CHATTANOOGA ZOO ANNOUNCES THE OPENING OF ITS NATURE PLAY

_Chattanooga, Tennessee_- The Chattanooga Zoo is proud to announce the grand opening of its interactive, naturalistic Nature Play playground. The Nature Play will include a honeycomb jungle gym, giant insects to climb, multiple musical components, a gazebo hut, a dig pit, a crawl through tunnel, boulders, and more.

The Zoo’s new Nature Play will encourage outdoor physical activity, provide a fun, educational environment for play, and will fulfill the zoo’s missions by creating ways to connect children with nature and wildlife. Play is critical to a child's learning and development, and nature play - or unstructured play outside - is even more important. When children are allowed to explore, create, and learn in nature they are found to have increased activity levels, decreased obesity rates, improved problem solving and reasoning skills, and increased social and emotional skills. Furthermore, children are found to have increased empathy for both other people and the animals and plants we share this planet with. In order to foster better stewards of the environment, it is essential that we allow our children to get out and explore nature. With natural substrates and theming, we hope to show our guests and their children that nature is accessible for everyone - all you need to do is get outside and explore!

“We are so excited to add this new feature to the Zoo. Nature Play is a project our team has been very passionate about, and was inspired by our commitment of conserving nature and wildlife, and educating those for our future,” says Dardenelle Long, Zoo CEO and president. “Through much community support and our team’s dedicated work, we are honored to offer a fun, hands-on learning environment offered daily to our guests.”

The official Nature Play grand opening ceremony will take place on **April 22, 2019 at 10:00am** at the Chattanooga Zoo. The ceremony is open to the public and media is encouraged to attend. For more information on details and to RSVP, please contact Hannah Hammon, Director of Advancement, at hhammon@chattzoo.org.

To learn about all of our zoo happenings, please follow us on social media and stay up-to-date.