Mike Jones stood on a wooden deck 6 feet off the ground waiting. He had a cracker in his hand. Suddenly a head three times the size of his appeared over the railing. Then there was an 18-inch-long tongue sticking out seeking the cracker. This was a giraffe experience so close that most people backed away at first. There aren’t many places in the world where you can get this close to captive giraffes and actually feed them. Now the Milwaukee County Zoo is one of those places, thanks to Miller Brewing Company.

Jones, who is a senior vice president at Miller, was at the Platypus Society/VIP premiere of the Miller Brewing Company Giraffe Experience to open this new exhibit. “We sponsored the giraffe experience to do our small part to enhance quality of life for people in Milwaukee and Wisconsin,” he said. “Giraffes are beautiful, gentle animals, and the opportunity to participate in an exhibit that allows people to go nose to nose with them was simply too good to pass up.”

Miller Brewing Company’s sponsorship of the new exhibit is only the latest in a nearly quarter-century relationship with the Zoo and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM). This is the 17th year that Miller has sponsored the ZSM’s Birdies & Eagles Golf Tournament, the second largest annual fund-raiser for the ZSM. Miller also has supported the ZSM’s largest yearly fund-raiser, Zoo Ball, for 23 years with corporate tables and free beer (which Miller also provides at the golf tournament). Miller also has been the sponsor of the Oceans of Fun Seal and Sea Lion Show at the Zoo for more than 15 years. In addition, it has supported ZSM education programs over the years.

“The Zoo is a tremendous community asset that not only enhances the quality of life but also provides critical educational and conservation services across all spectrums,” said Jones.

Miller is a longtime corporate member of the Platypus Society, and Mike Jones is a member of the Zoological Society’s Board of Directors. “Over the last few years, I have gained more than I have given as a Board member. Not only have I made some lasting friendships, but I also have learned a tremendous amount about the opportunities and challenges of operating a world-class zoo. I have great confidence in our ability to continue to enhance the entire Zoo experience, principally because of the high caliber of the staff and management of both the Zoo and the Zoological Society,” he said.

Jones, who grew up in a family of 11 children (“I had four brothers and six sisters.”) in Milwaukee’s Washington Heights neighborhood, remembers the Zoo fondly from childhood. “My mom used to take us to the Zoo at least once every summer and every winter, and we were so into the sights, sounds (and smells) that we never once complained about it being too hot or too cold. My three children (Mike, Charlie and Sarah) also go to the Zoo at least once every summer and winter and, not surprisingly, they also never seem to notice the heat or cold, either. My oldest is now driving. So he actually goes to the Zoo on his own with his girlfriend.”

So what’s Mike Jones’ favorite animal? “Well, given that we have so many long-neck bottles here at Miller Brewing Company, I’m naturally inclined to favor the long-necked giraffe,” he quipped.

By Paula Brookmire
It was an African-style sunny day as the giraffes roamed their grassland looking for food. They didn’t have to look far. Several people were eager to feed them at eye level from the 6-foot-high deck in their new exhibit at the Milwaukee County Zoo. About 400 guests attended the Platypus Society/VIP premiere of the exhibit, called the Miller Brewing Company Giraffe Experience. Cutting the ribbon on July 10 to open the new exhibit were (from left) Dr. Gil Boese, Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) president emeritus and director of the giraffe capital campaign project; John Sapp, ZSM Board president; Dashal Young, the Milwaukee County Executive’s director of community relations; Zoo Director Chuck Wikenhauser; Dr. Bert Davis, the ZSM’s CEO; and Mike Jones, a senior vice president for Miller Brewing Company and a ZSM Board member. The exhibit is the eighth of nine projects in the capital campaign to improve the Zoo. The campaign, run jointly by the ZSM and Milwaukee County, has changed more than 25% of the Zoo’s grounds and exhibits in the last five years.
Platypus/VIP Premiere: Giraffes

Right: Donna Rahlf stands in front of the new giraffe yard at the Zoo. Rahlf is the office manager of Metals USA, a corporate Platypus Society member.

Jim and Debra Baker, camera in tow, were photographed in front of the new giraffe yard during the premiere. Jim Baker was taking his own photos of the Zoo’s three giraffes: Malinde, Rahna and Bahatika. Jim Baker is CEO of Curtis Ambulance, a corporate Platypus Society member that provides emergency services at the Zoo.
Recruit New Platypus Members & We’ll Toast Your Efforts

Persuade a friend or colleague to join the Platypus Society OR upgrade your own membership by a minimum of $250, and receive a thank-you gift. Kathy Hust, one of our steering-committee members who is a partner in Calistoga Cellars winery in California’s Napa Valley, personally will select a bottle of wine as a gift for you. We also will include a pair of etched wine glasses bearing the Platypus Society logo. If you are a corporate member, you might consider upgrading from Associate level ($1,000-$1,499) to Supporting level ($1,500-$1,999), for example. Patron members might consider upgrading from Ambassador’s Circle ($500-$999) to Conservationists’ Circle ($1,000-$1,499).

As a Platypus member, you enjoy many benefits, such as attending premieres of new or touring exhibits, taking a behind-the-scenes tour of the Zoo, participating in the Platypus Family Picnic, dining on gourmet food at the annual awards banquet, receiving priority registration for education programs, and visiting the Zoo year-round with family and friends. Your membership enables the Zoological Society of Milwaukee to carry out its mission to conserve wildlife and endangered species, educate people about the importance of wildlife and the environment, and to support the Milwaukee County Zoo.

A Platypus membership helps the Zoo remain one of the premier zoological gardens in the United States. We need to grow the Platypus Society, and you can help.

Call Katie Hess, annual giving coordinator, at 414-276-0843 for more information.

On behalf of everyone at the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, thank you for your support. The wine and wine glasses are just a small way that we can toast your support.

Calendar of Events

Oct. 5
Platypus Society Awards Dinner, sponsored by Sattell, Johnson, Appel & Co. CPAs, LLC; 6 p.m., Milwaukee County Zoo. Look for your invitation in the mail.

Oct. 20 & 21
Boo at the Zoo, sponsored by Children’s World Learning Centers, featuring Halloween activities for children. No treats this weekend. See Oct. 27 & 28.

Oct. 26
Simba Society Recognition Dinner, 6 p.m., Milwaukee County Zoo. For information on joining the Simba Society, which honors people who make planned gifts to the ZSM, please call the Development Department at (414) 276-0843.

Oct. 27 & 28
Halloween Trick-or-Treat Spooktacular, sponsored by U.S. Cellular; Oct. 27, 6-9 p.m.; Oct. 28, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.

Nov. 11 & Dec. 2
Family Free Days at the Zoo, sponsored by Jewel-Osco

Dec. 1, 2, 8, 9, 15 & 16
The Milwaukee County Zoo’s Holiday Night Lights, sponsored by AT&T, featuring the Zoological Society’s Winter Wonderland

Dec. 2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17
Breakfast and Lunch with Santa, sponsored by Racine Danish Kringles; to get on Zoo mailing list, call (414) 256-5412 after Oct. 1

Feb. 8, 2007
Zoological Society’s Wines of the World fund-raiser, 7-10 p.m., at the Zoo