



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 24, 2017

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New Education Center Coming to the Idaho Falls Zoo!

Idaho Falls, ID: The Idaho Falls City Council unanimously approved a resolution to accept a \$500K donation from William J. Maeck for a new Idaho Falls Zoo education center.

The education center will be named the “Maeck Family Foundation Education Center,” in honor of this generous donation.

The education center will be part of a new Idaho Falls Zoo Master Plan currently in development that will direct future growth and improvement of the zoo. The proposed location of the education center could be near the current Zoo Administration Office.

“The Idaho Falls Zoo is a wonderful resource for our community that I am proud to support. As one of the zoo’s key mission is education, I knew they were limited with their current facility,” says William Maeck.

William Maeck is a local retired chemist who is passionate about supporting education and animal welfare in southeast Idaho. He was instrumental in supporting a myriad of education and animal-based programs including the Snake River Animal Shelter, The ARTiTorium on Broadway, the Museum of Idaho’s expansion fund and Maeck Family Foundation Education Center, as well as The Art Museum’s ARTWorks program, and Maeck Family Foundation’s scholarships for high schools students.

The Tautphaus Park Zoological Society (TPZS) raised \$250K for the education center. TPZS will manage a perpetual fund of \$100K through the Idaho Community Foundation that will provide annual funds for maintenance and utilities. TPZS is a non-profit organization that manages the zoo’s membership program and supports a variety of zoo fundraisers each year. The society’s contribution came from funds earned through local events such as the North American Brewer’s Association Mountain Brewers Beer Fest, Wines in the Wild, Zoo Brew, Reed’s Dairy’s Chillin’ at the Zoo and Boo at the Zoo.

“The Tautphaus Park Zoological Society has worked diligently for over four years to provide this contribution,” says TPZS Board President, Gaylene Verdoorn. “I’m extremely proud of all the hard work and volunteer hours the Board has given. The community’s support of the zoo and the many fundraising events have made this contribution possible.”

Additionally, the former Tautphaus Park Zoo docents contributed \$24K in support of the new education center.

The zoo provided organized educational programs for over 2,000 guests last year. Over 7,700 school students visited the zoo on field trips. Unfortunately, due to extreme limitations of the current facility, which includes one small classroom of only 140 square feet, only 400 guests were able to participate directly in classes at the zoo.

“Thanks to the incredible growth we’ve seen in our educational programming and community support, demand has nearly doubled in the last two years, making the current education facilities grossly inadequate. We are bursting at the seams,” says Zoo Executive Director, David Pennock. “We are excited to launch the next phase at the Idaho Falls Zoo. The center falls right in line with our goals as outlined in our [5-year strategic plan](#),” explains Pennock.

The proposed design of a new center will include three classrooms that could accommodate more than 200 students as well as storage and office space, for a total of approximately 4,500 square feet.

“We are so grateful for this generous donation by the Maeck Family and Tautphaus Park Zoological Society,” states Greg A. Weitzel, department of parks and recreation director. “Education is a priority for us, especially as children are becoming more and more disconnected from nature. This facility will provide yet another opportunity for us to reintroduce children of all ages to the natural world that is so crucial to their social, emotional and physical health,” adds Weitzel.

According to a patron survey conducted in 2015, 63 percent of zoo visitors came from outside of Idaho Falls. From April 9 to July 19, 2016, the zoo hosted more than 7,700 schoolchildren from 31 communities in 12 counties across Idaho and from cities in southwestern Montana and western Wyoming. A previous independent study from 2009, using visitor surveys, concluded that the zoo adds \$3.54 million annually to the local economy.

Nationally, attendance at zoos continues to increase. On average, 86 million people visit zoos and aquariums each year, with an astounding number of overall visits estimated at around 186 million.

Depending on the weather, the Idaho Falls Zoo will open for the 2017 season on April 8.

Media Note: For more information or to schedule an interview with city staff, contact Public Information Officer, Kerry Hammon.

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About Idaho Falls Parks & Recreation: *The mission of the City of Idaho Falls Parks & Recreation Department is to provide quality parks and recreation opportunities based upon cost efficiency and community needs. Learn more on our [website](#).*

Fall and winter recreation enthusiasts can now learn about a multitude of recreation activities and facilities that are available throughout our community in the recently released 2016 Fall/Winter issue of the [Discover Idaho Falls Parks and Recreation Activity Guide](#). Guides can also be found in local businesses and in our FREE distribution racks located in most city parks and facilities.