



Legacy Fund Progress Report

January 2018



COMO PARK
ZOO & CONSERVATORY





LEGACY AMENDMENT ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE GRANT

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

FY 2017 Report Minnesota Legislative Reference Library

January 2018

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is pleased to submit a current review of our work and accomplishments with the generous appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund of the Minnesota Legacy Amendment. We are thrilled to be able to produce a variety of programs and enhancements that interweave the arts, culture, and history for the guests thanks to the Legacy Amendment Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund. The programs overviewed in this report would not be possible, or exist, without this critical funding.

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is one of the top visited cultural destinations in the State of Minnesota, with nearly 2 million visitors each year, because it's free, interactive, welcoming, and accessible for families. Como Park Zoo and Conservatory celebrates diversity in many forms, across cultures, ethnicity, economics, and generations with visitors coming from throughout the State of Minnesota.

Grant Program Overview (brief): Minnesota Laws, 2015, 1st Special Session, Chapter 2, Article 4, Section 2, Subd. 6 awarded \$1,960,000 to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory for projects and program development. The grant requires a 25% match to come from other source of funding and includes a 2% administrative cost.

Funded initiatives fall into the following categories: EdZooCation Programs, Special Exhibits, Teen Conservation Community(YEP), Forecourt Gardens, Residency Program, Habitat Renewal and Music Series.

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:

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MUSIC SERIES

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory offered a variety of ways to introduce music and local artists to their visitors. Music Under Glass and Groovin' in the Garden were free to the public and each offered an eight-week series of live music inside the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's two-acres of tropical gardens during the winter months, and out on the front lawn of the Conservatory in the summer months. These concerts featured Minnesota artists and were held outside of the standard public hours and introduced the arts to a new audience. On Mondays during the summer months Music Mondays featured strolling musicians throughout the zoo grounds.

Outcomes:

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory offered 18 Minnesota bands, totaling 95 musicians, the opportunity to showcase their art in a paid performance at the number one cultural institution in Minnesota during the series of Music Under Glass and Groovin' in the Garden. In total 35 music events were available that over 18,800 Minnesotans enjoyed, while increasing appreciation to local music and musicians in a non-traditional setting.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 17 Budget = \$22,636.56

July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

.25

COMO RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Elementary schools from both the Metro and Greater Minnesota connected with nature in a whole new way at the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Spending either a full week, or five individual days, students learned about plants, animals, and cultures from around the world. In this hands-on high impact program students, along with their classroom teachers and adult chaperones, learned how to be conservation heroes and better stewards of the earth.

Outcomes:

Como's professional education staff reached 793 students, a 6% increase over the previous year. Como also saw 52 educators participate and had a 40% increase in volunteer chaperones. In addition, the following items were evaluated using a pre-and post test:

- A 46% increase in student's understanding of how to use engineering to solve problems.
- A 37% increase in student's knowledge that there are only three layers to a rainforest.
- A 30% increase in the knowledge that energy can come from wind.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 17 Budget = \$226,337.12

Total Non-grant Funding = \$20,000.00

July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

1.97



LIL' EXPLORERS

Family members are children's first educators. They are the greatest influence in shaping young children's attitudes, values, behaviors, habits and skills. Lil' Explorers was created to provide opportunities for families of very young children to create memories while developing an appreciation of the natural world. Lil' Explorers provides an opportunity to connect children and adults to nature (fostering environment awareness) through visits with live plants and animals, age appropriate educational activities, stories and playtime together.

Lil' Explorer's is a free, hands on program offered Thursdays from 10am-12pm between the months of September and April. The target audience for Lil' Explorer Thursdays is children between the ages of one and five years, along with their adults. The adult demographic typically includes stay-at-home parents, grandparents, and childcare providers. We offered 13 different themes over the 26 weeks.

Outcomes:

- 3,147 participated in Lil Explorers. Averaging 96 little guest, plus adults each week.
- Whether planning an outing or just coming across this outstanding program, attendees consistently expressed gratitude to have such an opportunity for a free educational outing.



EDZOOICATION PROGRAMS

LIL' EXPLORERS, NATURE'S ENGINEERS and PROJECT PASSPORT



NATURE'S ENGINEERS

Nature's Engineers is an all ages program offered free of charge in a one or three part series. Our earliest learners have animal visitors that all move in different ways. Students learn how these types of movement help each specific animal. Elementary students and adults both learn the four steps in the engineering process in different ways. Students are engaged in science processes through a whimsical story that introduces them to a variety of natural wonders.

Each of the three programs are inquiry-based, and allow children the experience of building projects using plants and animals as their models for design. Not only did children get inspired when they meet animals with amazing adaptations, they were thrilled with the opportunity to think like real scientists and design like real engineers. Learning and discussing along the way how there are many ways to solve a problem. Older students and adults marveled at the world of biomimicry. Amazing technological advances have been made in all areas of science. Many of these advancements have been inspired by plants and animals. Participants learned through an interactive slide show about how nature is helping scientists clean up oil spills, reduce energy consumption, and make advancements in aviation just to name a few.

Outcomes:

During the 2016-2017 school year Como taught 74 programs to 796 students. Como staff logged more than 1,500 miles to serve the students of Minnesota via Nature's Engineering Program.



PROJECT PASSPORT

A summer long program for two hours every Thursday, Project Passport took visitors around the globe. Targeted for middle school students but loved by all ages, any visitor could dive into one of seven themes offered throughout the summer. From a butterfly's life cycle to their importance as a pollinator and a migrator. Each week kids of all ages enjoyed potting and taking home plants to doing animal yoga on Donor Plaza.

Outcomes:

- Over 1,500 visitors enjoyed Passport activities throughout the 2016-2017 season.
- Each week consisted of up to five activity areas on Como's Donor Plaza featured hands on activities for any interested visitor, teaching visitors about various biomes and the

plants and animals that lived there. Also bringing attention to those Minnesota animals.

- Partnerships with seven organizations that participated in Project Passport with informational and interactive stations.
- Over 1,000 native plants were given to those who learned to pot them and how to care for each species.
- Project Passport taught visitors creative ways to reuse items in a garden.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 17 Budget = \$36,968.17
July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

.57

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

A new program launched in FY17 - YEP – a youth engagement program. In the inaugural year, five teams of youth applied and were accepted to join the Youth Engagement team. Teams began the program with a four-day trip to Eagle Bluff in Northern Minnesota where they learned leadership and team building skills. Once home, teams prepared to implement conservation-based projects in their communities throughout 2017 fiscal year. The development of the youth engagement program was based on several successful youth-based organizations and through consultation with several local and national industry-based youth programs. Each month the groups came together at Como to learn about grant writing, sustainability and to travel out into the community to experience tours of partner organizations like the U of M's raptor center or CHS fields conservation efforts. Como was able to leverage private dollars to award micro grants for project implementation to teams who went through the grant writing experience.



Outcomes:

- Youth learned about various aspects of their community and identified projects they felt strongly about, they expanded their skills in teamwork, leadership, time management, and communications through various activities during the nine-month program.
- In April, YEP participants invited family and friends to their presentation.
- One of Como's YEP teams won the 2017 Sustainable Saint Paul award for their work to getting youth of color to attend a winter festival at Phalen Park and hiring a puppeteer to produce a character for the event. They then worked with friends and classmates to put on a performance.
- *Communities gained rain gardens, food share tables and education at local schools thanks to the efforts of the YEP program.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 17 Budget = \$38,282.39

Total Non-Grant Funding = \$13,000.00

July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

.4





MINNESOTA GARDEN & CIRCLE GARDEN

The Minnesota Garden and Circle Garden replaced the large open turf forecourt in front of the Visitor Center with a formal garden layout that is reminiscent of the historic public gardens that were adjacent to the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory in years past. The space was envisioned for gardens since the 1996 master plan that recommend bringing back some of the early elements of Como Park that once stood after the Conservatory was built in 1915. This area once held outdoor gardens including Aphrodite's Garden, a Peony Garden and an Iris Garden and a pergola. The historic gardens were removed starting after 1920 and by 1974 a large parking area was installed and later moved in 2005 with the addition of the Visitor Center.

The concept of the Gardens is to provide a central pedestrian mall as the primary organizing element related to the front entrance of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory and the Visitor Center. Construction on the gardens was completed in June 2017. The installation of the new art piece commissioned for the project was completed in May 2017.

Outcomes:

The new gardens feature 5,000 Minnesota native cultivars, and several plants that have been selected from the historic plant lists. In addition, all plant material purchased for the project follows a city ordinance that requires plants to be grown free of pesticides that ultimately benefits insects including butterflies and honey bees.

The art piece commissioned was designed by Casto Solano from Spain who answered a public RFP last year. The process began with a committee that was represented by Como Staff, Parks Staff, Como Friends Staff and Public Art Saint Paul selecting three design concepts from three different artists. The design, title "Little Giants in Como Park" offers LED lighting and native dragonflies.

Casto Solano's intent was to show us that diversity and coexistence are crucial. I quote, "It will remind us of own greatness and fragility, and show us how important it is to follow a path of preservation and caring for the future. It will show us the real potential of ecological culture. Larger than life, so that we can live another perspective. Tallgrass prairies and their diminutive inhabitants will take pride of place here. Perhaps in the way we too can become conscious of the immense importance of things grandness of small things."

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 17 Budget = \$455,948.04

Total Non-grant Funding = \$112,000.00

July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

1.1

SPECIAL EXHIBITS

Como's Blooming Butterflies experience welcomed nearly 136,000 visitors who had the opportunity to immerse themselves amongst the 500-750 tropical butterflies present within the exhibit. Visitors experienced the thrill of watching moths emerging from cocoons, observed butterflies eating through their proboscis and learned how farmers work to preserve native butterfly populations. The outdoor exhibit hosted approximately 35 varieties of tropical plants which provided nectar and shelter for the butterflies. More than 50 species of tropical butterflies were imported from Central and South American, Asia and Africa. Six hundred visitors were able to hand release butterflies into the exhibit giving them a rewarding and personal experience in nature.



Without having to leave Como, visitors had the opportunity to get up close to hundreds of butterflies from around the world. Visitors reported feelings of relaxation and a direct connection to nature while experiencing the exhibit.

Como worked with a wide variety of Minnesota artists for our exhibit gallery July 2016-June 2017.

July-September 2016 we featured macro photographer Bill Johnson who focused on Butterflies of North America as his subject.

October-December 2016 we worked with the Minnesota Plein Air Painters group to create an exhibit of paintings created outdoors of Minnesota flora and fauna.

December 2016-January 2017 we featured an artist Rhoda Lucey who challenged herself to draw every day for 31 days in Sumi Ink a different animal featured at Como.

February-April 2017 we exhibited a photographic journey of Moon Lai's trip to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania to witness what is being done for elephant conservation and research.

April-June 2017 featured Amy Sandford's exhibit of Endangered Species along with information on each of the animals spotlighted.

June 2017 started a new Plein Air exhibit which was created at Como Park Zoo & Conservatory on June 10 by 22 artists who set up easels in various areas of the park.

Outcomes:

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory saw a year-end total increase in estimated attendance in 2016 of 2%, which matched the summer period of June-August and in the off-peak season, the year over year increase was 5%.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 17 Budget = \$197,458.94

Total Non-grant Funding = \$75,000.00

January 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

2.5



HABITAT RENEWAL

Improve interpretive graphics, add interactive elements, and expand encounters for both the guest and animal to better make the connection to inspire the public to value the presence of living things were the goals for the habitat renewal. In FY17, focused areas primarily in the Large Cats and Hoofed Stock area.

Outcomes:

Much of work for Phase 1 was completed at the end of the grant in June 2017 and Phase II is in process now. Length of stay will be measured upon construction completion. Phase I focused on creating an immersive experience from the floor bridge to a ceiling light canopy, adding tactile interactives like binoculars and paw prints, additional audio and visual effects. The most popular addition was an interactive Safari Jeep. Kids can take an experience looking eye to eye to a lion or tiger on board. The project work allowed Como to partner with the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Funding & Duration

Fiscal Year 16 Budget = \$217,367.28

Total Non-grant Funding = \$320,000.00

July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017

FTEs

.06