

Banovich Travels To China

Project Panda: The Global Search for "Chengdu Pambassador"

CHENGDU, CHINA September 29, 2010:

Banovich has just returned from a field research trip to Chengdu in the Sichuan Province, China, studying pandas in their natural environment at The Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding – the world's only research base solely dedicated to the preservation of Pandas. This very prestigious and rare opportunity was an invitation from the Chinese Government and sponsored by Mayor of Chengdu, Governor of Sichuan, World Wildlife Fund and supported by Ogilvy Public Relations.

In addition to exclusive panda research opportunities, Banovich was invited to join the judging panel in the Global Launch of "Project Panda: The Search for a Chengdu Pambassador" Project Panda was a world-wide competition to find six ideal candidates for a very special job - taking care of one of the world's best loved but most endangered creatures, the Giant Panda. Over 60,000 panda lovers around the world applied to what appears to be one of the most coveted jobs in the world.

The Panda Base recruited six global "Pambassadors" – panda ambassadors – who will spend one month living and working with the 80 pandas at the Chengdu Panda Base. The Pambassadors will be trained by the world's leading panda experts to become panda caretakers and international advocates for panda conservation. www.pandahome.com

During the 3.5-hour-long final competition on September 29, the panel of five judges selected the six Pambassadors out of 12 finalists, based on their personal profiles, performance during the one-week training (September 23-28) and communication skills. Besides a challenging panda knowledge Q&A session and impromptu speech, the judges also gave scores on the 12 finalists' ability to recognize bamboos, prepare panda food, set up panda shelters, etc.

Judges were **John Banovich**, internationally recognized wildlife artist and conservationist, **Dr. Zhang Zhihe**, Director General of the Chengdu Panda Base, **Jing Hui**, Director of Communications at WWF China, **Hu Jinghu**, Founder of research on giant panda biology; with more than 200 published academic thesis on animal biology. **Professor Zhang Anju**, Former Vice Chairman of the China Zoo Association, famous for his work on giant panda procreation and artificial reproduction, breeding and disease research.

"The six Pambassadors beautifully symbolize diverse cultures uniting their efforts and passion for the giant panda cause", emphasized Dr. Zhang Zhihe, "The Pambassador title only goes to six finalists, but all twelve candidates will come back with a unique experience to share", he added.

"I was honored to be invited by the Chengdu Government and to be the only American on the judging panel with such distinguished conservationist and scientists. The hospitality from the people of Chengdu could not have been nicer and they are leading the way for green living amongst the main metropolitan areas of china. The "Pambassador" competition was extremely tough and I was very happy to see the level of commitment and passion from the final six. They will be excellent spokespersons for the plight of the Giant Panda."

—JOHN BANOVICH
ARTIST/CONSERVATIONIST

The six Pambassadors will each have the once in a lifetime chance to look after their own giant panda. This hands-on experience will allow them to learn about all aspects of giant panda care and preservation. They will also spend part of their training exploring Chengdu's lush mountains to identify the challenges associated with returning giant panda to their natural environment.

The six winning Pambassadors are... Ashley Robertson (USA), Ali Shakonrian (Sweden), David Algranti (France), Yumiko Kajiwara (Japan), Xi Huang (Mainland China) and Yuwen Wang (Taiwan)

Visit <http://www.pandahome.com/en/6players.php> to follow their daily adventures!



Welcome ceremony for John Banovich and Jane Goodall at the Mayors Office in Chengdu.



CHENGDU PANDA BASE nursery in Chengdu China.



Panel of Judges.



The six Pambassadors.

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