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Binder Park Zoo's 2007 Season Set to be A Grand Affair with the Introduction of a Conservation Carousel

BATTLE CREEK, MI – September 19, 2006 – There will be a new ambiance at Binder Park Zoo next season and one that could be called a blast from the past. The carousel is something that many may recall as a popular amenity at local fairs and zoos. Now, thanks to one company, the Carousel Works, the wooden carousel from the 1900's is back in full swing and is set to become a permanent staple at Binder Park Zoo and Battle Creek's only carousel!

The Binda Conservation Carousel is set to arrive at the Zoo in the spring of 2007 and will be ready to delight people of all ages with lights, music, and motion. Best of all, it will be outfitted with two chariots and 36 different species of animals, all hand painted with bright and vibrant colors, giving each their very own uniqueness.

Each of these hand painted works of art will be available for sponsorship by community members and businesses looking to support Binder Park Zoo and their conservation initiatives. Sponsorships include recognition at the grand opening, name plaque at the sponsored carousel animal, recognition in the Zoo's annual ZooGoer publication and press releases, and representation on the carousel's 74 ft. pavilion, situated along the Avenue of Flags. Participating in the carousel sponsorship program is just one of the many ways people can get involved with the Zoo.

Among the menagerie of handcrafted rides will be zoo favorites like the giraffe, zebra, snow leopard, and cheetah, along with various other endangered species. The carousel will also feature some unique one-of-a-kind rides paying tribute to Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and Western Michigan University. These creations will be horses, handcrafted and painted in school colors and made exclusively for Binder Park Zoo's carousel.

“We wanted to add to the Zoo experience as a whole by offering yet another way for families to have fun and learn about endangered wildlife. This is an avenue that kids get excited about and will help promote learning,” states Zoo President and CEO, Greg Geise.

The carousel is made possible thanks to a major gift from the Guido A. and Elizabeth H. Binda Foundation. The Binda Foundation has played a leading role in the development of Binder Park Zoo. It has made numerous generous contributions to the zoo over the years from support of the trumpeter swan conservation program to the creation of the Binda Conservation Discovery Center and now the Conservation Carousel.

The Binda Foundation was established in 1977 by Guido A. Binda, AIA architect with the purpose of investing in creative programs which would improve the education and the quality of life for the citizens of southwest Michigan.

“Guido was a great Zoo believer,” states Geise. “The contributions made by him and Elizabeth have helped make Binder Park Zoo the great family facility it is today. Guido, a past zoo board member for eight years, even made annual donations of apples from his own orchard to feed the Zoo animals. He was a remarkable man and is deeply missed. Elizabeth and the board of the Guido A. & Elizabeth H. Binda Foundation remain great community supporters and carry on in that tradition.”

The Zoo anticipates that by the end of the 2007 season, 100,000 kids and adults will have ridden the Binda Conservation Carousel. The net proceeds from the carousel will go directly toward the Zoo’s conservation programs. Therefore, riders of the carousel will go a long way toward supporting the Zoo’s conservation programs worldwide. These conservation programs cover the world from piping plovers, trumpeter swans, and butterflies in Michigan to cheetahs in Africa, lemurs in Madagascar, and snow leopards in Nepal. Overall, the Zoo is involved in over thirty different conservation programs.

The authenticity of the wooden carousel should not be confused with the more recent fiberglass “cookie cutter” carousels, which are produced in mass quantities, but rather as a 38 ft. work of art. The artisans at Carousel Works, located in Mansfield, Ohio are theme specific designers and give special attention to individual etchings and color designs that require 30-40 hours of craftsman artwork for each animal. The animals are carved from basswood that has been harvested in Ohio. In addition to the carved animals, there will be 14 original landmark paintings of Binder Park Zoo, and 14 rounding board paintings of birds in their natural habitats.

Carousel Works has captured the heart of this project with a sole focus on quality and attention to the smallest details. Surrounding themed murals, crests, wooden floors, brass, lighting, music, and accessory trims - are all meticulously woven together to create a stunning whirl of animals.

Over 5,700,000 people have visited Binder Park Zoo since it first opened in 1977. It is located outside of Battle Creek, Michigan, on 433 acres of natural forests and wetlands. In the past 29 years, the Zoo has grown to be one of the leading cultural attractions in the region. It was created on the model of an entrepreneurial self-supporting nonprofit organization, and is managed by a zoological society board of directors to "nurture empathy, understanding, and conservation of nature." In the last several years a conservation education center, a 40-acre natural wetlands exhibit, and the 50-acre Wild Africa exhibit have been added to the original 80-acre zoo. Binder Park Zoo serves over 60,000 people annually in 30 different types of formal education programs and is heavily involved in conservation of wildlife and natural habitats on five continents. In cooperation with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) and others, Binder

Park Zoo is actively working to conserve a wide array of endangered species both at the zoo and worldwide.