

## The Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund: Disney Making a Difference

by Joelle Blaho-Sinclair, PassPorter Guest Contributor

"Would you like to donate \$1.00 to the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund?"

For those visiting the Disney parks and resorts or the Disney Cruise Line, this is a question you have probably been asked by a Cast Member. Did you ever ask what the Worldwide Conservation Fund is or what it does? After my last visit to Walt Disney World, I asked myself that question and went in search of the answer.

Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund was launched on April 22, 1995, Earth Day. It is a non-profit organization. Its mission, paralleling that of The Walt Disney Company, is to protect the planet for future generations and to help children develop lifelong conservation values. Specifically, the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund focuses on the protection of animals and their habitats, through research, education, prevention, and conservation efforts.

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□ A fund is an organization created to administer or manage a supply of monies or pecuniary resources for a stated purpose. Funding for Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund is received from The Walt Disney Company and guests of the Disney parks and resorts, in addition to the Disney Cruise Line. The Walt Disney Company contributes approximately 39% of the financial resources. It has committed to at least match the amount contributed by Disney guests. Further, The Walt Disney Company has also agreed to cover all administrative costs incurred by Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund. Disney guest donations amount to about 35% of the organization's funding. The remaining 26% of its financial backing is derived from program contributions, defined as proceeds from tours, events and merchandise. Disney guest contributions come from a variety of sources. At select locations in Disney parks and resorts and the Disney Cruise Line, guests are able to add a donation of at least one dollar to food or merchandise purchases. In addition, a portion of the fee for certain Disney Park tours involving animals is earmarked for Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund. Proceeds also come from the purchase of reusable shopping bags and other selected items at merchandise locations at the Disney parks and resorts. Interestingly, proceeds from the pressed penny machines and Disney parks and resorts fountains are also donated to the non-profit organization.

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□ Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund has also partnered with other organizations to raise money and awareness. Through Disney's Friends For Change and iTunes, Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund has raised over one million dollars from the sales of such songs as "Make a Wave," "We Can Change the World," and "Send It On." It is important to note that every dollar contributed to Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund is directed to other non-profit organizations worldwide.

Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund supports other non-profit organizations that are focused on long-term, positive impacts on wildlife and habitats. In recent years, it has also begun awarding grants to non-profit organizations that help children connect with nature through exploration and discovery. It awards grants, through an application process, to local and global non-profit organizations for the study of wildlife, protection of habitats, and the development of community programs that emphasize education and conservation. The average grant size is \$25,000. To be eligible for a grant, an applicant organization must be a registered non-profit organization and operate in the United States, or have a registered United States partner willing to accept and transfer awarded grants. None of the grant monies awarded may be used to offset the overhead costs of the non-profit organization.

□ Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund also sets aside emergency funds, Rapid Response Funds, which enables it to respond to wildlife and habitats in times of crisis. The Rapid Response Funds are awarded throughout the year. Grant applications are reviewed by Disney's Animals, Science and Environmental Staff. This group is composed of scientists, animal keepers, educators, and curators. Since 1995, Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund has awarded over \$20 million for projects in 112 countries. Grants have been awarded to such endeavors as the conservation of the Nantu rainforest in Sulawesi, Indonesia; restoring habitat for gopher tortoises in Central Florida; Monarch butterfly conservation efforts in Mexico; conserving the endangered African wild dog in Zimbabwe, Africa; conservation of the endangered mountain gorillas in Rwanda; and restoring coral reefs in the Florida Keys, to name just a few.

□ Most recently, Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund awarded a sizable grant of \$250,000 to the International Fund for Animal Welfare. The grant is to support the International Fund for Animal Welfare's efforts to rescue animals from disasters and to assist in its preparation of rescue personnel for emergencies. The International Fund for Animal Welfare has rescued animal victims from such disasters as Hurricane Katrina, the Asian tsunami, and the Haiti earthquake. In November, their animal rescue team joined efforts with other organizations to

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rescue and save animals after Hurricane Sandy.

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□ Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund has been the recipient of a prestigious award for its commitment to the planet. The Florida Wildlife Federation presented the Corporate Conservationist of the Year award to the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund on June 12, 2012 in recognition of its efforts to research, study, protect and conserve species and habitats, both in Florida and worldwide. The Florida Wildlife Federation is a statewide organization that has been improving Florida fish and wildlife for over 75 years.

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□ If you are asked if you would like to contribute to Disney's Worldwide Conservation Fund, please consider doing so. With 100% of every donated dollar going to conservation programs, every person contributing to the Fund is making a difference.

*About The Author: Joelle is an attorney, but currently raising the next generation of Disney fans. She is always looking forward to her next trip to Walt Disney World. Joelle knows no limits in her quest for a Disney vacation. She took up running in order to justify a trip and ran in both the Disney Princess Family 5K Run and Princess Half Marathon.*

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