



COMO PARK
ZOO & CONSERVATORY



LEGACY FUND PROGRESS REPORT

January 2021



LEGACY AMENDMENT ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE GRANT

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

Fiscal Year 2020 Report Minnesota Legislative Reference Library

July 1, 2019 –June 30, 2020 / January 2021

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.

In March 2020, Covid-19 forced Como Park Zoo and Conservatory to close and cancel all public programming while still maintaining the plants, animals and facilities. Staff were reassigned to assist with the Critical Infrastructure of the facility and support the essential functions. The Marjorie McNeely Conservatory reopened in June and the Como Zoo in July, to a limited capacity of 250 guests at one time, one-way traffic flow and reservations.

An outcome to this unprecedented time was a new programming element, Como Live which began in April. A daily program kicked off in April that provided virtual content into homes for families that allowed our community to stay connected to Como and the natural world. The viewership has exceeded our expectations.

Reporting: As a recipient of funds from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory must abide by certain reporting requirements as stated in Minnesota Statutes § 3.303, Subd. 10, and § 129D.17 Subdivision 2 (d).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.

Source:

Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund

Duration:

Fiscal Year 2020—July 1, 2019 –June 30, 2020

Total Funding Amount: \$1,350,000

Administrative Costs: 3% to MN Department of Administration Grant Management—\$40,500;
2% Como Administrative Costs—\$26,190

Direct Expenses: \$1,283,310

Matching Funds: \$330,000

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

Michelle Furrer, Campus Manager
& Director, Como Park Zoo and
Conservatory

Mayor Melvin Carter

Amy Brendmoen,
City Council President

Rebecca Noecker

Nelsie Yang

Dai Thao

Michelle Furrer

City of Saint Paul -
Parks & Recreation
Como Park Zoo and Conservatory
1225 Estabrook Drive
Saint Paul, MN 55103

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.

Due to Covid-19, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory was closed on March 16. The Conservatory reopened at limited capacity on June 28 and the Zoo on July 28. The gardening staff was limited during spring 2020 with the uncertainty of reopening timeline.

- Over 85% of guests reported visited Gardens while at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

FUNDING & DURATION

\$54,685.76

FTEs

.4

Actual Spending:

\$16,630.34



O M O C O M O C O M O C O M O C O M O C O M O C

M O C O M O C O M O C O M O C O M O C O M O C

NATURAL ENCOUNTER EDZOOICATION PROGRAMS

Como's Residency program offers a Minnesota class an entire week of educational programming at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. When school is out, Como will provide free outreach classes at a variety of traditional and non-traditional education institution at their locations.



RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Como's Residency Program is designed to be a high-dosage program that connects second and third grade 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. The week is spent going through the scientific method as they make animal enrichment, explore the zoo and conservatory grounds and visit behind the scenes. From Hinckley to Rochester schools learn engineering and scientific inquiry tools to help them succeed throughout their journey.

Covid-19 affected programs in March 2020 as schools closed and went to online classes and canceled all field trips. Therefore, the last 5 weeks did not have programs or had virtual partial programs.



NATURE'S ENGINEERS

Nature's Engineers is an all age, inquiry-based program that allows participants the experience of building projects using plant and animals as their models for design. Not only are they inspired when they meet animals with amazing adaptations, they are 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.

In this program, older students and adults marvel 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 learn how nature is helping scientists clean up oil spills, reduce energy consumption and make advancements in aviation.

Due to Covid-19, no programs were booked or performed during non-school year times in 2020.



FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year
2020 Budget
\$334,782

FTEs
2

Actual Spending:
\$203,109.08

Measurable Outcomes:

- 20 weeks of Residency Programs with 549 student participants
 - Greater Minnesota participation represented 27.7%
 - 1,327 participants in 62 programs in Nature Engineer Program
- ✓ *Achieved most of the proposed outcomes—Covid related*

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 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.



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 10 a.m.- 12 p.m. Programs ran weekly July 1, 2020 and due to Covid have been canceled since March.

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.



ASL 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.

SAFE SUNDAYS

Every Sunday we offer 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.



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 9 a.m.– 10 a.m. every Tuesday in summer months 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!

COMO LIVE: DIGITAL LEGACY LEARNING CONTENT

Due to Covid-19, Como pivoted our Public Engagement team to produce daily live content online starting on April 6. Each segment featured some of Como's beloved animals and gardens, behind the scenes content, tours and tidbits. Como has used Facebook live as the platform and reaches over 150,000 followers. The most popular segment to date has been on Chloe the Sloth with over 55,300 people viewing the video.



FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year
2020 Budget

\$126,405.76

FTEs

1.4

Actual Spending:

\$119,568.10

Outcomes:

37 weeks of programming

- 1,706 Little Explorer Participants
- 635 Summer Lil Explorers
- 1,785 Safe Sunday Participants
- 333 Sensory Friendly Visitors
- 1,625 Translator Interactions
- 618 Senior Strollers
- 26 Como in the Community events with 2,052 interactions

Como Live

- Engagement: 49,200
- 3-second views: 675,700
- 1-minute views: 54,600
- Net followers: 4,000
- ✓ *Achieved proposed outcomes*

SPECIAL EXHIBITS

Limited edition or seasonal immersive, educational experiences engage visitors, build excitement and reinforce conservation messages. Como provided three major special attractions.

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 life cycles.

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.

Since we were not able to have guests at Como over part of the summer, a weekly pollinator virtual program was produced that started in June 2020.



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.

Como hosted this exhibit May 2019–September 2019.

CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

Como is part of an important movement devoted to species conservation and protection. Como produced an exhibit that speaks to the Conservation work that is done both locally and abroad. Staff participate in conservation work and our goal is to use this work and stories to inspire and empower our community to take meaningful conservation action. The exhibit opened in Fall of 2019.

Outcomes:

- In Fiscal Year 2020, Como offered three unique exhibits touching 256,410 visitors
- ✓ *Achieved most of the proposed outcomes— Covid related*

FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year
2020 Budget
\$192,342.56

FTEs
.09

Other Funding Sources:
\$45,000

Actual Spending:
\$101,541.28

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.

Outcomes:

- Improved one focused area—still in progress in Marine Mammal Building, not enough data/guests to perform surveys
 - Improved signage at one area—not enough data/guests to perform survey
- ✓ *Achieved proposed outcomes*

FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year
2020 Budget
\$499,497.92

FTEs
.06

Other Funding Sources:
\$285,000

Actual Spending:
\$684,859.74



MUSIC IN NATURE

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.

Because of Covid-19, we were unable to produce the 2020 Summer Groovin' In the Garden Series and Music Monday Series.

FUNDING & DURATION

Fiscal Year
2020 Budget
\$39,346.67

FTEs
.135

Actual Spending:
\$15,551.79

Measurable Outcomes:

- In Fiscal Year 2020, Como offered:
- 10 Music Monday performances
July–September 2019
- 4 Groovin' in the Garden Dates—
Wednesdays in July 2019
- 8 Music Under Glass Concerts—
Sundays in January–March 2020

- Over 40 local musicians had the opportunity to showcase their art in a paid performance
 - Attendees to Music Under Glass and Groovin' in the Garden totaled 7,230
- ✓ *Achieved most of the proposed outcomes—Covid related*