

# Life in Louisville:



Watch cute cub video on your smartphone

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Qannik has become the darling of Louisville and we've received a lot of inquiries about what she's been up to since her arrival. She's been a very busy little bear cub.

As Qannik drifted off to sleep in the wee hours of June 29 under the watchful eye of surrogate mother and keeper, Assistant Mammal Curator Jane Anne Franklin, our new cub officially began her quarantine period in Glacier Run in her private off-exhibit den with an adjacent pool and play area. She would spend the next 30 days there, a typical quarantine period of isolation from other animals, restricted access to the public, and intense health and behavioral monitoring by keepers and veterinary staff. This practice is a basic component of preventive medicine programs in zoos and is a fundamental step in the prevention of the spread of disease into an existing animal collection.

Quarantine also allowed our little cub some time to adjust to all the rapid changes in her life, gain some more weight, build her immune system – acclimating to Louisville versus Alaska – learn critical skills like swimming, and start developing relationships with her new surrogate parents (keepers). Big job for a little cub.

According to Franklin, "those early days were focused on getting Qannik settled and relaxed and building trust. Qannik's mother would have given her cues to what is safe and not safe. In the wild, every behavior has consequences. Her sense of safety and trust are critical."

One of Qannik's first important challenges and



victories was learning how to swim, something she would have learned from her mother. During her stay at the Alaska Zoo, she frolicked in a shallow baby pool but did not have a chance to swim. A graduated ramp was built in her 6 foot deep 65 degree pool at Glacier Run to allow her to safely learn at her own pace. Initially Qannik dipped her head into the water but kept her back feet firmly planted at poolside; but on the 3rd day she slid all the way in. After a few gulps of water, she swam – all to a chorus of relieved sighs. Timid no more, now she dives, plays for hours and leaps off the edge like the brave kid at summer camp – all under watchful eyes.

As of the end of July, Qannik was a healthy 100 pounds and has graduated from a diet of heavy whipping cream mixed with a puppy formula, Esbilac, to herring, rice, bananas and the infant formula, Enfamil, by way of a large feeding syringe through bars which protect the keepers – they do not go in with her. She was screened for parasites and pathogenic bacteria and passed with flying colors, and soon she'll be getting some vaccinations to help protect her from local environmental challenges.

Longtime keeper Kevin Grizzle was added to Qannik's team to assist Franklin with care of this very busy bear. Both Grizzle and Franklin are like new parents anticipating Qannik's every move; but they are also experts at operant conditioning and understand bear behavior. "This cub really picks up cues quickly" explains Franklin, "like a certain door opening at a specific time for feeding. We have to

be consistently inconsistent so she won't anticipate food and play schedules and lock into behavioral patterns."

Speaking of play – this girl is non-stop play and discover – and this ability to occupy herself is good news. It does take creativity to come up with her next favorite enrichment activity though, all designed to allow for safe exploration, to increase behavioral choices and to draw out species-appropriate behaviors and abilities like hunting seals and balancing on icebergs. Franklin laughs like a proud mom as she describes Qannik stalking and attacking her favorite bucket or burlap-covered boomer ball (a.k.a. seal), and jumping onto and balancing on her large white float in the pool (a.k.a. iceberg). "She is downright stealth in her play" describes Franklin. "Her hard-wired instincts are clearly evident. Each day she gets bolder. Her prey drive comes through more and more."

One frequently asked question is how to pronounce her name. Qannik is pronounced "KUN'nik" – this is according to Professor Lawrence Kaplan, a linguist at the University of Alaska and director of the University's Alaska Native Language Center. Qannik means "snowflake" in the Iñupiaq language.

### What's Next so Far?

- Qannik will be learning to move through her new home, climb steps and slowly get used to bear alley. Paper will cover her windows and be slowly removed over time, similar to what was done with the Grizzly bears. No predictable schedule has been set for public appearances so that keepers can maintain high variability and flexibility in her schedule during this formative stage.
- There are no current plans to introduce her to Arki, the adult polar bear, but the option exists.
- Eventually she will be provided access to the larger bear exhibit but no timeframe has been set.
- A second polar bear cub will be joining us from Toledo Zoo this fall. Incorporation of this male 2-year old cub into Glacier Run will also be one small step at a time.

What we are learning from Qannik will possibly play a role in shifting the paradigm for management of bears in zoos. Qannik's movements and behavior are being documented – observations that can add to the canon of what scientists know about bears. It is a unique and rare opportunity and one the team does not take lightly.

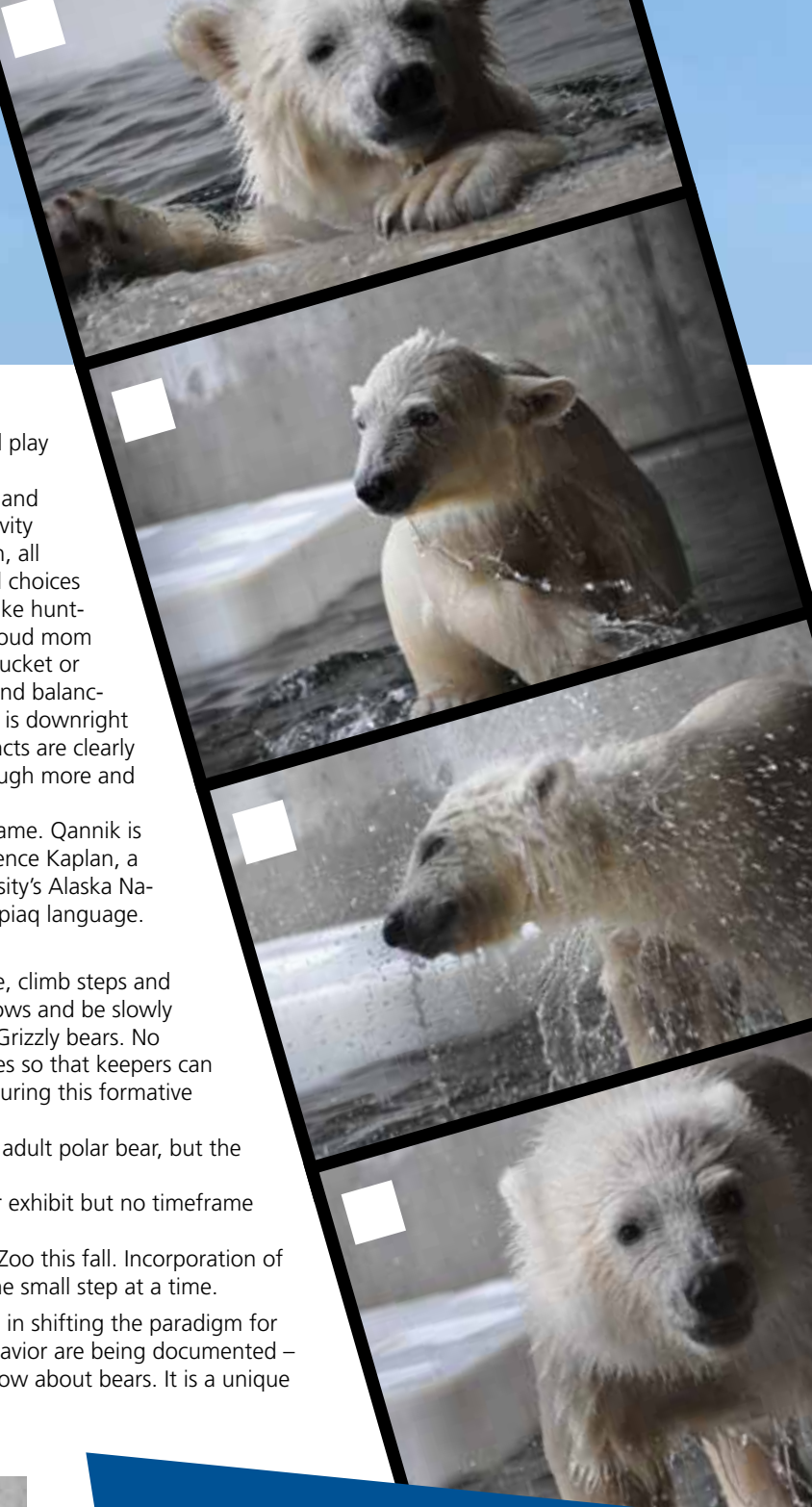


There are lots of ways to follow Qannik's progress:

Watch videos and check out answers to frequently asked questions at [louisvillezoo.org/glaciterrun/cubs.htm](http://louisvillezoo.org/glaciterrun/cubs.htm)

Follow her twitter feed at: [@QannikTheCubLZ](https://twitter.com/QannikTheCubLZ)

Keep up with all the Zoo's news at [facebook.com/LouisvilleZoo](https://facebook.com/LouisvilleZoo)



below: Jane Anne Franklin bonds with Qannik during quarantine

