

Weekly Telegram Article – September 5, 2008
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Summer vacation is over and school is back in session. The education division has been receiving many requests for zoo programs, so this is an excellent opportunity to remind everyone what the zoo offers in the way of education and good ol' fashioned fun.

The zoo has a variety of programs to choose from that help reinforce life science and environmental curriculum. Our programs even help teachers meet national education standards for science. We have many pre-planned topics available but we can also create a program to meet your specific needs (given enough time of course). In order to request any of our programs, a minimum of two weeks notice is required.

You can rest assured that all of our programs use live animals, many of which the students can touch. Biofacts (animal pelts, skulls, feathers, etc.) are also utilized so students can see and feel the talons of an owl or the fur of a tiger. Probably most important, however, is that all our programs are free of charge (with the exception of out-of-town zoomobiles).

There are several different ways an educator can take advantage of our programs. One is to bring your group to the zoo and visit the Finnup Center for Conservation Education. This building is home to the Lee Richardson Zoo Education Division and houses about 35 animals that are used specifically for educational programs. The building contains two classrooms and one large lecture hall that are ideal for groups of 10 up to 100. Animals and interactive displays line the hallways and self guided tours of the zoo are also available. Formal programs at the Finnup Center can be scheduled far into the future, and some requests for May 2009 have already been taken. The building is

open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - noon, and from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. to anyone who has questions or just wants to enjoy the interactive displays.

With budget cuts and rising gas prices, some groups may be unable to come to the zoo. No problem! We can bring the zoo to you! There are two ways this can be done: by zoomobiles or by distance learning. Zoomobiles consist of an education staff member or one of our trained Docent volunteers who come to your building and give a program very similar to our on-site programs. Our animal ambassadors and biofacts are brought directly into your classroom. Zoomobiles are free to the Garden City and Holcomb area. We do offer zoomobiles within a 70 mile radius of the zoo for a nominal fee.

The second option is to take advantage of our free interactive distance learning programs. The Finnup Center has an Interactive Television (ITV) Studio that allows us to give programs around the world. By using the internet, we can connect to other ITV studios and interact in real time by a series of televisions, cameras, and microphones. Distance learning programs only take requests for three months into the future. Currently we are booking through the month of December.

If you are a teacher who would rather create your own lesson, we have materials that you can borrow to aid you in this endeavor. Discovery boxes contain biofacts that help emphasize your lessons. The zoo has a wide variety of boxes with topics ranging from Australia to Kansas animals. These boxes can be checked out for free for a two week period. Contact the zoo for a list of boxes available to check out. The zoo also has an extensive research library with many books and videos on animals and environmental topics. Educators can check these out and students and the general public can utilize the materials on-site during center hours.

For the younger kids, we offer a weekly Story Time every Friday at 10:30 a.m. A story is read and animals or biofacts related to the story are shared. This is open to anyone who is interested and no reservations are needed! For the young at heart, we offer a monthly Coffee Hour the first Thursday of every month from 9-10 a.m. We would love for you to join us in this casual setting to learn about animals, zoo programs, education, and more. Each Coffee Hour has a theme and the coffee, hot tea, and hot chocolate are free! Both of these activities occur in the Finnup Center.

We are very fortunate to be able to offer our programs free of charge and take great pleasure in increasing awareness of the world around us. If you are interested in a program, please contact the zoo at (620) 276-1250 or drop by and we would be happy to help you schedule a fun, educational, and memorable experience for your group.

Visit our award winning website at www.garden-city.org/zoo