



COMO PARK
ZOO & CONSERVATORY

LEGACY ANNUAL REPORT FY23

Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund / January 2024



Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is pleased to submit our annual report on programs and projects supported by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF), which was created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. This report is required by M.S. 3.303 and details outcomes for FY 2023: July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

We are grateful for your support of our programs.

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is a statewide resource for every Minnesotan, inspiring visitors with the wonders of the natural world. More than a century since its founding, Como's free admission, family-friendly accessible environment and free non-formal education programs continue to make this facility the State's most visited cultural destination.

Funding supported from the Legacy Amendment's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund allows Como Park Zoo and Conservatory to provide a variety of accessible and free programs and enhancements that interweave the arts, culture, and history for citizens of the entire State.

The report of projects funded with ACHF appropriations must contain the following information:

1. The name of the project and project description;
2. The name, telephone number, members of the board or equivalent governing body, and e-mail address of the funding recipient and, when applicable, the website address where the public can directly access detailed information on the recipient's receipt and use of money for the project;
3. The amount and source of funding, including the fiscal year of the appropriation;
4. The amount and source of any additional funding or leverage;
5. The duration of the projects;
6. The number of full-time equivalents funded under the project;
7. The direct expenses and administration costs of the project;
8. Actual measured outcomes and evaluation of projects as required by statute; and
9. Specific information for each program produced and broadcast, including the cost of production, the number of stations broadcasting the program, estimated number of listeners, and other related measures. If the programs produced include educational material, the noncommercial radio station must report on these efforts.

The report must be submitted by January 15 to the Minnesota Department of Administration, the Legislative Coordinating Commission, and the chairs and ranking minority members of the Senate and House of Representatives committees and divisions having jurisdiction over Arts and Cultural Heritage policy and finance. Reporting Period:

This document covers the Fiscal Year 2023 reporting period of July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

FY 23 Total Funding Amount: \$1,500,000

Administrative Costs: 3% to MN Department of Administration Grant Management \$40,500, 2% to Como Administrative Costs \$29,100

Duration of Projects: July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

Staff FtE: 5.05 FtE

Oversight of these projects is the responsibility of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, a division of the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department and key senior staff. Questions about these projects may be directed to:

Michelle Furrer

City of Saint Paul – Parks & Recreation
michelle.furrer@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

www.comozooconservatory.org
1225 Estabrook Drive, Saint Paul, MN 55103



LEGACY AMENDMENT'S ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
FY 2023 Report Minnesota Legislative
Reference Library

July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023 / January 2024

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is owned
and operated by the City of Saint Paul's
Department of Parks and Recreation.

Leadership:

Michelle Furrer

*Campus Manager & Director,
Como Park Zoo and Conservatory*

Andy Rodriguez

Director, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

Melvin Carter

Mayor

City of Saint Paul City Council:

Amy Brendmoen

City Council President

Chris Tolbert

Rebecca Noecker

Mitra Jalali

Elsie Yang

Jane L Prince

Russel Balenger

Reporting: As a recipient of funds from the ACHF, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory must abide by certain reporting requirements as stated in Minnesota Statutes § 3.303, Subd. 10, § 129D.17 Subd. 2 (d), and § 129D.19 Subd. 5. 4 According to Minnesota Statute 129D.17, Subdivision 2(d): A state agency or other recipient of a direct appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund must compile and submit all information for funded projects or programs, including the proposed measurable outcomes and all other items required under section 3.303, subdivision 10, to the Legislative Coordinating Commission as soon as practicable or by January 15 of the applicable fiscal year, whichever comes first. The Legislative Coordinating Commission must post submitted information on the Web site required under section 3.303, subdivision 10, as soon as it becomes available.

Cover photo by
Steve Solmonson, Como Volunteer

MUSIC IN NATURE

Live music showcasing rich and vibrant rhythms and sounds of Minnesota's multi-cultural community. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory offered a variety of ways to introduce music and local artists to their visitors. Groovin' in the Garden offers an eight-week concert series of live music on the front lawn of the Conservatory in the summer months. In the winter months, the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory hosted an eight-week concert series called Music Under Glass. On Mondays during the summer months, Music Mondays features strolling musicians throughout the zoo grounds. Both music series were free to the public and each featured Minnesota artists. The concerts were held outside of the standard public hours and introduced the arts to a new audience.



Outcomes & Outputs FY23

- 16 concerts
- 71 artists
- 8,165 attendees

Proposed Outcome Achievement

- Achieved all**
(Achieved 100% of proposed outcomes)
- Achieved most
(Achieved greater than 50% of proposed outcomes)
- Achieved some
(Achieved less than 50% of proposed outcomes)
- Achieved none
(Achieved 0% of proposed outcomes)
- Outcomes data not yet available



EDZOOICATION PROGRAMS

Como Class Pass is free educational and engaging programs for all Minnesota schools focused on 3-4th grade students. These lessons build meaningful connections between students and Como's plants and animals at a time when field trips are not feasible.

Students report an increased understanding of how to use engineering to solve problems. Teachers report that student's connection between plants and animals are stronger and enhance STEM curriculum.

Outcomes & Outputs FY23

- Class Pass Outputs
- 29 classes
- 1,538 participants and 57 teacher/adults

Proposed Outcome Achievement

- Achieved all**
(Achieved 100% of proposed outcomes)
- Achieved most
(Achieved greater than 50% of proposed outcomes)
- Achieved some
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- Achieved none
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SENIOR STROLLS

Senior Strolls is a program for Como's "55 and better" visitors. This program offers an opportunity for a leisurely stroll through the lush greenery and warm confines of the conservatory, or a walk amongst the amazing animals and world-class exhibits on zoo grounds. Seniors Strolls takes place 9am-10am two Tuesdays a month. During the winter months, we also offer "Sunset Senior Strolls" which takes place in the conservatory after hours.



APPRENTICE PROGRAM

The Apprentice Program partners career development to students employed through the City of Saint Paul RightTrack program. Apprentices commit to two years of paid work to develop professional skills in zookeeping and horticulture, providing enough experience to meet employment requirements. RightTrack is a youth employment initiative for building a diverse future workforce, while supporting young people and their families now. RightTrack engages nearly 1,000 young people from cost-burdened homes throughout Saint Paul. The support of the program includes training, development and support.



S.A.F.E. DAYS

S.A.F.E. (Saving Animals From Extinction) Days offer visitors a special opportunity to chat with an Education Specialist about one of Como's endangered animal species. This opportunity highlights the work zoos and aquariums are doing to save these species, and what everyone can do to help.

COMO CARES STATIONS & VIDEOS

Como Cares (Conservation, Action, Research, Empathy, Stories) stations and videos help visitors strengthen their connection to Como through insider information about the zoo and conservatory such as animal names, personalities, highlighting special programs, and even trivia! Along with these weekly stations, Como Cares reaches a virtual audience through social media videos (Instagram Reels) that take a look at Como's plants and animals through a humorous lens.



SPECIAL EXHIBITS

SUMMER OF SPARKY

For more than 65 years, “Sparky the Sea Lion” has been a beloved Minnesota tradition, teaching generations of children to care about seals and sea lions in the wild. As Como evolved, Sparky became a conservation ambassador, with a show that teaches visitors everything from the value of recycling to protecting marine mammals from plastic pollution.

In June 2022, Summer of Sparky launched, and the celebration continued into FY23. Como commissioned 20 custom 6ft Sparky statues that would then be hand-painted by local artists and placed throughout the Twin Cities. Statues were placed at businesses, parks, and tourist locations around the Twin Cities, including CHS Field, Rice Park, Harriet Island, Como Regional Park, Minnehaha Park, and the Minneapolis RBC Gateway until September 2022.

With a different educational and interactive pop-up event at each statue, we engaged 45,000+ attendees. Utilizing every avenue from summer Rec-check programs to partnerships with the Science Museum of Minnesota, Minnesota Children’s Museum, and Saint Paul Saints, we worked diligently to foster a connection between the public and natural world.

As a fitting finale for the Summer of Sparky, all the statues were collected and redistributed around the Como campus for a month-long celebration. With a team of educators, Sparky artists, sponsors, and volunteers, each weekend in October was a new celebration of Sparky and conservation. It was a culmination of everything we strived to achieve throughout the summer all rolled into one place. With activities ranging from our ever-popular ocean trivia to “Sparky beach clean-up”, we worked to engage with every generation of visitor.



MISSION SAFARI MAZE

In May 2023, Mission Safari Maze invited guests to explore a vast biodiversity in Mission Safari, a bilingual, multi-layered adventure maze, and discover how even the most insignificant seeming wildlife (ahem...mosquito) plays an important role in human survival. Mission Safari.

Guests embarked on a journey by completing question-and-answer challenges that let you choose your own path through the winding maze.

Along the way they could transform into different animals and experience life on the wild side. They saw how a long jump measures up to that of a Red Kangaroo; Swing through the canopy beside an Orangutan; Soar on the breeze like a Bald Eagle; Hang with a Two-Toed Sloth; And try not to get squeezed by a Python or caught in the Black Widow’s web!

They could also continue the survey of Earth’s biodiversity on a Secret Safari. Here you will enter the hidden maze-within-a-maze and connect with a dozen different animals on missions to learn about their unique adaptations and survival stories. Each weekend in October was a new celebration of Sparky and conservation with the help of educators, Sparky artists, sponsors, and volunteers to engage with every generation of visitors.



EXHIBIT GALLERY



“Roots to Healing: A Brief Survey of the Past, Present, and Future of Plant-Based Remedies in Minnesota” December 8-March 15

This exhibit examined the intersection of culture, medicinal plants, and current research. It invited viewers to consider the value of plants that have taken root in Minnesota. These include the commonplace plantain, the rare Lady’s Slipper orchid, and the controversial Cannabis.

Tiger! Tiger! April 1-May 31

Tigers are amazing! Test your knowledge of tigers while learning some interesting facts. Why do they have those stripes? How are house cats similar to the world’s largest cats? Learn many “fun facts” about tigers.

Tigers are important! As apex predators, tigers keep their habitats in balance. This means lower levels of the food chain, including plants, depend on tigers. Humans have relied on this balance for thousands of years, tigers are a part of their cultural heritage.



Endangered species - The chief threats to tigers in the wild are loss of habitat and poaching. Three species of tigers are already extinct. And only about 4,000 tigers are left in the world today.

Hope for tigers - Conservation efforts for saving tigers, in their natural habitats, are underway. Learn about the innovative methods being implemented to make sure tigers continue to have a home in a balanced ecosystem. Every person, regardless of age or location, can help save them.



Monarchs and Milkweed: A Story of Survival June 1-September 30

This exhibit takes you on a journey into the world of butterflies and plants and introduces the complex relationship between monarchs and milkweed. We will explore how their very survival has been shaped over time by one another, as we travel through the seasons of a calendar year revealing how both insect and plant grow and interact, culminating in a massive migration that crosses a continent.

Outcomes & Outputs FY23

- Increased free access to art exhibits to Minnesotans with ways they can feel, act, learn
- Attendance: 565,442
- Engagement: 52,392
- Provided a special exhibit that featured ways to connect with nature
- Summer of Sparky Statues
- 24 artists, 13 community partners
- 32 events

Proposed Outcome Achievement

- Achieved all
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- Achieved most
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