

“Business Friends of Niabi Zoo” Forms to Support Elephant House

Written by Heather Venema

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Stepping forth to kick off a new initiative in support of Niabi Zoo is a group of local businesses called the “Business Friends of Niabi Zoo.” Over the next 12-18 months, participating businesses in the Iowa and Illinois Quad Cities will be coordinating individual promotions and efforts to raise funding towards the new elephant house.

As part of a recent accreditation inspection by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Niabi Zoo was asked to start having a stronger focus on renovating the home for the elephants. The proposed new structure is estimated to cost over \$4 million, and Niabi Zoo has been relying on community members and organizations to help raise the needed funding.

Local company GCO Flooring is kicking off the “Business Friends” initiative. “We believe very strongly that giving back to our community is one of the most important things you can do as a business owner,” said Shawn and Janelle Langan, co-owners of GCO Flooring. “That’s what we teach our associates, children, and it truly is the foundation of how we run our business.”

Throughout this initiative, GCO Flooring announced that they will spearhead this group’s efforts by announcing a 5 percent donation of qualifying sales towards the elephant house initiative. Throughout the year GCO also plans to hold special sale weekends aimed specifically towards the elephant house.

Other members of the business community in the Quad Cities were also called on to consider joining this effort. President of Rock Island County Forest Preserve, Tom Rockwell, said, “We hope that this business group inspires other businesses on both sides of the river to support

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our local zoo.”

Collectively, the participating businesses will work with the Niabi Zoological Society throughout the fundraising effort.

During a press conference on Thursday, October 6th, representatives from Rock Island County, Niabi Zoo, the Niabi Zoological Society, and the Convention & Visitors Bureau all spoke about the impact this effort can make.

“Initiatives like this are so important to keeping facilities like Niabi Zoo operating at the highest caliber possible,” said Zoo Director Mark Ryan. “Community efforts like this do so much to gain support and awareness for our programming in the Quad Cities.”

The proposed new space for the zoo will be large enough to house up to four elephants, including special facilities to house a male. The new structure will enable Niabi Zoo to work towards getting a third elephant, and also have the capability to temporarily house an elephant should another zoo need assistance.

Throughout the coming months the progress of the Business Friends for Niabi Zoo will be shared and communicated with the Quad Cities community through releases, online and social media. Individual business events to support the fundraising effort will also be shared.

Businesses wishing to get more information about joining the “Business Friends of Niabi Zoo” are asked to contact TAG Communications, Inc.