

# GOTTA BOWL!



## I hate bowling! I never go bowling.

Maybe it's because I'm so bad at it. Breaking 100 would be a really big deal for me.

More likely it's the embarrassment factor. Standing alone at the end of the lane imagining that everyone is watching you (they're actually watching their beer and nachos).

What if you let go of the ball too soon and it flies off behind you into the midst of the innocent bystander (I've done that)?

What if your fingers get stuck in the ball and you go sprawling down the lane after it (I've done that)?

What if you throw the ball so hard and so off target that it skips out of the gutter into the next lane (I've done that)?

What if your pants fall down (so far I've only done that in my recurring nightmares)?

Despite this fear bordering on paranoia I do go bowling once a year. I wouldn't miss Bowling for Rhinos.

It's been almost 30 years since I was officially a zoo keeper. But, like most former keepers, I still feel that I'm a zoo keeper. I'm just a zoo keeper who's doing a different job.

I have a great deal of pride towards AAZK and the zoo keeping profession. I see so many AAZK Chapters involved in local, national, and international conservation efforts. I know so many keepers that have gone on to change the world. Laurie Marker, Arnaud Desbiez, Norm Gershenz, just to name a few. My favorite conference to attend is the Zoos and Aquariums Committing to Conservation Conference. A meeting that was started by zoo keepers who felt zoos should be doing more for conservation.

But, in my mind, there's no doubt that the greatest conservation accomplishment of keepers has been Bowling for Rhinos. A program that has made a significant difference in the fight to save vanishing species. A program that was initiated by keepers; sustained by keepers; nurtured, grown, and evolved by keepers.

The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens AAZK Chapter is one of only a handful of Chapters that has participated in every single BFR since its inception. But, not a single one of our current keepers/bowlers was here when the event started. Another great thing about BFR – it has been carried on through a generation change. The keepers have changed, the passion and dedication hasn't.

As director of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens I want to see our AAZK Chapter succeed in their efforts to make BFR bigger and better every year (they've broken their own fundraising record for the past two years in a row). I want everyone in the zoo to participate and the zoo to devote resources to help make it a success. But, I walk a fine line. If we help too much it becomes a "zoo event" rather than an "AAZK event".

That can't happen. BFR is about conservation, it's about rhinos and other wildlife, but, more than anything else it's about zoo keepers.

Congratulations AAZK on 25 years of Bowling for Rhinos. I will see you in the bowling alley. I'll be the one holding tightly on to his pants.

**Tony Vecchio**  
Director, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

# 2015

## Bowling for Rhinos Conservation Resource Grant

# Now accepting applications!

The AAZK Conservation Committee is pleased to announce that we are now accepting applications for the Bowling For Rhinos Conservation Resource Fund for up to \$10,879.70. The application materials and grant stipulations can be found on the AAZK website under the Bowling For Rhino's FAQ's page.

Applications are due 1 June 2015.  
Specific questions can be obtained by  
contacting [Wendy.Lenhart@aazk.org](mailto:Wendy.Lenhart@aazk.org).



Photo by Patty Pearthree

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# BOWLING FOR RHINOS

**Patty Pearthree, BFR National Program Manager**

I first visited Kenya in 1991 after being awarded the prize of a free two-week trip to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. I had raised the most money in the U.S. and Canada during the first annual AAZK-sponsored Bowling For Rhinos (BFR) event. As it is with many, it was a life-changing trip for me. I was able to share the trip with my husband, Herbie, who has tirelessly supported me in all my ventures. I could not have been your BFR Program Manager for the last 25 years without his unending support.

The dedication of the Craig family (owners of Lewa) and Anna Merz (co-founder of the original rhino sanctuary) to conservation was extraordinary. Their vision was to have the surrounding communities benefit from wildlife conservation and this became the key to their success. As they shared their passion with us, we soon became lifelong conservationists and had the bug to help all we could.

BFR supported only Lewa in the beginning, raising about \$100,000 annually with support from 45 Chapters. Our success grew over the years. Lewa was a 10,000-acre rhino sanctuary back then in the African bush at the foothills of Mt. Kenya. Lewa and BFR grew over the years. Lewa is now home to 15% of Kenya's black rhino population and the world's largest population of Grevy's zebra. Lewa is now 65,000 acres that are a small part of the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT). This

now protects six million acres of wildlife habitat on communal lands through The Nature Conservancy.

In 1993, Anna Merz asked if AAZK could expand its funding efforts to try to help save all five species of rhino from extinction. In 1994, we expanded our funding efforts to include Ujung Kulon National Park in Java, Indonesia to help protect the Javan rhino. Again, Herbie and I were able to visit this amazing part of the world and trek through this lowland tropical rainforest. My trip was funded by the Minnesota Zoo and a grant through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

As BFR became more successful we were able to expand even further in 1997 by adding National Parks in Sumatra, Indonesia to save Sumatran Rhinos. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided a grant that allowed me to travel again to Indonesia with a crew of Minnesota Conservation officers and television crews. We traveled for days into the tropical rainforests of Java where our journey took us to a remote village that had only seen one white man 50 years ago and never a white woman. We were quite the spectacle for a couple of days.

In Indonesia, we now protect nearly 1.5 million acres of crucial lowland rainforest habitat for the survival of the Javan and Sumatran rhinos and other species living

in their ecosystems including Sumatran tigers, elephants, tapirs, Javan gibbons and sun bears. It is one of the most biologically diverse places on the planet and BFR played a huge role in saving a bit of it!

I ventured back to Lewa several times (on my own dime) as I felt I couldn't speak to the Association if I didn't have firsthand information. Now, I voluntarily lead groups of zoo keepers, docents, family and friends to Lewa each year. I am able to spread the word about Bowling For Rhinos and conservation while I show folks firsthand how their fundraising dollars are spent. As each returns home, they bring with them the passion to help Bowling For Rhinos grow and become more successful. Many have gone on to increase the fundraising success at their zoos or start up new events.

Many of you have now visited Lewa yourselves by winning trips through BFR or by traveling with one of the zoo groups. I hope you all get to visit one day.

We also now support Action for Cheetahs in Kenya (ACK). This supports habitat around Lewa that creates a buffer zone from poachers. ACK works to educate communities of the importance of wildlife so rhino benefit by sharing the same habitat as the cheetah.

In addition, BFR supports a conservation grant program that benefits rhino conservation in the wild. This program allowed us to expand to include supporting projects to help save the Indian rhino, finally granting Anna Merz's lifelong wish of AAZK saving all five species of rhino.

Our support of our three conservation partners, Lewa, IRF & ACK has helped enormously in the anti-poaching war and habitat protection. As our fundraising success increases we can begin focusing on combating the demand-side of rhino poaching. Decreasing the demand for rhino horn and elephant ivory is the direction we are moving towards in conservation efforts. But we must always keep our finger in the hole in the dam against poaching and never let our guard down. Our conservation partners are now able to make strides in this direction due to our fundraising success. You will hear from "Breaking The Brand", an organization whose mission is to combat the demand-side of rhino poaching. It will be interesting to see the results of this new direction.

I am so proud to have served as your National BFR Program Manager for over 25 years. BFR now helps save all five species of rhino plus everything from orchids to sea turtles to elephants. I had the unique opportunity of being involved with BFR as it evolved from protecting a 10,000 acre rhino sanctuary to protecting over seven million acres of wildlife habitat in some of the most unique ecosystems in the world. We have raised over \$5.4 million with EVERY PENNY going straight to conservation in the field where it is most needed to save wildlife for future generations. Bowling for Rhinos saves diverse wildlife such as cheetah, Sumatran tigers, Malayan sun bears, tapirs, Javan gibbons, leopard tortoise, scarlet-chested sunbird and the coral reefs, just to name a few. Together we have helped to save countless species from extinction. Here's to the next 25 years!

Our #1 BFR goal for 2015 is to have all AAZK Chapters participate in "Bowling For Rhinos". Any type of fundraiser is welcome. Some Chapters have been very successful with "Wii Bowling", "Run/Race For Rhinos", "Rummage For Rhinos", "Rock'n For Rhinos", "Sailing For Rhinos"...and the list goes on. All donations of course are always welcome **and count as participation**. Remember, it takes about five consecutive years for a fundraising event to catch on in your community so it is important to keep rolling with BFR in order to be successful.

Our #2 BFR Goal is to increase our fundraising success each year. We raised over \$581,000 in 2014 so we will get there working together. If we increase the overall size of the "conservation pie" each of the organizations we support will receive a larger amount of money. We have already raised over \$5.4 million to date **so let's aim for reaching \$6 million this year-our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year!**

Now is the time to begin planning your event for 2015. Form a committee and select a date if you have not done so already. **If you are able**, try to pick a date **in early May**. The more events we can have around the country together, the more PR we are likely to receive. Please see <http://aazk.org> for helpful hints on holding a successful event. You will need to log onto the members-only site in order to access most BFR info.

Please let me know the **date of your event and your contact information asap including e-mail address** so I can update the website. All three organizations who receive BFR funding (IRF, Lewa and Action For Cheetahs in Kenya) would like to help you "grow" your event but we need this information to do so. If you plan to make a donation rather than hold an event, please let me know. 🐘

Patty Pearthree receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from Bob Cisneros in 2013. Photo by Bill Konstant. All other photos by Patty Pearthree.



**Please contact Patty Pearthree: ppear3@gmail.com.**

Please also join the BFR Coordinator yahoo groups e-mail by e-mailing your request to Barbie Wilson at [rhinobarbie@hotmail.com](mailto:rhinobarbie@hotmail.com). We can then inform you more quickly of important updates/events, etc.

**NEW ADDRESS FOR 2015:**

Deadline to send in BFR funds for trip winners is September 1

Checks payable to: "AAZK,Inc-BFR"

Please send all BFR funds to:

Ed Hansen, CEO  
AAZK Office c/o BFR  
8476 E. Speedway Blvd., Suite #204  
Tucson, AZ 85710

Please also e-mail a scanned copy of the check & financial statement (found on website) to: [ppear3@gmail.com](mailto:ppear3@gmail.com) ESPECIALLY if it is close to the deadline! If you have straggler checks you are waiting on, I can add them to your total at a later date.

Deadline for all funds to be included in the 2015 BFR totals is December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Please do NOT use the website BFR donation button to send in your Chapter's BFR funds. This is meant for the general public's use. There is a fee that AAZK incurs when the donation button is used.

The \$25 Administrative Fee check should be a separate check mailed to the above address. This fee enables BFR to be one of the only conservation organizations in the country where "100% of every donation goes directly to conservation".