



Message from the Executive Director

Dr. Jackie Augustine

AS AOK GROWS, SO DOES OUR IMPACT

In last year's message, I described how our work internally and externally was "laying the foundation for expansion." Now, I am excited to describe all the ways AOK is expanding. First, the impact of our environmental education has grown. The readership of our monthly emailed newsletters has increased 250% since October 2021. We maxed out our attendance at our Kansas Lek Treks Prairie-Chicken Festival with 130 people – a 40% increase from the previous year. With targeted marketing, we nearly doubled attendance at the Celebration of Cranes. Second, we are continuing to refine our internal processes, and have successfully completed our first audit.

Lastly, AOK hired additional staff. We started the year with only one full time staff member, but ended the year with three. Because of a large donation from the Jerry Busch estate, we were able to hire Amy Kucera as Sanctuaries Manager in August. Before joining AOK, Amy was the Park Superintendent at Smith Falls State Park and the Executive Director at the John G. Neihardt State Historic Site where she managed operations and habitat restoration while helping visitors have a great experience. She also coordinated book and journal publications as the Associate Editor for the South Dakota Historical Society Press and the Nebraskaland magazine, and organized cultural educational programs for Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. At AOK, Amy will be doing on-the-ground management at our sanctuaries. She has already had a big impact through preparing fire breaks, managing woody vegetation removal contracts, coordinating grant implementation, assisting with the Celebration of Cranes and other events, and so much more.



AMY KUCERA

In December, we hired Ellen Johnson Mosley as our Director of Philanthropy and Event Manager. This position is an expansion of our part time Director of Philanthropy position to include event management. Ellen was previously the Director of Development at Great Plains Nature Center where she expanded the center's impact through forming public/private partnerships, crafting intentional appeals, and building



ELLEN JOHNSON MOSLEY



KELLEY HURST

strategic relationships. She also coordinated events both for the nature center and for Wichita Symphony Orchestra's Youth Orchestras Program.

Although we are excited to add Ellen as a strategic member to our leadership team, we are also sad to see Kelley Hurst go. Kelley has been instrumental in revitalizing our philanthropic efforts. She has evaluated our database to ensure our fundraising message is being received by the right people. Her appeal letters have focused on our greatest needs, and her personalized thank you's help donors feel appreciated. She has also managed registration software and answered questions for those attending

our birding festivals. We cannot understate how much Kelley has contributed to our organization.

To conclude, the hiring of staff, streamlining of internal processes, and expansion of grass roots support through our education programs will help us be a better advocate for wildlife and wild places in the Great Plains. Next year, I hope to describe the expansion of habitat management efforts on our current sanctuaries, additional sanctuaries in the process of being added to AOK, and increased advocacy efforts to ensure wildlife has a voice when regulatory decisions are being made.



Want to learn more about AOK and nature in Kansas? Receive AOK's monthly newsletters via email or read them online at <https://www.audubonofkansas.org/newsletters.cfm>.