Blanche Jones retired from the Zoo after 43-year career

Longtime zoo employee Blanche Jones retired Friday, July 22, following a 43-year career at Dickerson Park Zoo. Jones, 88, was the longest-serving employee working at the zoo, the Springfield-Greene County Park Board and the City of Springfield. She has held the same position, administrative assistant, throughout her entire career.

“Half my life has been spent at the zoo,” said Jones, who started working at the zoo in November 1972.

“I came to the zoo simply because I’d worked behind closed doors,” she said. “The zoo is an open place. I can get out in the fresh air, see outside at all times and even get out and take a walk.”

At first, however, she wasn’t sure she would stay.

“My first day of work, I walked into my office and saw an old typewriter that probably came over on the Mayflower,” Jones recalled. “I was used to a nice IBM model. I made it through four hours and went home, not sure I’d return. My husband said to me, ‘Don’t you think you should give it another try?’ So with a little encouragement, I made it 43 years.”

Zoo Director and Park Board Assistant Director Mike Crocker has worked closely with Jones for all of his 40 years at the zoo.

“Blanche Jones is a mainstay of the zoo,” said Crocker. “She is the epitome of dependability, she truly is,” said Crocker. “Those of us who have worked with her, that was the first thing we said. She is very detail oriented and a stickler for neatness.”

911 employee loses 100 pounds

Thanks to lifestyle changes and exercise on her own and through programs offered by inBalance, 911 Shift Supervisor Heather Morrison is about half the woman she used to be. In pounds, that is.

Morrison, 37, has lost 100 pounds and has gone from a size 26 to a size 10 since May 2015. When her father had a heart attack in February of that year, she decided it was time to get serious about getting healthy.

“I have a family predisposition to high cholesterol,” Morrison says. “I was always yo-yo dieting, but when my dad had a heart attack, I decided to make a real lifestyle change. The older I got, the more I noticed how much my weight was affecting me.”

The first lifestyle changes Morrison made were to cut out all fast food, soda (even diet soda) and sugar, and stop eating after 8 p.m. She said she sticks to about a 1,200-1,400 a day diet and keeps go-to healthy snacks with her like a banana, almonds, string cheese, yogurt or an apple with her to curb hunger pangs.

See JONES on page 3
JONES from page 1

As administrative assistant, Jones has worked on budgeting, bookkeeping, time sheets, employee records, zoo records and more.

“I do a little bit of everything,” she said. “What needs to be done gets done.”

In the last 43 years, Jones has worked under three zoo directors and four Parks directors. During that time she has seen tremendous growth at the zoo, which was much smaller in 1972, with no fence and free admission.

Jones has also experienced huge changes in office technology, from hand-written records to computers. Crocker said the conversion to digital records almost caused Jones to retire three years ago, just after her 40th anniversary with the zoo.

“There were three things coming she was worried about: electronic times sheets, an Oracle upgrade and something else,” said Crocker. “She didn’t think she could do that and she thought she’d get out of here before that happened. But I said, ‘Why don’t you stay, and we’ll take them one at a time?’ She did stay around and we were able to get those things implemented. And we were able to get three more years out of her!”

Jones used a typewriter — although not the same one she started out with in 1972.

Even in retirement, Jones plans to continue to spend time at the zoo, where her favorite animals are the elephants. Friends of the Zoo presented her a lifetime membership as a retirement gift.

“I could very well wind up as a zoo volunteer,” said Jones.

41 employees donate at June 30 blood drive

A heartfelt thank you to the awesome City employees who participated in last week’s Employee Blood Drive at Historic City Hall!

“Our goal was 40 and we ended the day with 41 donors. We hope to see everyone and more at the Aug. 25 Aaron Goddard Memorial Blood drive,” said blood drive coordinator Nikki Crisp, executive secretary for the Finance Department.

Todd Cox, Purchasing: “Hopefully blood donation can help somebody in the city who has a need for it.”

Fire Chief David Hall: “This is one of those things that’s simple and easy to do that makes a difference in our community. We’re out there, and we see first-hand the need for blood, and this is just one of those things, again, it’s just easy to do. It doesn’t take long, and it’s really NOT painful. I would encourage everybody.”

Laurie Duncan, Environmental Services: “It’s something that I do anytime I’m able to, and the City makes it very convenient for having it right here on site, and taking a little bit of time out of my day to help someone else.”

Jon Mooney, Health: “It’s a great way to give back to the community”

Lavena Pilgrim, Health: “Giving blood’s good for the community, and you never know when it’s gonna be needed. And someday YOU may need it.”
organizations will be able to sign up for a Zone 1 Job Center.

Rojas to find a location on the first floor of Cox Medical Tower. Workforce Development for a pre-apprenticeship program to offer on-the-job, on-the-project apprenticeship program to offer on-the-job, on-the-project.

The Workforce Investment Board recently approved opening a Zone 1 Job Center.

City, community launch Zone Blitz initiative July 11

The effort is called the Community Health and Wellness Challenge, which is a community-wide initiative to address poverty and its root causes.

The Zone Blitz will be an 18-month project that will attempt to ‘move the needle’ on poverty within our community. To attack a challenge that is this complex and multifaceted, it can only work if every sector of our community gets involved – it only works as a barn raising,” City Manager Greg Burris said. “For example, bringing diverse partners within our faith-based sector together to address a unifying challenge of poverty has the potential to be a ‘healing moment’ within our community. We’re more alike than different, and every faith-based organization has this in their mission.”

At the launch, Director of Workforce Development Mary Ann Rojas, announced that Springfield has been awarded a $129,000 grant from the State Department of Workforce Development for a pre-apprenticeship program to offer on-the-job, “earning while learning” training and that the Workforce Investment Board recently approved opening a Zone 1 Job Center.

Zone 1 Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson said she is most proud of the City staff and community partners who work so well together, despite busy schedules and sometimes what seem to be competing interests.

“The focus areas we identified are not necessarily easy to address: a communities health and wellness; easy access to healthy foods; safe place to lay our heads at night; miles of roadways and infrastructure to maintain; good, steady jobs; public safety; those slumlords who don’t take care of their properties and then take advantage of people who cannot afford to make waves or move somewhere else. In north Springfield, however, we are get-it-done type of people. And we have challenged ourselves, challenged our community – and I promise you, that we will GET IT DONE,” she said.

For more information about Zone Blitz and how you can get involved, visitspringfieldmo.gov/zoneblitz.

David Holtmann named interim Finance director

City Manager Greg Burris named David Holtmann to serve as interim Finance director effective July 25. Holtmann temporarily replaces Mary Mannix Decker, who announced her retirement in May. Her last day with the City was July 22.

Holtmann, who has been the City’s accounting manager for 14 years, is a Certified Public Accountant and has a bachelor’s degree in accounting and business administration from Drury University.

As accounting manager, Holtmann’s scope of duties includes supervising the Finance Department’s accounting division, where he directs the preparation of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, coordinates the work of external auditors and oversees the financial integrity of the City’s accounting system, managing more than $200 million in City investments.

Before joining the City, Holtmann was an audit manager for the Missouri State Auditor’s Office for 14 years.

Holtmann lives in Springfield with his wife, Molly, and youngest son, Peter. The Holtmanns also have three grown children: Elle, Maxwell and Lydia.

“I look forward to David continuing the high standard of financial professionalism for which the City is known,” Burris said.

Burris has formed a search committee consisting of members of the City’s Leadership Team and an external finance professional to conduct a formal search for a permanent Finance director.
HR Director Sheila Maerz announces retirement

Sheila Maerz, City of Springfield Human Resources director, announces her retirement effective Oct. 20.

Maerz joined the City of Springfield as the Human Resources director in October 1998 and is responsible for employment, classification, salary administration, payroll, benefits administration, employee relations, training and development, labor relations, safety and workers compensation. Prior to 2013, the Human Resources department was also responsible for the City’s risk management program.

Prior to working for the City of Springfield, Maerz served for nine years as the personnel/risk manager for the City of Joplin. She also served in similar capacities for the Joplin Workshops, Teledyne and Motorola, Inc.

Maerz considers her work negotiating the City’s first collective bargaining agreement with International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and Springfield Police Officers’ Association/FOP (SPOA) to be among her career’s most rewarding and challenging, and takes pride in her work guiding the City’s self-insured health plan. The financially sound plan is an important benefit for City employees and has remained stable throughout the storm of health care reform.

“Sheila’s expertise has been vital to the growth and change within the City of Springfield. Her leadership in moving us toward becoming an employer of choice will leave a lasting legacy in our community as we continue to recruit the best and the brightest,” says City Manager Greg Burris. “We wish her the best and thank her for her service to the City.”

Maerz says the environment in which HR has to navigate has changed completely over the past several years, which has made her job both challenging and rewarding.

“My successor will be blessed with high-quality Human Resource staff members, amazing outside legal counsel and long-term partnerships with several consultants vendors and third party administrators (TPAs) that make the job easier and rewarding. I will value these relationships for years to come,” she says.

Maerz and her husband Steve have three grown daughters: Samantha, an attorney in St. Louis; Jessica, a first-grade teacher with Springfield Public Schools; and Mary, a junior at Drury University.

Burris said the Human Resources director position will be posted on the City’s Web site in August.

CoSFit Games Mini challenge winners announced

What City employees may know formerly as Battle of the Boot Camps has become the CoSFit Games! Congratulations to the CoSFit Games Mini Challenge No. 3 winners, and thank you to those who came out on July 13 to participate or cheer on co-workers in the surprise “star-spangled” challenge! Participants were paired up, and Melissa Barton (Planning) and John Waldo (Parks) won the prize for doing the most jumping jacks in 2 minutes and 40 seconds: 254 combined jacks! The competition was neck and neck and had to be settled with a tie-breaker. Winners received camping chairs, and all participants left with fun, patriotic prizes and healthy snacks.

Mark your calendars for the “Back to School” challenge which will be at noon on Aug. 10. Take 15 minutes to join us for a fun fitness challenge. Healthy snacks will be available, and best of all, prizes will be awarded! All skill levels welcome. All body shapes and sizes encouraged! This will be the final minichallenge for the year, and it will be a special one. In anticipation of this surprise fitness challenge, we will be collecting donations of school supplies for Pipkin Middle School. You don’t have to participate in the fitness challenge to be part of this worthy cause. More details to come next week.

The season will culminate with the CoSFit Games at noon on Sept. 14 at Drury’s track and field. Hear from last year’s winning team on their victory!

Support Special Olympics Missouri with the Cardinals

Special Olympics Day at Hammons Field is set for Aug. 14. The game is at 2:10 p.m., and the tickets are just $10 each if you order them from SPD Officer Mark Priebe by emailing him at mpriebe@springfieldmo.gov.

Mayor Pro Tem McClure meets KISS

Mayor Pro Tem Ken McClure presented the band KISS with a proclamation in recognition of their $150,000 donation to the U.S. Chamber’s Hiring our Heroes program, which is dedicated to helping veterans, transitioning service members and spouses find meaningful employment. KISS members were also spotted trying Andy’s Frozen Custard during their stop in Springfield.

Proclamation

In recognition of the support and encouragement of all citizens to join with us in honoring the brave men and women of our military, the men and women who have served our nation’s freedom and those great heroes who have lost their lives in the pursuit of our freedom to rock and roll.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council of the City of Springfield, Missouri, do hereby proclaim July 21, 2010, as freedom to rock day.

In witness whereof, the mayor and council of the said City of Springfield have hereunto set their hands and caused the seal of said City to be hereunto affixed.

[Signature]
Why do you do what you do?
“I have a passion for skateboarding. Coming to the Skate Park and interacting with my staff and community really makes it a great experience to be at the Skate Park for me.”

What’s the best part of your job?
“The best part of my job is being able to give back to my community. I enjoy interacting and engaging with my community at the Skate Park.”

What are you passionate about?
“I’m passionate about making a difference. When I’m involved with a project at work, I want to do my best to achieve success. I feel the same way about what I do in my personal life.”

What do you admire about this organization?
“The organization as a whole is amazing. I admire the friendliness that everyone carries and willingness to help in any situation they can. I’m very lucky and proud to work for the Park Board.”

Who do you admire in this organization?
“I admire my recreation superintendent. I applaud the commitment she has to her staff and organization as a whole. My superintendent is very knowledgeable of our Park Board policies and procedures which makes her an excellent resource for anything Parks related.”

Do You Know...?
A Q&A of City of Springfield employees.
To suggest a colleague for “Do You Know...?”
e-mail thescene@springfieldmo.gov.

Daniel Villalobos
Community Recreation Supervisor,
Springfield Skate Park
Daniel has worked for the City for 1 year.

Why do you do what you do?
“I have a passion for skateboarding. Coming to the Skate Park and interacting with my staff and community really makes it a great experience to be at the Skate Park for me.”

What’s the best part of your job?
“The best part of my job is being able to give back to my community. I enjoy interacting and engaging with my community at the Skate Park.”

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Follow the GOLDEN GOOSE
It is an honor to pass along the Golden Goose Award to Maria Johnston with Parks. Maria and I have overlapped on several neighborhood projects and events. Maria is always engaging and enthusiastic whether at a meeting, neighborhood event, or planting tulips in Smith Park. She is truly someone who seems to enjoy her job! It is almost guaranteed when you see Maria she will greet you with a big smile ready to tackle on the next project. Maria, thanks for all you do for our parks and neighborhoods!

Heather Parker, Health
National Night Out promotes safe, healthy neighborhoods

6 p.m.-Sundown, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2016
Meador Park, 2500 S. Fremont Ave.

- $1 pool admission or donate a canned good for FREE pool admission (5:30-8 p.m.)
- Crime and safety informational booths
- Tour police, fire and EMS vehicles
- Prescription drug take-back
- Games and children’s activities

Springfield Police Chief Paul Williams is sending a message to criminals: neighborhoods are organized and fighting back. This year marks the fifth anniversary of a citywide National Night Out event to coincide with the national public safety event.

This free event is a result of collaboration between Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Springfield-Greene County Park Board and the City of Springfield and will bring together law enforcement, as well as agencies and organizations that promote health and safety.

This event doesn’t replace the annual neighborhood-based events, billed as Neighborhood Night Out. Individual neighborhood and homeowner associations are encouraged to hold their own events following National Night Out to allow residents to get to know their neighbors.

National Night Out celebrates the culmination of crime prevention activity in all Springfield neighborhoods: people working together in associations and other groups to prevent and address crime and other neighborhood problems. It also promotes healthy neighborhoods and encourages people to get out and get to know one another.

“It is an occasion to celebrate past successes, discuss current challenges or issues, and re-dedicate collaborative efforts with neighbors, police, businesses and others to improve the quality of life in our city,” said Chief Williams.

Last year’s National Night Out campaign involved citizens, law enforcement agencies, civic groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations and local officials from over 15,000 communities from all 50 states, U.S. territories, Canadian cities and military bases worldwide.

The Springfield Police Department uses a variety of crime prevention and community engagement strategies to increase ways that citizens can protect themselves and their property.

Community Policing is a collaborative effort between the police department and the community they serve that identifies problems of crime and disorder, and involves all elements of the community, in the search for solutions to these problems. It is founded on close, mutually beneficial ties between police and community members.

Police Area Representative (PAR) Officers use problem-oriented policing to produce long-term solutions to the problems of crime or decay in communities. Police, residents, and other agencies or organizations work together to identify and find the causes for neighborhood crime problems, then develop responses to those problems. In most cases, the responses developed through problem-oriented policing are joint police-community actions, which also involve participation by a variety of other departments within the City of Springfield. By doing this, the PAR Officers are able to resolve long-standing neighborhood issues, thereby avoiding an escalation of those specific incidents. Citizens can locate their PAR Officers at the City’s website.

Neighborhood Watch is a voluntary program organized by concerned citizens to reduce crime in their communities. Working with local law enforcement agencies, citizens can learn when and how to report suspicious activities, assist in property identification, conduct home security surveys, and implement home security measures and precautions. SPD also recently launched programs built with similar goals called Apartment Watch and Business Watch.

Crime Prevention Officers coordinate and help organize Neighborhood Watch, Business Watch and Apartment Watch groups and perform commercial and residential security surveys using established Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

Crime Prevention Officers can also present programs on varied topics including robbery prevention, drugs, residential security, commercial vandalisms and burglaries and personal safety. Crime prevention tips are also available on the SPD website, and the Crime Prevention Officers can be contacted at 417-874-2113.

Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO) is a nonprofit agency that aims to facilitate and promote the building of resilient children, healthy families and strong neighborhoods and communities through collaboration, programming and resource development. CPO has a variety of programs aimed at helping neighbors.

The Springfield-Greene County Park Board works closely with Springfield neighborhood associations, the CPO and other partners to support events and kids activities in neighborhood parks.

The City of Springfield Neighborhoods and Planning Office also provides services and support to sustain and revitalize Springfield neighborhoods. The department recently launched Great Neighborhoods, an initiative to improve quality of life and recognize neighbors who are making a difference.
MILESTONES

Promotions
Colten Harris
Project Engineer – Public Works

Ashley Grajczyk
Coord. of Epidemiological Svcs. – Health

Jennifer Adams
Community Recreation Coord. – Parks

David Cook
Christopher Roush
Kristopher Tate
Fire Lieutenants – Fire

Kenneth Edmonds
Waste Water Video Technician – Environmental Services

Joseph Gatiba
Systems Administrator – Emergency Communications

Mike Evans
David Kenyon
Erich Rogge
Justin Thorn
Marcus Walker
Bryan Welch
Police Corporals – Police

Joshua Chambers
Scott Owens
Benjamin Wahl
Fire Equipment Operators

Brian Thompson
Rescue & Salvage Specialist – Fire

Retirements
Rex Frieze
Fire Captain
Fire – 25 years

Mark Miller
Building Maintenance Worker
Airport – 10 years

Larry Morgan
Plant Maintenance Mechanic I
Environmental Services – 8 years

Steven Phillips
Fire Equipment Operator
Fire – 20 years

Patricia Rader
Zoo Keeper
Parks – 20 years

Michael Wade
Fire Captain
Fire – 25 years

FOR SALE
1988 Honda Goldwing, 1500cc with reverse, am, fm, cassette, three helmets and mic systems. A matching trailer comes with it. 106k miles. Runs great and looks great. $4000 or best offer. For more info or pictures contact Richard at 417-818-3353.

2013 Honda Shadow Phantom, Cobra Streetrod Slashdown Black Exhaust, Cobra Standard Sissy bar, Willie and Max Revolution Saddlebags, Memphis Shades Big Shot windshield with trigger locks, 2400 miles, Bought New from dealer. Next to New condition. Has been kept in Garage. Asking $5,000.00 Contact Wilma May Text 417-536-1027 or Nathaniel May Text 417-300-2405.

Bedroom Furniture: Full size mattress/adjustable bed ($100). (2) 32 inch 3 drawer oak dressers ($75), (1) 48” 6 drawer cherry dresser ($125). Call Phil at 848-8450.


Computer desk in like new-condition. Asking for $600 (New $850-$900). Contact Suzanne at 417-425-2294 or Randy at 417-425-2293 (evenings Fri - Mon) or days otherwise.

‘95 Ford Conquest – $3,000 (Ozark, MO) 95 Conquest in excellent condition; well taken care of and maintained. New tires, new generator and stove. New batteries. Call Rex or Vera at (417) 818-4586.

2Bd/2Ba Garden Level Condo in Northern Branson behind Walmart, Kohls, and Bed Bath and Beyond. All appliances stay and will leave some furniture. In the process of painting entire unit and putting down new vinyl in kitchen and baths. If I finish $73,000, if you finish (I’ll leave paint and flooring) $70,000. Call Mary at 573-747-8705 or Johnnie at 636-524-9541. Parked in Branson.

Large L-shaped simulated cherry office desk with beautiful matching hutch from office depot ($200.00). Solid oak entertainment center with pull-out swivel television holder, including a 51” TV, and lots of cabinet space and built to last a life time ($300.00). Contact Joe at 343-3117.
To: Ashley House, 911

Ashley did an amazing job dispatching for me during a pursuit. The pursuit started at Sunshine and Farm Road 129 at 1:53am. Speeds in excess of 85 MPH. Pursuit ended at Bob Barker and Jefferson. Suspects in custody.

Sincerely,
Deputy Ryan McKinley

To: Public Works

Most often, we get calls in the CRC that are negative or less than a call for some type of service. Today, I was making calls to follow up on a few service requests that had been completed. On two of those calls, I was advised of what a great job the guys did when they went out. I wanted to pass these along as well. Request 10897 was a call to trim a tree near a gentlemen’s property. He commented on how quickly they got out and what a great job they had done. He was very happy. Request 10534 was a call to clean a drainage ditch. Ms. Marshall wanted me to pass along that she was very appreciative of the attention her request had gotten and that they had done a fantastic job.

Regina Crumrine
Citizen Resource Center

Citizen Recognitions

To: Officer David Stires, SPD

We had an AC condenser stolen as well as $700+ worth of tools after months of vandalism and theft values for $10k on one of our rental properties that we are rehabbing, so our frustration level was high. Officer Stires really took the time to investigate and assess the situation and look up the history on this property, take all info from me and one of my contractors and went a step further by talking to all of the neighbors about the situation. We were there for almost and hour and he was still gathering info from neighbors. Officer Stires is a true servant to our community and a great example of how all cases should be handled. We pride ourselves on being the good guys on the north side and sacrifice a lot to make Springfield look great. It was nice to feel like we had an advocate for good from our local law enforcement.

Sincerely,
Brian Powers, Springfield

To: Matt Dwyer, Dustin Holmes, Andy Russell, Public Works

One morning, a very large limb from an oak tree in my front yard fell, landing across the entire road on South Chantilly. I wasn’t sure how quickly a response would occur, being it was a Sunday morning and July 4th weekend at that. Matt Dwyer showed up in a City truck in short order and was incredibly cordial and professional. He explained he would need a boom truck to be dispatched as the limb was larger than the police officer reported. While he waited on that truck to arrive, he cut up much of the limbs with his chainsaw all while it continued to rain. Dustin Holmes and Andy Russell then arrived in the boom truck and proceeded to cut back the limb that was still partially attached to the tree, and the three of them completely cleaned the entire area. All three employees displayed exceptional professionalism and courtesy to me and in the work they performed. They represented the City of Springfield and your department well that day, and I hope all City staff are as professional and efficient as they were.

Sincerely,
Chris Davis, Community Partnership of the Ozarks

To: Public Works - Tree Maintenance

On Tuesday, July 19, a Public Works crew in truck 6008 was cutting limbs in the 1000 block of West Webster Street. I asked them if they could cut some additional limbs which were blocking a nearby street light. They replied yes and in a short time had them cut and the light cleared. This crew of three was friendly and courteous and very professional about their work. They seemed to work well together, got the work done smoothly, and were safety conscious as they did their jobs. Please thank them for doing this extra work on a very hot day.

Thanks, nice job!
Steve Thiel

To: Springfield Fire Department

I would like to commend your firefighters that were on duty at the fire station on Grant around 11 p.m. on Saturday, July 23. My hubby (David) and I went to the KISS concert for our 34th wedding anniversary. I’m surprised we can still hear! We got turned around when we left the building, so we couldn’t find our truck. David has several health problems. Besides being an insulin dependent diabetic with lots of sudden sugar drops, most of his sweat glands have shut down, so he can’t tolerate heat very well. We were walking around looking for the truck, but actually getting further away from it. It was about 90 degrees and he was getting hot, and getting worried about a sugar drop. We saw the fire station on Grant, and saw the fire truck coming in from a call. We told them what was going on. They invited us in, gave us cold drinks and a chance to cool down, and called a taxi for us. I know they were tired, but they talked to us until the taxi came and David felt better. These guys went above the call of duty. All of them were really nice. You are lucky to have this caliber of personnel working for you. Also, Springfield is a beautiful city. We live in Prairie Grove, AR (next door to Fayetteville, AR, home of the Arkansas Razorbacks!). We plan to come back to visit when it cools off. Almost forgot ... David saw that this station had several chili cook-off trophies. He said he would like a sample of the chili ... lol!

Keep smiling!
Melanie Thomas

To: Laurie Duncan, Education Outreach Specialist

I am in Mr. Tim Tucker’s Earth Science for Teachers class this summer. I wanted to thank you for going with us on the two field trips, coming to our class and giving us the extra materials we can use in teaching, printing off the papers for me for the science notebook, and letting my class come visit your office. You are a very hard worker and I admire everything that you do! I can’t wait to finally be a teacher and call you to help me with science in my classroom.

Thank you again,
Brenna Edmonson