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The Columbus Dispatch

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Short takes: Jack Hanna's outrage is on the mark

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Thursday February 13, 2014 6:14 AM

Jack Hanna stated exactly what people all over the world thought about the shockingly cruel execution and public dismemberment of a healthy young giraffe at the Copenhagen Zoo on Sunday. But as the renowned emeritus director of the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, he said it with a lot more authority.

"It's abominable," Hanna said. "These are creatures we have a responsibility for — to find it a home if they don't have room."

On Sunday, the zoo veterinarian, violating the trust he'd built with the 18-month-old giraffe, lured it with a piece of rye bread, its favorite, and then killed him with a shotgun blast to the head.

The vet took the body apart in front of a crowd of children (calling it an "autopsy") and threw the parts to the lions.

The giraffe, named Marius, was deemed expendable because he was "surplus" and not "genetically valuable" to a breeding program the zoo participates in through the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria. The zoo doesn't appear to have sought alternatives to this violent act. Thousands of people signed petitions of protest beforehand and other zoos offered to take Marius, to no avail.

"I want people to know that I don't know of any zoo in this country that would do this," Hanna said, "and if it did, it would not be allowed to have any connection to the Columbus Zoo."

Good for Hanna for speaking for zoo officials everywhere who take seriously their role as protectors of animals. Copenhagen's callous justification is far outside the values that most zoos, including the Columbus Zoo, stand for.

Senior citizens contribute much as employees

Whether they need to work to make ends meet or just want to stay busy and engaged, a greater percentage of Americans 55 and older are working today than in the past. But it can be tough for older people to find jobs, especially if they have lost their previous one: A recent national survey found that job seekers 55 and over had been out of work an average of 56 weeks, 20 weeks longer than their younger counterparts.

There are resources in central Ohio for seniors who are looking for work, though. One is Employment for Seniors, a nonprofit group. The organization, founded more than 40 years ago, provides free job-counseling services, workshops and an annual job fair for those 50 and over. More information: <http://employmentseniors.org> or 614-863-1219.

The Ohio Department of Aging also offers services to state residents 55 and over, including referring people to the federally funded Senior Community Service Employment program. Aimed at lower-income seniors who may have been out of the work force for some time, it helps people gain up-to-date experience and earn minimum wage by working up to 20 hours a week in a charitable group or government agency. More information can be found at <http://aging.ohio.gov> or (800) 266-4346.

Employers also can use these resources to recruit experienced, reliable workers; Employment for Seniors reports that companies often are repeat customers, because they quickly see what good workers those over 55 are. Getting senior citizens back to work is a win for everyone involved.

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