

For immediate release

January 21, 2022

Roane State student helps teach famous talking bird at Zoo Knoxville

By Bob Fowler

Roane State staff writer



Roane State student Kinsley Cagle has a job helping teach "Einstein."

That's the moniker for the famous African grey parrot at Zoo Knoxville. Einstein is a viral superstar whose incredible antics have been viewed more than 24 million times on YouTube.

Einstein's hilarious mimicry of noises ranging from a variety of animal sounds and calls to complete sentences is a popular attraction at the zoo's "Wild Encounters" area.

"She (Einstein) can make a lot of sounds," said Cagle, a 23-year-old Oak Ridge resident. "At times, it's almost like having a conversation with her."

One of Cagle's latest training endeavors involves teaching a species of duck called hooded mergansers to voluntarily waddle into a crate for safe, secure transport.

"I was never a 'bird person' before this," Cagle said, "but I like being around them."

Cagle has worked her way up from being a part-time volunteer at the zoo to a promotion this year to a full-time position working mainly in the Wild Encounters area.

Not every task is as high-profile and gratifying as training birds. She still cleans cages and removes waste from enclosures where porcupines, ducks, tortoises and sloths are housed.

"I've always wanted to work with animals and watch their behaviors," Cagle said.

She enrolled at Roane State last January, taking only online courses. "I don't have time to go to classes," Cagle explained. She and her husband Daniel are the parents of 4-year-old Nolan.

Daniel Cagle is also a Roane State student and is studying computer science.

With a semester under her belt, Kinsley Cagle says Roane State has been a good experience, and she's "doing pretty well" with a 3.5 grade point average.

Memorable instructors thus far include Dr. Ashley Galloway, an assistant professor who was Cagle's Biology II teacher, and Dr. Matt Waters, an associate professor who teaches fundamentals of communication.

"She was great," Cagle said of Galloway. "I loved that class, and it was super relevant to my job. It helped me understand the animals I work with." She said she did her class research project on the hooded mergansers.

Waters requires students to write four speeches, "and he let you speak on things you're interested in." One of her topics, of course, was animal behaviors.

Cagle said that after she graduates from Roane State, she intends to transfer to the University of Tennessee and get a bachelor's degree in biology.

"I want people to care about animals so we can save them from going extinct."

#

Roane State is a two-year college providing transfer programs, career-preparation programs and continuing education. Founded in 1971, the college has locations in Roane, Campbell, Cumberland, Fentress, Knox, Loudon, Morgan, and Scott counties as well as a branch campus in Oak Ridge. For more information, visit roanestate.edu or call (865) 882-4554. Remember, eligible adults can now attend Roane State tuition-free with the new Reconnect grant. Learn more at roanestate.edu/reconnect.