



For Immediate Release

Henry Vilas Zoo announces campaign to “Bring Bucky Home” and honor Wisconsin’s state history

MADISON, Wis., April 6, 2016 – Henry Vilas Zoo today announced a campaign to create a Wisconsin Heritage Exhibit that pays tribute to Wisconsin’s proud history as a mining state and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

When completed, the exhibit will honor the state’s proud mining history and will include special story walls dedicated to the state’s history, Bucky Badger and sandhill cranes. It will feature fun and educational opportunities such as a badger sett (den) crawl that will allow guests the opportunity to get up close to our badgers, named Kaminsky and Dekker.

“We are delighted to announce this campaign to ‘Bring Bucky Home’ to the Henry Vilas Zoo and help provide our badger brothers Kaminsky and Dekker with a home worthy of our state Capitol’s zoo,” said Alison Prange, executive director of the Friends of the Zoo.

The exhibit continues to build Henry Vilas Zoo’s legacy following the completion of the Arctic Passage.

Henry Vilas Zoo has a long history with UW-Madison. The zoo became the home of the university’s original Bucky Badger after the live mascot proved too fierce to patrol the sidelines. The new exhibit will honor the long relationship and history shared by the zoo and UW.

“We are excited to announce today that, when the badger is identified, the Henry Vilas Zoo will forever house ‘Bucky’ and provide a reminder of just how fierce a badger can be,” said Greg Gard, UW-Madison Men’s Basketball Coach.

“Last year, Henry Vilas Zoo welcomed over 930,000 visitors, many of whom were school children and families from across our great state,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “The Wisconsin Heritage Exhibit will give our guests, particularly children, the opportunity to connect with these new animals and learn more about them and their place in Badger State history. We are grateful to the community for the support of the exhibit. Their generosity will benefit the community for generations.”

The exhibit also will feature another native Wisconsin species—the sandhill crane—and will provide a home for cranes that cannot be returned to the wild. Zoos now play an integral role in the survival of endangered animals.

“This exhibit will allow us to tell a success story about the sandhill crane’s remarkable comeback story from being threatened and how zoos work to save animals from extinction.” says Ronda Schwetz, zoo director.

The campaign’s goal is to raise \$650,000 for the new exhibit. The zoo has announced a matching gift challenge of \$125,000 generously provided by Pam and George Hamel, and Hamel Family Wines.

“The zoo holds a place near and dear to our hearts as do the Wisconsin Badgers,” Pam Hamel said. “We are thrilled to be a part of providing a lasting legacy for Badger fans around the world. It is our goal to finish this campaign so Badger fans everywhere will have the opportunity to experience this exciting exhibit in the fall of 2016.”

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