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## **Lincoln Park Zoo Awarded Two Significant Grants for Science Education**

*Funding supports new mobile learning stations, Chicago and Africa youth collaboration*

*Chicago (Aug. 4, 2011)* – Lincoln Park Zoo was awarded two significant, highly competitive national grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), American Association of Museums (AAM) and the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to support science education locally and abroad.

“Science education is a crucial part of our mission, and these grants will provide the assets necessary to deliver high-quality educational experiences that have the potential to impact thousands of people from middle-school kids in Chicago and their counterparts in Africa to families enjoying a leisurely visit to the zoo,” said Rachel Bergren, Vice President of Education at Lincoln Park Zoo.

### **IMLS Museums for America Grant**

The zoo will receive \$149,295 through the IMLS Museums for America grant program to develop a new fleet of six mobile learning stations that are designed to create a dynamic guest experience and foster inquiry-based learning.

Design concepts and development will begin immediately with the assistance of project design consultant Museum Explorer. Learning stations will be pilot tested and evaluated to ensure maximum effectiveness before final design implementation.

“We are excited to bring guests closer to the work Lincoln Park Zoo does in new and exciting ways through specially designed learning stations. With three million visitors a year, this greatly expands our ability to reach our guests,” says Jessica Monahan, director of public programs and guest engagement.

## **Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad Program**

The zoo was awarded \$85,000 through AAM and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad (MCAA) program to develop a collaborative youth program between Chicago and Niamey, Niger called *Community of Conservation: Research Exchange Experiences for Global Youth*.

"The open dialogue that is established by this museum exchange initiative strengthens people-to-people relationships," said Ann Stock, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. "With stronger relationships and greater collaboration, the Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad initiative will achieve shared goals for the benefit of the global community."

Middle-school students from Chicago's Francis W. Parker school in Lincoln Park and schools in Niger will partner with Lincoln Park Zoo and the National Museum of Niger Boubou Hama to conduct original conservation research projects that explore concepts in animal behavior and ecological biodiversity. Participants will select topics that are of personal interest and relevant to their community. The zoo and museum will guide the students through the use of authentic research methods, ensuring a student-centered approach to learning. As students share their findings, they will learn about the similarities and differences between their local wildlife experiences, and their cultures.

"Their work will contribute to a globally relevant, multilingual wildlife-conservation education curriculum that can be shared beyond the two communities and implemented everywhere wildlife exists," said program leader Leah Melber, PhD, Lincoln Park Zoo director of student and teacher programs.

"Each MCCA project is centered on bridge-building across cultural, geographic, and economic divides, uniting people through a more thorough understanding of their commonalities," explained AAM President Ford W. Bell.

This fall, students from Chicago and Niger will begin their school-year-long dialogue and research collaboration. They'll use tools such as Skype and other technology to communicate

and help bridge the geographical divide. Their projects will conclude with a culminating event in Spring 2012 in Chicago and Niger where the students will have an opportunity to share their research work with their respective communities.

“We are excited to receive these significant awards. Lincoln Park Zoo is dedicated to science education and these grants will help us expand that work and significantly increase our impact,” said Kevin Bell, president & CEO of Lincoln Park Zoo. “The zoo has a long history of working with international colleagues and communities in the area of conservation biology, particularly in Africa. The new global youth initiative extends our opportunity to work collaboratively with international communities and peers beyond scientific research and into the realm of educational outreach.”

#### **About Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo**

Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo, a historic landmark founded in 1868, is dedicated to connecting people with nature by providing a free, family-oriented wildlife experience. A leader in conservation science both globally and locally, the zoo exemplifies the highest quality animal care and educational outreach. The not-for-profit zoo, managed by The Lincoln Park Zoological Society, is a member-supported organization and one of the nation’s only free, privately managed zoos. For more information, call 312 -742-2000 or visit [www.lpzoo.org](http://www.lpzoo.org).

#### **About AAM**

The American Association of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. With more than 18,000 individual, 3,000 institutional and 300 corporate members, AAM is dedicated to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past, present and future. For more information, visit [www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org).

#### **About the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) promotes international mutual understanding through a wide range of academic, cultural, private-sector, professional, and sports exchange programs. The Bureau’s exchanges engage youth, students, educators, artists, athletes, and emerging leaders in many fields in the United States and in more than 160 countries. Alumni of ECA exchanges comprise over one million people around the world, including more than 50 Nobel Laureates and more than 320 current or former heads of state and government.

#### **About the Institute of Museum and Library Services**

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).