



For immediate release
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AMAZONIA Open at Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden

(EVANSVILLE, IN)- The largest project in the 80-year history of the Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden is ready to be explored! Today Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel was joined by local dignitaries in cutting the “vine” for the official opening of AMAZONIA, Forest of Riches.

“AMAZONIA is truly magnificent. The hard work and attention to detail has brought the South American rainforest to life right here in Evansville,” said Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel. “A visit to AMAZONIA will not only be educational, it will be memorable for residents and visitors alike assuring they’ll want to come back time and time again.”

Hundreds of animals inhabit AMAZONIA’s rainforest. One who’s expected to get a lot of ooh’s and ahh’s is Beliza, the two-year old female spotted jaguar. Beliza was born at Boston’s Zoo of New England and arrived at Mesker Park Zoo in February 2007. Other inhabitants of the rainforest include keel-billed toucans, howler monkeys, emerald tree boas, capybara, caiman, tegu, Baird’s tapir, prehensile tail porcupines, giant waxy monkey tree frogs, bird-eating tarantulas, river turtles, fresh water stingrays and bats.

Visitors will be able to observe the animals among a vast collection of tropical botanic species and incredible man-made rock formations. The journey from the canopy of the rainforest to the flooded forest below includes a walk across a suspension bridge and the sights and sounds of a 17-foot-high waterfall.

AMAZONIA’s 45-foot tall roof is made of clear polycarbonate, which is used in greenhouses to let in a sufficient amount of sunlight. There is also an overhead watering and fogging system which undergoes six to eight changes an hour to create a true rainforest environment and ensure that the animals stay healthy.

The Evansville Parks Board approved the contract to build AMAZONIA on May 17, 2006 and work began on June 6, 2006. Since that day, countless hours have been spent bringing the \$13 million exhibit to life. The Zoo’s animal hospital and quarantine facility underwent major renovations in preparation to house and treat the new animals at AMAZONIA. New greenhouses were also built to manage the plants.

Along with AMAZONIA, the Zoo unveiled its \$2 million new entry complex. The complex, which is located on Mesker Park Drive, will now serve as the main entrance to the Zoo. There are four ticketing windows, the Rainforest Grill, Wild Rivers Trading Company gift shop, and

restrooms. Once visitors pass through the complex, they will enter an orientation plaza with fountains, benches and café seating.

The Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden and AMAZONIA are open 365 days a year from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (the zoo entrance gate closes at 4:00 p.m.). Admission for adults is \$8.50 and \$7.50 for children between the ages of three and 12. Children under the age of three get in free. Residents of Vanderburgh County receive a \$1 discount on admission. For more information, please visit the zoo's website www.meskerparkzoo.com.

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