



COMO PARK ZOO & CONSERVATORY



LEGACY FUND PROGRESS REPORT

JANUARY 2020





LEGACY AMENDMENT ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE GRANT

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory January 2020
FY 2019 Report Minnesota Legislative Reference Library
July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is a statewide resource for every Minnesotan, inspiring nearly two million annual 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 & 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.

Funded initiatives fall into the following categories: Natural Encounters EdZooCation Programs that feature Como in the Community and Residency Program; Public Engagement Events that include Lil Explorers, Senior Strolls and Sensory Friendly Days; Special Exhibits, Garden Preservation, Habitat Renewal and Music in Nature Series.

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, **Michael Hahm**, Director, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, **Mayor Melvin Carter**

City of Saint Paul City Council: Amy Brendmoen, City Council President, Chris Tolbert, Rebecca Noecker, Mitra Jalali, Nelsie Yang, Jane L Prince, Dai Thao

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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Legislative Citation: Minnesota Law, Chapter 91 – HF No 707, Article 4 Sec. 2. Arts and Cultural Heritage Subd. 6.(g) of \$1,350,000 the first year and \$1,350,000 the second year are for a grant for program development that features education programs and habitat enhancements, special exhibits, music appreciation programs and historical garden access and preservation.

Source:
Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund

Duration:
FY 19 – July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019

Total Funding Amount: \$1,350,000

Administrative Costs: 2% to MN Department of Administration Grant Management \$27,000, 2% Como Administrative Costs -\$26,460

Direct Expenses: \$1,296,540

Matching Funds: \$337,500



MUSIC IN NATURE

Como's Music in Nature series are live music showcasing rich and vibrant rhythms and sounds of Minnesota's multi-cultural community.

A variety of music opportunities for guests free of charge include a winter series called Music Under Glass in the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory and a summer series called Groovin' in the Gardens on the front lawn. These featured music series are offered FREE of charge and at times when Como would normally not be available for the public to visit. Music Mondays offer general visitors throughout the Zoo grounds to enjoy the sounds of local musicians and enhance their visit from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Measurable Outcomes:

- 15 Music Monday performances
- 8 Groovin' in the Garden Dates Wednesdays in July, August, & June
- 8 Music Under Glass Concerts Sundays in January-March
- Over 74 local musical musicians had the opportunity to showcase their art in a paid performance
- Attendees to Music Under Glass and Groovin' in the Garden totaled 9,700

FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

\$41,989.60

FTEs

.10

Achieved Proposed Outcomes

HABITAT RENEWAL

Improved interpretive graphics, added interactive elements, and expanded encounters for both the guest and animal to better make the connection to inspire the public to value the presence of living things. In FY19, the focus was on the Marine Mammal and Large Cats.

Outcomes:

The updated habitat signage, graphics and interactive elements have shown to have a reported increase in awareness of conservation actions by 15%, however anticipated length of stay has not changed. The survey happens at the exhibit and not at the end of the guest visit. A new output technique would be to capture the guests upon entering and have them report upon exiting.

FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

\$178,696.51

FTEs

.06

Achieved Most of Proposed Outcomes





NATURAL ENCOUNTER EDZOOICATION PROGRAMS

Como is committed to creating a legacy of learning for all Minnesotans, free of charge.

RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Como's Residency Program is designed to be a high-dosage program that connects elementary school classrooms with the plants and animals of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Students learn about different biomes and have the chance to apply the skills needed for STEM focused careers with engineering challenges. Participating classrooms will make enrichment for zoo animals while going through the scientific method, explore the zoo and conservatory grounds and visit behind the scenes of the conservatory. The program is open to 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms throughout Minnesota as we offer a Metro and Greater MN version of the curriculum.

Parent message to teacher: *"Thank you so much for writing the grant & giving the kids this amazing/educational experience at Como! I was so impressed with all of it and probably a highlight for me was to listen to Clara every night tell me so excitedly about the details of each day. Thank you! She gave us a special zoo tour on Saturday-plants/ferns/north and sunken gardens and her favorite the Japanese garden. What a great week & then weekend too!"*

Student letter: *I am so grateful to get this opportunity to spend the week at Como! The next time I come to Como Zoo I'm going to look at it way differently thanks to you! I've learned so much here and it's been so much fun! I am always excited to come here and spend the day! You are so nice, always positive and caring! The second I met you were so nice and I knew I was going to have fun here. Thank you!*

Student letter: *The Como Residency was the most exciting week of my life. I hope some time again I'll see you guys. I'll come again with my family and teach them everything you've taught me. My favorite animal now is every animal. Thank you for changing how I think of animals.*

COMO IN THE COMMUNITY

Como in the Community programs are intended to get participants interested in who Como is and what Como does through movement-based activities and visits from live animals and plants. These programs are intended to reach organizations with audiences ages K-6 who do not readily have access to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

NATURE'S ENGINEERS

Nature's Engineers has three programs to choose from based on the audience age with programs for K-adult. These programs are designed to inspire and value the presence of living things in our lives through interactive programs, problem solving real-life ecosystem problems, and learning about technological advances inspired by plants and animals.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Como's Youth Engagement Program (YEP) is a program for any youth entering 9th - 12th grade who have a desire for gaining knowledge in the conservation field. YEP offered youth a unique environment to learn from professionals in their respective fields, have fun and learn about conservation in our community. Como asks that youth who join YEP come with an open mind and the desire to be engaged.

"The most useful part of YEP was the many environmental careers and finding what I should major in while in college and wanting to join and learn more about the nature walk program."

Measurable Outcomes:

- 31 weeks of Residency Programs with 912 student participants, and 71 teachers and staff
- Greater Minnesota participation represented 31% of the programs in Residency
- 190 Nature Engineer Program Offerings
- Como in the Community Program delivered 41 programs reaching 880 participants

Achieved Proposed Outcomes

FUNDING & DURATION

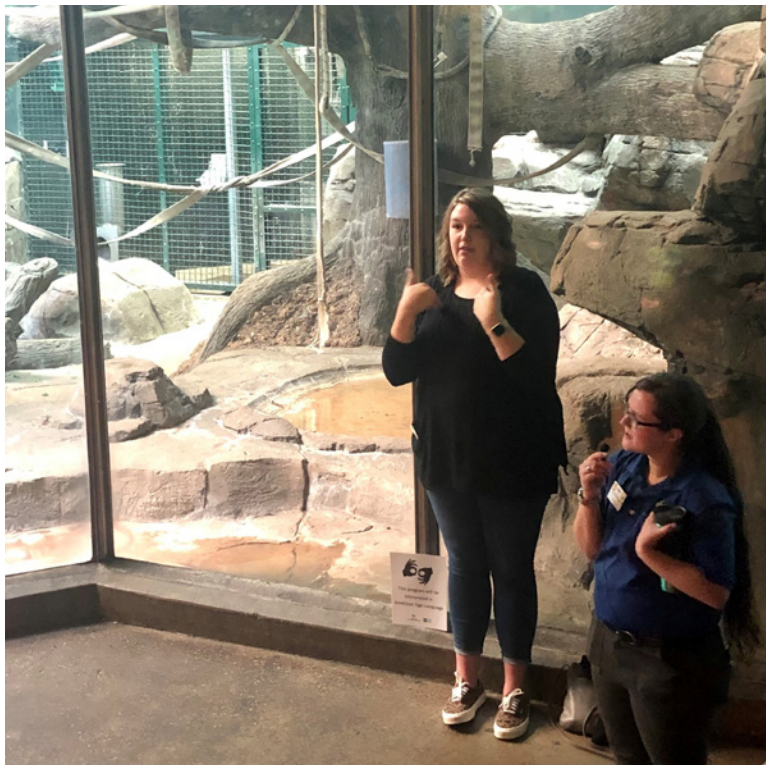
Fiscal Year 2019 Budget
\$350,149.20

FTEs
3



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Como is committed to ensuring that there are program offerings accessible to all and has a long history of providing quality public engagement programs. These programs provide opportunities to learn and be creative in a free/ low cost environment. Programs are focused on equity, access and conservation include -Senior Strolls, Sensory Friendly Events, ASL Days, S.A.F.E. Sundays & Como Making a Global Impact Conservation Talks.



SENSORY FRIENDLY DAYS

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is an energetic, colorful place full of sensory stimuli, and we know this environment can be overwhelming for some guests. Como has developed a few ways that we strive to provide a positive, welcoming experience for every visitor.

Special dates for a more inclusive experience at Como Park Zoo & Conservatory for families have been developed. Spend time exploring exhibits and activities designed for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. A “social narrative” created in collaboration with the Autism Society of Minnesota helps visitors reduce their anxiety about new experiences by explaining what to expect step by step as they explore the Campus and the “create your own visual schedule” tool on Como’s website helps prepare you for your Autism Friendly Early Entry day if following a schedule is helpful. There is also a sensory friendly map to highlight stronger smells and quiet spaces around the Como Campus.

ALS DAYS

The first Sunday of each month a Sign Language interpreter from SportSign translates some of Como’s daily value-added programs for our visitors.

COMO MAKING A GLOBAL IMPACT TALKS

Introducing a two-month series of talks in April and May. Como invites the public to learn about conservation research projects that our zoo keepers, educators, and gardeners have been working on. Our goal is to provide opportunities for the public to learn about local and global conservation projects that Como supports.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS CONTINUED

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' Explorers is a free, hands on program offered Thursdays from 10am-12pm now offered year-round. The adult demographic typically includes stay-at-home parents, grandparents, and childcare providers. We offered 27 different themes over the 47 weeks.



SENIOR STROLLS

Senior Strolls is a program for Como's 55 and-up-aged friends, offering an opportunity to experience Como Park Zoo & Conservatory before it opens to the public. Seniors Strolls takes place 9am - 10am every Tuesday in the summer and twice a month in the winter.

Guests are welcome to partake in active social and learning opportunities complete with special activity stations before the doors open to the public at 10 a.m. Also available is the opportunity for a leisurely stroll through the lush greenery and warm confines of the conservatory; or, in the warmer months, a walk amongst the amazing animals and world class exhibits on the grounds of the zoo. This program is a great way to get active and social, with a little adult learning thrown in to spice it up!

SAFE SUNDAYS

Every Sunday we off a special opportunity to chat with an education staff member about an endangered animal species and how all of us can Save Animals From Extinction (S.A.F.E.). This opportunity also highlights the work Como Zoo and other zoos and aquariums in our network are doing to save endangered species.

Outcomes:

- 47 weeks of programming featuring 187 offerings averaging 3-4 programs a week with:
- A total of 9,480 participants
 - 3,670 Lil Explorers
 - 2,714 S.A.F.E
 - 1,595 A.S.L.

FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year 2019 Budget
\$96,738.56

FTEs
1.1

Achieved Proposed Outcomes



SPECIAL EXHIBITS

Como offers new immersive, educational experiences that engaged visitors and reinforce our conservation messages. Topics included Pollinators and Nature Play.

BLOOMING BUTTERFLIES

Como's Blooming Butterflies offered guests the opportunity to immerse themselves amongst the 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. The exhibit run was completed in September 2018.

POLLINATORS: ALL THE BUZZ

Como commissioned the development of a new, multi-year special exhibit with Outhouse Productions on the topic of pollinators. This seasonal exhibit was open daily Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day Weekend and highlighted pollinators from all around the world with signage, art installation and live bees for visitors to observe in an indoor 2,500 square foot greenhouse garden environment filled with pollinator plants. The wide variety of plants come from the world class Marjorie McNeely Conservatory collection showcased the different pollinator syndromes, as well as how different flowers attract their own pollinators.

Live bees including the Blue Orchard Mason Bees, Alfalfa Leafcutter Bees and Eastern Bumblebees were on display in the covered enclosures so guests can safely observe them through their lifecycles.

Over 80% of the plants today rely on bees and other animals for pollination so that they can produce seeds, including one third of crop species. Bees alone are responsible for many commercial crops such as alfalfa, tomatoes, pumpkins, apples, cherries and many more.

Como hopes to inspire the public with this exhibit to take notice of the pollinators all around them and see what all the buzz is about when it comes to pollination. Pollinators: All the Buzz will be open in 2020 and 2021.



POLLINATORS: LITTLE HELPERS, BIG RESULTS

Como Park Zoo & Conservatory hosted the Paly Foundation's traveling panel exhibit of Pollinators: Little Helpers, Big Results in our Exhibit Gallery. This exhibit featured informative and engaging panels about different types of pollinators beyond bees. The Exhibit Gallery provided guests a space to take a rest and relax while learning about shared conservation success stories and shared how we can help save other species. We hosted this exhibit May 2019-September 2019.

NATURE PLAY PARTY

Como offered a special event called Nature Play Party on Cleveland Court. This event was open to all and featured activity stations which were Nature Play based. The stations featured natural materials for kids to use their imagination with minimal instructions. Adults could read the informational signs about the importance of incorporating Nature Play into their child's free time.

Outcomes:

- In FY19, Como offered four unique exhibits touching 361,632 visitors

Achieved Most of Proposed Outcomes

FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year 2019 Budget
\$301,656.40

FTEs
2.1



GARDENS — CLEVELAND COURT & JAPANESE GARDEN WALK

Cleveland Court, the final phase of the forecourt gardens that began in 2014, was designed in FY18 with completion in FY19. 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. Cleveland Court was completed in June 2019.

In the Charlotte Partridge Ordway Japanese Garden, Como designed a natural Zen walk and new exit path from the Tea House to the Pine Grove walk. This new space provides ample resting areas, an interpretive court and new views into the garden. The work was completed in June 2019.

Outcomes:

- Over 30% of guests interacted with the area.
- Guests were able to connect with nature and the Japanese Garden in a new, inviting area.

Achieved Proposed Outcomes



FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year 2019 Budget
\$703,430.88

FTEs
.2