



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Zoo Announces a “Wild” 50th Birthday Celebration

The Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo turns 50 years old in 2015, and the entire community is invited to be part of the celebration.

“The zoo was built by this community, starting with the school children who donated pennies to build Monkey Island back in 1965,” said Zoo Director Jim Anderson. “Since then, thousands of families and businesses have donated funds to create everything you see at the zoo.” More than 20 million people have visited the zoo since it opened on July 3, 1965, and more than \$32 million has been donated for capital projects.

“The zoo’s 50th Birthday Celebration is our way of thanking the community for five decades of outstanding support,” Anderson said.

To kick off the celebration, the zoo invites the community to submit photos of their families enjoying the zoo. Photos from the 1960s and 1970s are especially needed, but all photos are welcome. Submitted photos may be used in the zoo’s 2015 advertising campaign. Fans may submit photos before February 28 by posting them to the zoo’s social media accounts, emailing them to communications@kidszoo.org, or bringing prints to the zoo, where they will be scanned and returned.

The 50th Birthday Celebration will continue all season long. Highlights will include a “Happy Birthday to Zoo” Party on July 1 with performances by local youth choirs; a giant Birthday Card for zoo guests to sign; appearances by the zoo’s new Mascot at community events; partnerships with the Three Rivers Festival and Fort Wayne TinCaps; paw prints painted on roads leading to the zoo this summer; signs showing “Then & Now” zoo photos; a Nature Scavenger Hunt for kids; contests on social media; an expanded zoo history section on the zoo’s website; and more. Commemorative merchandise will be available in the zoo’s Wild Things Gift Shop all season.

“The support of our community has made the zoo the world-class facility we are today,” said Anderson. “We’re excited to share 50 years of zoo memories as we continue to grow the zoo for the next generation of kids and families.”

The zoo opens for the 2015 season on April 25. The zoo’s 50th Birthday is sponsored by Sweetwater, PNC, Strahm Building Solutions, Do it Best, Centier Bank, and Mainstay Solutions.

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Zoo History Highlights:

- July 3, 1965: Zoo opens for the first time
- 1976: African Veldt opens
- 1979: Great Zoo Halloween opens (now called Wild Zoo Halloween)
- 1987: Australian Adventure opens
- 1994: Indonesian Rain Forest opens

- 1995: Orangutan Valley opens
- 1996: Tiger Forest opens
- 2001: Indiana Family Farm opens
- 2002: Sea Lion Beach opens
- 2009: African Journey (formerly the African Veldt) opens
- 2014: Phase 1 of the Australian Adventure renovation opens
- 2015: Phase 2 of the Australian Adventure renovation opens
- 2016: Phase 3 of the Australian Adventure renovation opens

Recent Zoo Accolades:

- Travelers' Choice Award, *TripAdvisor*, 2014
- Best Family Attraction in Indiana, *VacationHomeRentals.com*, 2014
- Indiana's #1 Gotta-Do Summer Attraction, *Indiana Office of Tourism Development survey*, 2012
- One of the Nation's Ten Best Zoos for Kids, *Parents Magazine*, 2009

Zoo Animal & Conservation Highlights:

- Critically endangered Sumatran orangutan birth, 2014
- Endangered red panda birth, 2014
- One of only two zoos nationwide to house endangered Javan gibbons
- Contribute more than \$80,000 annually in conservation support
- Innovative *Kids4Nature* program allows zoo guests to help direct zoo conservation funding
- Z-TEAM Conservation Crew involves youth in local hands-on conservation programs
- Participate in breeding and management programs for more than 90 endangered and threatened animal species and taxa through the Association of Zoos & Aquariums
- Named Northeast Indiana Sustainable Business of the Year in 2014

Community and Economic Impact:

- A non-profit organization that receives no tax support
- More than 20 million visitors since 1965; currently host more than 500,000 people per year
- More than \$22 million in economic impact annually
- 95% of out-of-town zoo guests cite the zoo as their main reason for travelling to Fort Wayne
- Currently employs 71 full-time and 21 part-time employees year-round; additional 75 hired each summer
- More than 30,000 school children visit the zoo annually
- More than 35,000 people attend zoo education programs annually
- 400 people donate more than 33,000 hours of volunteer time annually

About the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo: The Fort Wayne Children's Zoo is northeast Indiana's largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 500,000 guests annually. The zoo received the 2014 **TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Award**, was voted **Indiana's #1 "Gotta-Do Summer Attraction,"** and is consistently named one of the nation's **Top Ten Zoos for Kids** by national media outlets.

The zoo is a conservation leader, contributing more than \$80,000 annually to local, regional, and international efforts to protect wild animals and habitats, and participating in cooperative management programs for 91 endangered species and taxa. The zoo was named Northeast Indiana's **Sustainable Business of the Year** in 2014. As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo receives no tax dollars for operations. The zoo's operations are funded entirely by earned revenue and donations.

The zoo opens for the 2015 season on April 25, 2015. Hours are 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM daily through October 11, 2015. Admission is \$14.00 for adults; \$10.50 for seniors age 60+; and \$9.00 for children ages 2-18. Babies age 1 and under and Zoo Society Members are admitted free.