



TOLEDO
ZOO[®]

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Note: *Please contact the Marketing & PR Department if you are planning to attend the presentation.*

Research Shows Success in Zoo's Nature's Neighborhood

Toledo, Ohio—The Toledo Zoo's Nature's Neighborhood was designed to be a place where children could discover and learn about the natural world through play, and the results of a recent study show that this innovative children's zoo has done just that. The results of this evaluation, conducted by consultant Kathy Wagner in conjunction with Bowling Green State University, will be presented Thursday, February 10 at 10:00 a.m. in the Zoo's African Lodge.

This suite of evaluations, which looked at Nature's Neighborhood from both children's and adults' perspectives, determined that children report not only having fun exploring the exhibit, but they also report linking that fun with a learning experience. Among their favorite features were the Tree House and the Stream, where most of the cause-and-effect learning took place. Children also report that observing and encountering animals, from goats and guinea pigs to the ants and bees, had a tremendous impact on their experience—so much so that the decision to leave Nature's Neighborhood was almost always made by the parents. Adults surveyed reported that the Nature's Neighborhood experience also influenced play that families engaged in at home; they might make a fort or a "bug catcher" similar to one they had seen in the exhibit. Families often stayed for nearly an hour in the exhibit, and some would spend up to two hours.

In developing Nature's Neighborhood, which was made possible thanks to the voters of Lucas County, The Toledo Zoo took an intentional approach to ensure that play would be linked with learning. The children's zoo had four primary goals from the outset: connecting families with nature, encouraging learning through play, engendering empathy and caring attitudes, and helping families make good pet choices and provide good pet care. According to the Zoo's Executive Director, Dr. Anne Baker, "Each step in the design and implementation of Nature's Neighborhood was thoughtfully planned and developed, using our best understanding of inquiry-based learning, to make this experience both engaging and educationally sound. These evaluations are also a key component to this process, because we are always looking for ways that we can improve the exhibit. We are also very encouraged by the fact that both children and adults surveyed report that Nature's Neighborhood helps lead them to understand that they can have a positive impact on the natural world."

The Toledo Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is located on the Anthony Wayne Trail (US 25), four miles south of downtown Toledo. For more information, please visit www.toledozoo.org or call (419) 385-4040. Lucas County residents are admitted free of charge each Monday from 10 a.m. to noon. ID showing proof of residency is required.

The Toledo Zoo is committed to inspiring others to join in caring for animals and conserving the natural world. As part of that mission, The Toledo Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), a leader in global wildlife conservation. AZA member institutions are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for visitors and a better future for all living things.

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