FROM THE BARNYARD:

New Park Animal Keeper

Hello to all! My name is Rachael Komulainen, and I became the new Park Animal Keeper at Hart Park on June 2nd. I grew up on a dairy farm in Northern Minnesota and moved out to California in 1999 to pursue a passion of working with – and on behalf of – our animal friends. I have been very fortunate and have gotten to work with a huge variety of animals at different facilities over the years, including African lions, tigers, wolves, fox, donkeys, bison, owls, hawks, snakes, lizards, and much more. It is very thrilling to now be on the Hart Park team! I can be found around the barnyard and encourage anyone interested in meeting me to stop by. Also, I want to extend an invitation to anyone that would like to arrange a private group tour of the barnyard. Just contact me at the park to set a date and time, and I will be happy to accommodate your group.

The Barnyard’s Newest Residents

On July 10th the Barnyard at Hart Park received its newest residents: two wild boars! The boars had been rescued and raised by a woman in Northern California, along with five additional siblings. As they grew, she began her search for prospective homes for them. Eventually, she was put in touch with Hart Park and we agreed to take two of them for a new exhibit. Once here, the Barnyard Staff had a naming contest and chose “Luke” and “Leia” – after the famous “Star Wars” siblings.

Wild boars are a species of wild pig and are the ancestors of our domesticated pig. They are omnivorous animals that primarily eat plants. They are opportunistic and have been shown to eat a large variety of items in the wild. Luke and Leia, however, have already established themselves to be much pickier eaters. Besides their diet staple of pig pellets, they enjoy various berries, apples, bananas and corn on the cob. They tend, though, to turn up their “snouts” at other types of fruits or vegetables offered during their mealtimes.

Each morning and afternoon, they are given showers with the hose by staff. These are their favorite times of each day because…well…you know…they get to be…pigs! They roll around in the dirt and make a muddied mess, which is great fun if you are a pig. They have settled right into their new home here at Hart and they love to show off to visitors. Come check them out!

A Sad Farewell

It is with a heavy heart that I report the loss of our beloved Asian Fallow Deer, “John Deere.” He passed away on Saturday, August 17th. Earlier in the week, John Deere had become ill and was under veterinary care. We are awaiting the necropsy results to determine his exact cause for illness. John Deere was a STAR here at Hart Park, and a favorite amongst the public. He was 10 years old and had originally come to the park after being found wandering a sidewalk in Norwalk when he was just a few days old. Animal Control placed him with us, since we had a mule deer resident at the time. We will greatly miss John Deere and we THANK EVERYONE for their sympathies for our loss at this very sad time.

Rachael Komulainen

Park Animal Keeper