



## **RAMON VILLAVERDE**

### **AQUATIC PROJECTS KEEPER AND DIVE SAFETY OFFICER**

- 1. When did you begin working at the Columbus Zoo?**  
I began working at the Columbus Zoo in July 2003.
- 2. What education and animal experiences helped you become a zookeeper?**  
I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree, specializing in Zoology and Ecology. I received my Open Water Scuba Certification in 1997 and my Scuba Diving International (SDI) Instructor Certification in 2009. I also volunteered as a Docent at the Cleveland Zoo while in college.
- 3. What skills are the most important in your job?**  
Aquatic husbandry skills, observation, and creative thinking are very important in my role.
- 4. What is a typical day for your current position?**  
My day consists of maintaining coral holding systems, aquaculture systems, and live foods (phytoplankton and zooplankton); computer work for dive operations; record keeping; and collaboration with colleagues at other facilities for conservation projects.
- 5. What advice would you give me to help me become a zookeeper?**  
I would try to get different experiences through shadowing, volunteering, and working in seasonal jobs, and then focus on what sparked an interest and passion.
- 6. How does this career impact your personal and lifestyle choices?**  
This career impacts my personal and lifestyle choices by making me aware of how we affect the environment and what impact I can contribute to my field.
- 7. What is the hardest part of your job?**  
It can be challenging to stay on top of all the different responsibilities to keep them at the highest standards I set for myself.
- 8. What is the best part of your job?**  
Working with aquatic animals on a daily basis is the best part of my job.
- 9. Does the work you do at the Zoo impact the animals around the world?**  
Yes! My work impacts coral reefs, as well as marine ornamental fish and invertebrates.
- 10. What is the most important thing you do for the well-being of the animals in your care?**  
The most important thing I do on a daily basis is monitoring all aspects of these animals' aquatic habitats at our Zoo. There are many variables that need to be considered to keep aquatic life alive and healthy.

**ZOO KEEPER INTERVIEWS**

