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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, February 19, 2015

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The Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo partners with the David & Lucile Packard Foundation to better serve children with physical or developmental disabilities

Palo Alto, California, February 19, 2015. The Friends of the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo is pleased to announce a partnership with the City of Palo Alto and the David & Lucile Packard Foundation to advance the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo's (JMZ's) ability to provide better education about science and nature for children with physical or developmental differences. This partnership was made possible by a \$25,000 grant from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation to the Friends of the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo, the non-profit organization that supports the JMZ.

This grant will be deployed wholly to a JMZ taskforce whose goal is to improve the visitor experience and hands-on science education for children with disabilities.

Tina Keegan, Exhibits Director at the JMZ, explains: "This generous grant will enable us to assess how we can adapt our science education experience at the JMZ to fully engage children with all learning styles. Although ADA requirements and best practices set standards for accessibility, most museums and zoos minimally accommodate for children with developmental disabilities such as autism, sensory integration, and dyslexia."

Specific activities funded by the Packard grant will include staff training; a focus group; an accessibility review; support for universal access museum consultants to review concept designs; and eight *Super Family Sundays* – free events when the Junior Museum & Zoo will be open exclusively to families with children who have disabilities.

John Aikin, Director at the JMZ, adds: “Being truly inclusive requires an integrated approach throughout the entire organization so that all touch points a person has while visiting the JMZ are considered.”

These funds come at a significant time for the JMZ. The organization is in the midst of a major planning effort – the **JMZ Initiative** – for the creation of a new building, zoo, exhibits and enhanced science education programs. The visitor experience research and accessibility review will be folded into the new building designs to create a museum and zoo expertly designed with the ability to engage all children, regardless of learning styles, in early science education.

The first *Super Family Sunday* event took place on January 11, 2015; the second will be on March 22, 2015. Reservations are required to attend and can be made by emailing Trudi at Trudi.Wallick-Horrocks@CityofPaloAlto.org.

For more background information, please see below.

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The Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo
Tuesday, February 19, 2015

Background and Additional Information

Facts and figures on children with disabilities

- Approximately 159,000 children with disabilities live in the Bay Area. **Data Source:** Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. *National Survey of Children's Health*. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, www.childhealthdata.org/learn/NSCH. (May 2013).
- In the Bay Area in 2013, there were 78,802 students enrolled in special education (K-12). While learning disabilities and speech or language impairments are the most common disabilities in special education, enrollment for autism has registered among the fastest growth areas. **Data Source:** Special Tabulation by the California Dept. of Education, Special Education Division; Assessment, Evaluation and Support (Nov. 2013); California Dept. of Education, [California Basic Educational Data System \(CBEDS\)](#);
- In the counties we serve, one in eleven children (10.9%) is enrolled in special education. **Data Source:** DataQuest, 2009. <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>. State of California, Department of Education. (June 25, 2010).
- Autism is the fastest growing developmental disabilities in the US. **Data Source:** Center for Disease Control (2008).
- Currently 1 in 68 children are diagnosed with autism. Prevalence of autism in U.S. children increased by 119.4 percent from 2000 (1 in 150) to 2010 (1 in 68). **Data Source:** Center for Disease Control (2014).

Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo (JMZ)

The Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo's mission is to engage a child's curiosity in science and nature.

- Founded in 1934 by Josephine O'Hara. It was the first children's museum west of the Mississippi.
- Current building erected and funded by the Margaret Frost Foundation in 1941.
- 150,000 visitors come to the JMZ each year; most are children under the age of 10 from local Bay Area communities.
- The JMZ educates 14,000 children a year through science outreach classes in local schools.

Friends of the Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo (Friends)

The Friends of Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support and enhance the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo.

- 1962 - Friends organization was founded to support the JMZ
- 1999 - The Friends started (and continue to the present day) to fund the East Palo Alto Science Outreach Program. Provides funding for free educational science classes to low-income school-aged children in East Palo Alto.
- 2003 - The Friends completed the capital campaign to renovate the bat habitat, and African fruit bats were added to the Zoo.

- 2010 - The Friends completed the \$450,000 fundraising campaign for the design and construction of Bobcat Ridge, which opened on June 19, 2010.
- 2011 – Friends donate \$50,000 to the new Buzzzz exhibit, which lets kids explore the beauty of bugs and their fascinating life cycles.
- For more information about Board members, and the JMZ, please go to <http://www.friendsjmz.org>

JMZ Initiative

The JMZ Initiative is a public/private partnership of the Friends of the Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo and the City of Palo Alto, with the goal to renew facilities that will keep this intimate, child-sized experience viable for future generations. For more information, please visit http://www.friendsjmz.org/capital_campaign/.