhibit* home to a flock of endangered African Penguins.

What is the goal of owner and future plans?

The Zoo's objective is to establish itself as a key Lehigh Valley cultural institution. Continued professionalization of programs and operations, moderate expansion of animal exhibits, and improvement of guest amenities and site infrastructure are central priorities. Enhanced partnerships with local and regional government, corporate citizens and private contributors will be vital to position the Zoo within the community and to achieve its goals with regard to new exhibit development and modernizing its facilities. Expanded partnerships with wildlife conservation organizations such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Pennsylvania Game Commission will help the Zoo deliver critical wildlife conservation messages to Zoo guests. Broad-based partnerships with other nonprofit organizations such as the Lehigh Valley Children's Center, Boys & Girls Clubs, and the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts will enable the Zoo to expand our reach to engage and educate underserved communities with Zoo Activity Programs both at the Zoo and offsite. The citizens of Lehigh County can be proud of the educational and entertainment value that our AZA-accredited Lehigh Valley Zoo provides to enhance the community's quality of life.