

A Message from the President

By Jamie Whittaker



I certainly have some big shoes to fill. Nancy Speed may look petite, but she has a big heart and a strong spirit. She has been a big presence in AFA for many years; and I am glad to know that she is still looking over my shoulder as past president. The new Board of Directors represents all areas of aviculture and all species of birds. There are certain to be rough waters ahead, but with your support, we will continue to do everything we can to keep birds in our homes and in our lives now and in the future.

Chicago was a great experience! The hotel was great; and the zoo trips were interesting. I heard that some people even got to kiss a giraffe! The speakers were interesting and educational. The vendor hall and the raffles were fun. The Lory League Bird Show had a record number of entries including birds that have almost disappeared from aviculture. Have you ever seen a Barraband Parakeet (*Polytelis swainsonii*) or a Sierra Parakeet (*Psilopsiagon aymara*)? If you went to the Lory League Bird Show in Chicago, you would have had that opportunity.

Speaking of birds at AFA, Bilbo, the Curl-crested aracari (*Pteroglossus beauharnaesii*), was at the registration desk helping Carol Woodson greet attendees. Luna, the Golden conure, was the perfect hostess. You never knew what shoulder she would be on next. If you were in Chicago, you could have held them and played with them too.

The legislative workshop attendees learned more about the ESA and the WBCA and how we are each affected. People who own birds, people who breed birds, and people who just love birds will all have to work together if we hope to keep this restrictive legislation from devastating the bird population. Attendees left with a renewed energy and a focus on the important task at hand—working together to keep birds in our lives.

Working together, how do we accomplish that? First, we need to focus on what is important to us, the main thing that we all have in common, an appreciation and love of birds and a dedication to the birds in our care. We all need to continue to do the best we can for our birds; and we need to remember that we don't have to all do things the same way. Sharing information with each other does not mean that we have to judge and criticize each other. There are many ways to keep birds and have them be happy and healthy. We have to stop focusing on our differences and focus on our goals—a healthy and happy population of birds in the future.

Finally, I want to encourage everyone with suggestions, ideas and concerns to let me know. If we do not know your concerns, we cannot address them. If your wonderful idea is not shared, we can never act on it or build on it. If we are going to work together, we have to corroborate. We all have something to contribute; and the birds deserve the best we have to offer.

Sincerely,

Jamie Whittaker