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Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum to Welcome Hollie Colahan as New Executive Director

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is excited to announce Hollie Colahan as its new Executive Director, following the retirement of Craig Ivanyi. Craig leaves behind more than 40 years of service, including over a decade of distinguished leadership as Executive Director. Hollie brings over 25 years of experience in zoo management, conservation, and animal wellbeing. With a proven track record at some of the nation's most respected zoological institutions and a commitment to fostering inclusive, equitable environments, she is well-positioned to lead the Museum into an exciting new chapter of growth and innovation.

Hollie's appointment marks a pivotal moment for the Desert Museum. "I have always been a fan of the Museum, so I am thrilled to have this opportunity to lead this organization," Hollie shared. "Right now, I am most excited about getting to know the team and the community so that we can start planning the future together."

Hollie comes to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum from the Birmingham Zoo, where she served as Deputy Director and Vice President of Living Collections. Her leadership there was marked by impactful projects like Cougar Crossing and the Alabama Zoo Teaching Hospital, as well as initiatives focused on staff wellbeing and building an inclusive workplace culture. Prior to that, Hollie held senior leadership roles at the Denver Zoo, overseeing major exhibits such as The Edge (Amur tigers) and the Harmony Hill Grizzly Bear Habitat.

Reflecting on her experience, Hollie said, "The diversity of experiences I've had at different Association of Zoos and Aquariums accredited zoos has taught me many lessons about solving problems and approaching my work. I'm looking forward to bringing that perspective to the Desert Museum, while also appreciating the organization's rich culture and history."

Hollie's passion for conservation and her deep respect for the Sonoran Desert's unique ecology are central to her vision for the Museum. "I appreciate the singular focus on the Sonoran Desert region, which allows the Museum to develop deep knowledge and make a tangible impact," she explained. "I love that this work includes not just the animals, but the plants, the land, the culture of the region, and the infusion of art." As she steps into her new role, Hollie expressed her gratitude for the foundation laid by her predecessor. "Craig's leadership has been instrumental in building the Museum into the world-class institution it is today. I'm grateful for the strong foundation he has built and honored to be trusted with leading the Museum into the future," Hollie shared. "Our communities and audiences are changing, and it is critical for museums to grow with them. I want to honor Craig's legacy and ensure that we continue to be a leader in animal wellbeing, conservation, and inspiring people to love the desert."

Looking ahead, Hollie is eager to collaborate with the Desert Museum's staff, supporters, and the Sonoran Desert community. "It is clear how much everyone values the Museum, and I take my role in upholding that legacy and leading it into the future seriously," she said.

Hollie will officially begin as the Executive Director in early January. She and Craig will collaborate during a brief transition period before his formal retirement the following month, ensuring a seamless leadership transition and continuity as the Desert Museum embarks on this exciting new chapter.

For more detailed information, visit: <https://desertmuseum.org/about/ceo2025>