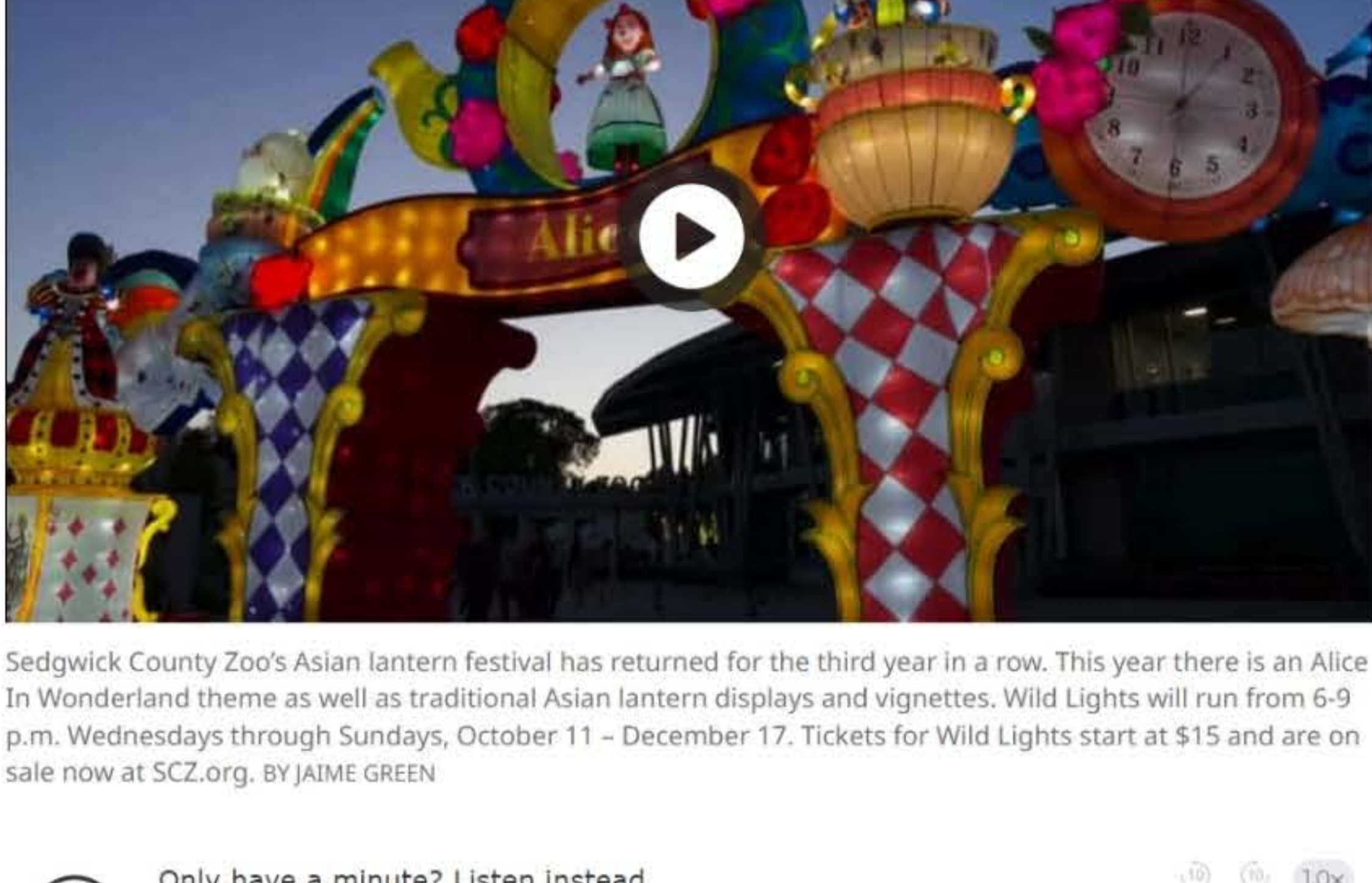


HOMEPAGE

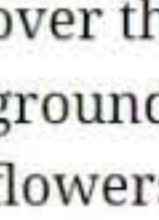
Check out the zoo's Wild Lights show, this time with an 'Alice in Wonderland' theme

BY DENISE NEIL

UPDATED OCTOBER 13, 2023 10:44 AM



Sedgwick County Zoo's Asian lantern festival has returned for the third year in a row. This year there is an Alice In Wonderland theme as well as traditional Asian lantern displays and vignettes. Wild Lights will run from 6-9 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays, October 11 - December 17. Tickets for Wild Lights start at \$15 and are on sale now at scz.org. BY JAIME GREEN



Only have a minute? Listen instead

Powered by Trinity Audio

00:00

04:58

People who have been to the Sedgwick County Zoo's [Wild Lights](#) traveling exhibit over the past two years — and there have been a whole lot of them — have seen the grounds glowing after-hours with dozens of Asian lanterns in the shapes of animals, flowers and Asian characters.

The exhibit, which opens tonight and will run through Dec. 17, is back for a third consecutive year, but this time it has a recognizable literary theme. Of the 60 lantern scenes set up, at least half come straight from "Alice in Wonderland," the whimsical tale originated by author Lewis Carroll in his 1865 book "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland."

On Tuesday, members of the media and other guests got a sneak preview of the exhibit, which will be open from 6 to 9 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays and requires a special ticket that costs \$19 for adults or \$17 for children and members. (Advance tickets bought online are \$17 for adults, \$15 for children and members.)



This year's Wild Lights exhibit at the Sedgwick County Zoo features a towering replica of the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. Jaime Green *The Wichita Eagle*

Crews from a company called [Tianyu](#) travel to zoos all over the world to set up their lantern exhibits, and in Wichita, they've been working on assembly since just after the big Zoobilee fundraiser on Sept. 9. Normally, the company that owns the lanterns sends just one crew for setup, but because this year's show has more lanterns on a more grand scale, it had to send two, said Emily Bishop, the zoo's communications coordinator.

The lanterns, which are best viewed after dusk, greet people as soon as they arrive at the zoo: This year, the company positioned a scene featuring the Queen of Hearts at the zoo's entrance facing Zoo Boulevard, and before people even get to the gates, they're greeted by a towering piece that features several key characters —The White Rabbit, The Caterpillar, The Queen of Hearts and Alice, who is standing in the center of a teapot.



Visitors to the Sedgwick County Zoo's Wild Lights display will find that this year, more than half of the displays feature scenes and characters from "Alice in Wonderland." Jaime Green *The Wichita Eagle*

Most of the "Alice in Wonderland" pieces are at the front-end of the exhibit, and most of them are elaborate, towering, sometimes animated setups depicting scenes from the book. One memorable display portrays the moment Alice nibbles on some mushrooms then discovers her neck can suddenly bend like a snake's. On the display, Alice's head eerily floats up and down from her body.

Another piece, titled "Square Dance with the Fish and Shrimp," features Alice sitting beneath a giant flying gryphon while below her, sea creatures turn around and around as though on a carousel. That sculpture occasionally emits smoke and bubbles out into the crowd.

Deeper into the zoo, after they've passed through a giant tunnel of glowing upside-down teacups, visitors will find the famous scene of the Mad Hatter's Tea party, whose guests include The Caterpillar, The White Rabbit and The March Hare.

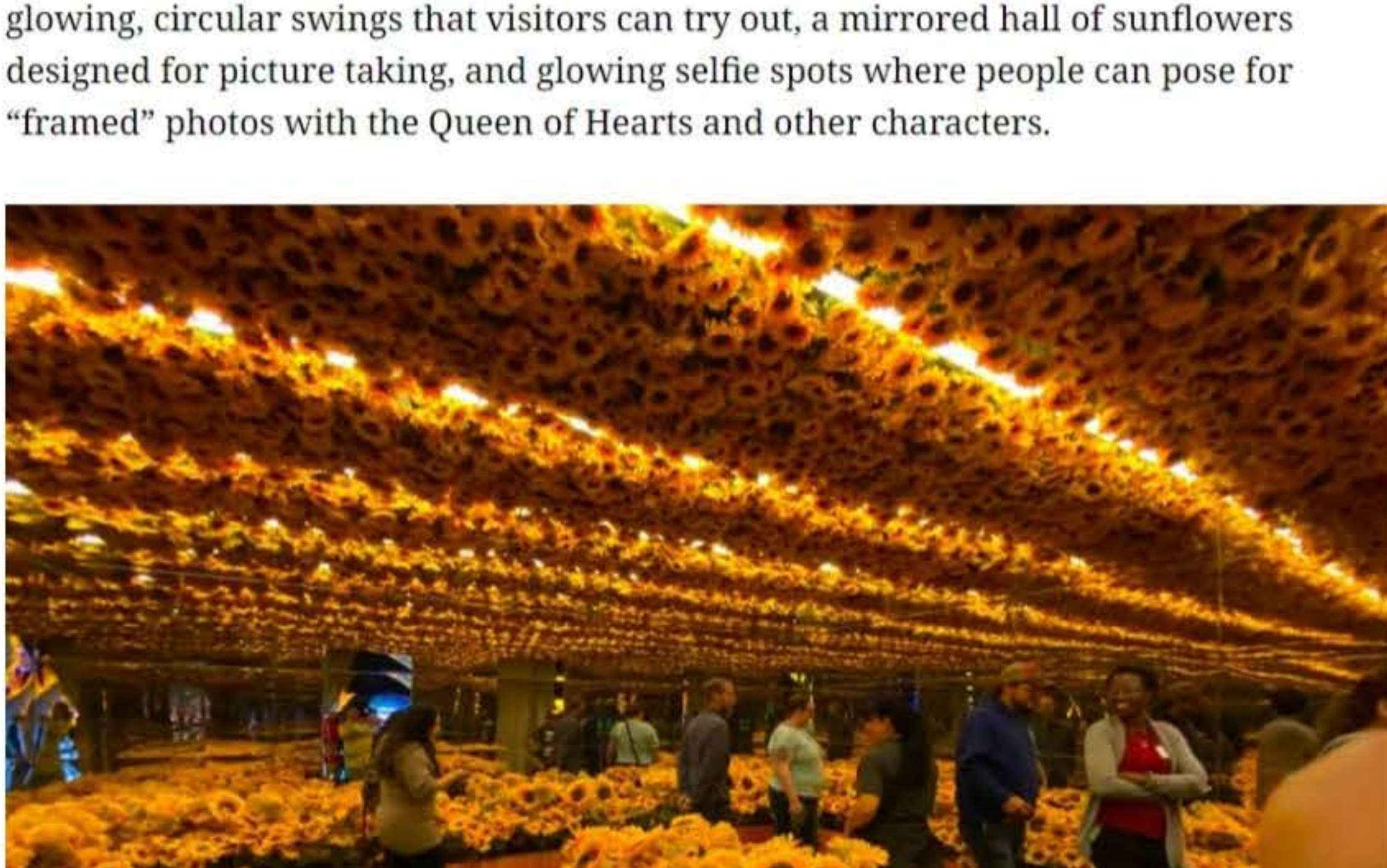


A 100-foot-long glowing dragon is part of the Sedgwick County Zoo's Wild Lights display. Jaime Green *The Wichita Eagle*

Also populating the "Alice in Wonderland" displays are characters including The Cheshire Cat, The King of Hearts and The Duchess. Near the beginning of the path, visitors also will see that one of the zoo's large trees is dripping with two dozen of the White Rabbit's pocket watches.

Deeper into the exhibit, the theme becomes less "Alice in Wonderland" and instead features traditional Chinese Lantern themes. There's a 100-foot-long dragon, several flowers that open and close as though in bloom, and a massive replica of the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, which is so tall it can be seen no matter where visitors are in the zoo.

The exhibit also again includes lots of interactive pieces, including a set of six glowing, circular swings that visitors can try out, a mirrored hall of sunflowers designed for picture taking, and glowing selfie spots where people can pose for "framed" photos with the Queen of Hearts and other characters.



The Sedgwick County Zoo's Wild Lights Chinese lantern display features several interactive pieces, including this mirrored hall of sunflowers. Denise Neil *The Wichita Eagle*

Those who want to make an evening of visiting the exhibit can get dinner while there. The zoo will be serving items like pizza, burgers, sandwiches, ice cream and DIY S'mores during Wild Lights. People with mobility issues or who want a VIP experience also can go online and reserve private golf cart tours for Monday and Tuesday evenings.

Those who visit the zoo during the day also will be able to see the lanterns, but they won't be lit.

Tickets to Wild Lights are available in advance at scz.org/event/wild-lights or at the door. The ticket price includes admission to the zoo.

WILD LIGHTS EXHIBIT AT THE SEDGWICK COUNTY ZOO

When: Wednesday, Oct. 11, through Dec. 17

Where: Sedgwick County Zoo, 5555 W. Zoo Boulevard

Hours: 6-9 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays

Tickets: \$17 online, \$19 at the gate for adults; \$15 online, \$17 at the gate for children 3 and over and for members; free for ages 2 and under. A family four-pack is \$60 online, \$68 at the gate or \$52 online, \$60 at the gate for members. Available at scz.org/event/wild-lights or at the gate.



Sedgwick County Zoo's Asian lantern festival has returned for the third year in a row. This year, it features an "Alice In Wonderland" and also has traditional Asian lantern displays and vignettes. Jaime Green *The Wichita Eagle*

This story was originally published October 11, 2023, 11:24 AM.



DENISE NEIL

316-268-6327

Denise Neil has covered restaurants and entertainment since 1997. Her Dining with Denise Facebook page is the go-to place for diners to get information about local restaurants. She's a regular judge at local food competitions and speaks to groups all over Wichita about dining.