



PRESS RELEASE

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North Carolina House of Representatives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Statement on the Passing of North Carolina Zoo Director Pat Simmons

Today, with deep sadness, I join the people of Randolph County, the staff of the North Carolina Zoo, and all North Carolinians in mourning the passing of Pat Simmons, Director and CEO of the North Carolina Zoo.

Pat Simmons was more than an exceptional leader she was a visionary who poured her heart into making our Zoo one of the finest in the world. For nearly a decade here in Asheboro, and over four decades in the profession, she devoted herself to caring for wildlife, conserving habitats, and inspiring generations to love and protect the natural world.

Under Pat's leadership, the North Carolina Zoo expanded its mission, strengthened its global conservation programs, and laid the groundwork for exciting new habitats like the Asia and Australia regions that will educate and amaze visitors for years to come. Her careful planning, tenacity, and bold vision ensured our Zoo would remain a treasure for future generations.

Pat's influence wasn't limited to animals and exhibits. She led with compassion, humor, and unwavering integrity. She mentored countless staff, supported women in leadership across the zoo community, and made everyone feel welcome, heard, and valued. She reminded us that protecting nature is not just a duty, but a shared privilege.

Her legacy is not just the habitats she helped build, but the lives she touched along the way.

On behalf of my office and the people I serve in Randolph County, I extend my deepest condolences to Pat's family, friends, and the entire North Carolina Zoo team. We are grateful for the years she gave us, for the beauty she preserved, and for the example she set in dedicating her life to something larger than herself.

I will miss her tremendously but her work, her spirit, and her dreams for the Zoo will live on.