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TAMPA'S LOWRY PARK ZOO AWARDED AZA ACCREDITATION THROUGH 2015

Designation Recognizes Highest Standards of Animal Welfare and Operations

TAMPA, Fla. (March 21, 2011) – The Lowry Park Zoological Society Board of Trustees today announced that Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo has earned accreditation by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). Fewer than 10 percent of approximately 2,400 animal exhibitors licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture are AZA-accredited.

AZA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science and recreation. AZA-accredited facilities undergo a thorough review every five years that includes a detailed accreditation application as well as a multiple-day onsite inspection by a team of independent experts from other AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums around the country.

"It means a great deal that our AZA colleagues support and recognize the extraordinary effort of Zoo staff and volunteers to meet and exceed the highest industry standards," said Craig Pugh, executive director and CEO of the Zoo. "Any organization that has a commitment to excellence will always strive to do better. We look forward to continuing our collaborative work with other AZA-accredited institutions for animal care, wildlife conservation and education."

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo was first granted accreditation in 1989. In 2010, the decision on five-year accreditation was tabled for one year, which allowed the Zoo to remain accredited while addressing some of its capital improvement needs.

In the past year, the Lowry Park Zoological Society has launched a \$10 million "New Horizon Campaign," the first capital campaign in 10 years, which specifically addresses major concerns of the previous onsite inspection and review. More than half of the campaign goal has been pledged to date.

Campaign priorities dedicate substantial resources to professional standards in the areas of veterinary medicine and animal care. The Zoo is currently in the design development phase for a Veterinary Hospital and Conservation & Animal Science Complex, begun by a leadership gift from the Jacarlene Foundation. Renovations are currently underway at the Zoo's Lykes Florida Wildlife Center and boardwalk. The campaign will also provide for new exhibits and visitor amenities in future years.

"AZA has provided, by objective authority, validation of the continuing good work of Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo," said Robert Thomas, chair of the Lowry Park Zoological Society board of trustees and co-chair of the New Horizon campaign cabinet. Thomas was unanimously elected chair in January 2011 when Catherine Lowry Straz completed her two year term. "This sustains momentum to address needs of the Zoo, to achieve our long range plans, and to fully realize our vision for the Zoo," he added.

Curt Harbsmeier, Zoo trustee and associate member of AZA since 2003, was a volunteer representative on behalf of the board of trustees at the AZA mid-year meeting. Harbsmeier said, "What makes the Zoo strong is its broad base of public private support, throughout the region and statewide. Continued AZA accreditation confirms that the Zoo is managed to the highest standards."

It is anticipated that an AZA executive will travel to Tampa to present a plaque commemorating this significant achievement in the near term. The presentation will take place during a special staff event at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo.

About Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is operated by the Lowry Park Zoological Society, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to excellence in education, conservation and research. Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), and has been named the No. 1 zoo in America by both *Parents* magazine (2009) and *Child* magazine (2004). The Zoo is located at 1101 W. Sligh Avenue in Tampa, one mile west of I-275 (exit 48) and is open seven days a week, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with extended hours on select nights during special events. Zoo daytime admission prices are: adult - \$23.95, seniors (60+) - \$21.95, children ages 3-11 - \$18.95, and children 2 and under are free. *Daytime admission is value-priced to include unlimited amusement rides.* Parking is free. For more information, visit LowryParkZoo.com. Also find the Zoo on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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