

# Meet the WDW Team

BY ELLENA BALKCOM



## Name:

Andre Boyd

**Position:** Material attendant, Engineering Services, Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge

**Hometown:** Saint Mary, Jamaica

**Years with the company:** 14



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*With approximately 62,000 cast members, the Walt Disney World Resort is anything but small. With that in mind, the Meet the WDW Team profiles connect our diverse cast and educate them on the variety of roles and responsibilities held on property.*

## *What inspired you to pursue a career with The Walt Disney Company?*

"My first visit to Disney brought to light what the company does for families – brings them closer together. The experience guests have here gives them stories to tell and memories that last a lifetime. I wanted to be a part of that and work with people from all over the world."

## *How did you go about obtaining this position?*

"I first went to Casting by referral of a friend and took any position available to me. With hard work and determination, I've been able to move into other roles."

## *What are some of your responsibilities?*

"I am the one who orders and maintains all supplies and repair parts to support the Engineering Services

team [at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge]. I make sure the inventory of everything needed for maintenance of the property, from air filters to tools and equipment, is stocked in the correct quantities and ready for use."

## *What do you love most about your role?*

"My fellow cast members are some of the most amazing people!"

## *What is your fondest Disney memory?*

"As a cast member, it's being a part of the opening team at [Disney's Animal Kingdom Villas] – Kidani Village, but I will never forget being an 11-year-old boy just moving to the United States from Jamaica and walking down Main Street, U.S.A. at Magic Kingdom [Park] for the first time. It was during Christmas, and I was amazed by the holiday parade and Cinderella Castle. I was in awe!"

## MAGICAL MOMENT

# Exploring African nations

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African culture is prevalent in every crevice of Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge, and its allure is what makes this resort a favorite among guests.

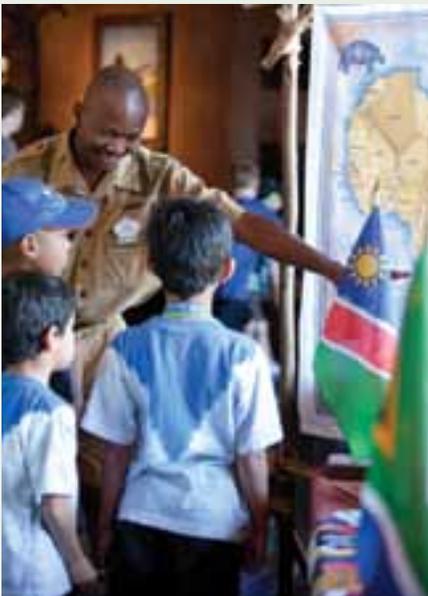
Another big draw are the many activities and magical moments that can be found here. From African face painting to wildlife-focused educational experiences, there's something to be learned and magic to be bestowed at every turn.



Kgalalelo Gambule, a cultural representative from Francistown, Botswana, shows her love for children and experience as a youth counselor with the care she takes painting African symbols on the faces of little guests at The Mara restaurant.



Six-year-old Carolyn Rehac from Tewksbury, N.J., chose the "Power of Love" symbol, *odo nnyew fie kwan*, which means "Love never loses its way home." Since Carolyn is adopted, her mother thought this was fitting.



As a savanna guide, Cultural Representative Ben Mogotsi shows 8-year-old Jarvis from Miramar, Fla., that an educational experience can happen anywhere, as he points out his hometown of Mahalapye, Botswana, on a map and talks about cultural nuances in the region.



Described by their parents as "totally opposite," it wasn't surprising that 5-year-old twins Aliza (left) and Faiz Didarali from Dallas would choose different symbols. Who knew they'd opt for different body parts as well?

FEATURE STORY

# It takes a village



brings Africa to guests,  
celebrates 10 years

## DID YOU KNOW? >>>

🌀 The 16-foot IGBO IJELE MASK that serves as the centerpiece in the resort's lobby was made by the Igbo people in a Nigerian village in 1983 and is the only one of its kind in the world.

## 🌀 JIKO - THE COOKING PLACE

The Cooking Place restaurant holds the largest single collection of South African wines in the world, outside of Africa.



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During the grand opening ceremonies for Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge in April 2001, the late Roy E. Disney addressed thousands of guests present to celebrate the occasion.

"They [Walt Disney and Roy O. Disney] would have been thrilled with what has been created here and would have thought it a wonderfully appropriate addition to their company," he said.

A decade later, Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge General Manager Kim Marinaccio and her team, including nearly 150 opening cast members, are filled with anticipation, as April 16 marks the 10-year anniversary of the award-winning, deluxe resort.

As plans for a weeklong celebration are under way, Kim's fondest memory is a ceremony with international cultural representatives welcoming her to the Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge family.

"The sound of drums beating, a feast of African food, vibrant garb and national flags greeted me as I walked into [Jiko – The Cooking Place 's] wine room," she recalled. "A receiving line of cast members in authentic African attire lined my pathway into the restaurant. This was all to dedicate me as their new queen in a traditional African ceremony. It was so emotional and such an honor



that I immediately felt the weight of keeping the spirit of the African culture alive in the atmosphere we perpetuate here for our cast members and guests."

Ten years of the "DAK Lodge difference" have set the property apart. That "difference" includes African culture; warm, friendly service; educational sharing; the world's largest permanently-on-display African art collection of more than 800 pieces; authentic decor and architecture; a focus on nature and conservation; and a front-row view of a 33-acre savanna teeming with animals.

Heritage Club cast member Gita Patel, a Merchandise hostess who was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya, says she sees glimpses of home everywhere at the resort.

"My favorite memory of opening day is meeting lots of guests and watching 'The Lion King' performers," she said. "DAK Lodge is my house, my passion! Everyone thinks I live here. The savannah here is just the same as what you would find in the national parks in Kenya. It is so similar to where I grew up in Africa that I can't help but love it here."

Prior to breaking ground in 1999, Imagineers visited more than 20 African lodges for inspiration and research, and the fruit of their labor is evident in the details.

"Collectively, the team was trying to capture an image that was not only symbolic of Africa but culturally relevant while evoking the profound spirit and romance of Africa," said James Kwasnowski of Walt Disney Imagineering, who was WDI

project manager on DAK Lodge.

James says he is most proud of guests' reactions when they come to the property.

"The design architect, the late Peter Dominick, Jr., captured it best when he described guests as they first entered the lobby – 'eyes up, jaws down.' I think that reaction permeates on so many different levels. Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge is a sensory experience from the bricks and mortar to the animals and birds to the culturally diverse cast."

The horseshoe-shaped lodge now welcomes nearly 3 million guests each year. The shape of the six-story, 1,293-room resort is based on the traditional kraal (pronounced "crawl"), a design used in African villages to keep homes and livestock safe from predators and other harm, allowing harmony between man and animals. With towering thatched roofs, handcrafted woods with rich tones, and large windows displaying the lush landscape and natural beauty of the savannah, one is immersed in a cultural experience the moment the front doors swing open.

The flavors of Africa come to life at the resort's dining locations, including two specialty restaurants: Jiko – The Cooking Place, which offers a wine room and lounge; and Boma-Flavors of Africa, featuring an exhibit kitchen and authentic African cuisine. The Mara offers a quick-service option, along with Victoria Falls, a mezzanine lounge serving coffee, teas, wines and international cocktails. The cultural journey continues with authentic merchandise offered in Zawadi Marketplace.

