



Alabama's Must See Attraction!



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The Birmingham Zoo Launches Innovative Sensory Friendly Initiative

BIRMINGHAM, AL – The Birmingham Zoo is excited to announce a partnership with KultureCity to develop the Sensory Friendly Zoo Initiative. The goals of this initiative are to raise awareness of Sensory Processing Disorders (SPDs) among Zoo staff and throughout the community, to increase accessibility throughout the Zoo grounds for visitors with SPDs and to promote inclusive experiences for visitors with SPDs. The initiative came about after last October's Special Needs Spooktacular. This special event made it possible for over 300 families with special needs children to visit a modified Boo at the Zoo for free. Roger Torbert, Vice President of Education at the Zoo, says, "We were overwhelmed by the success of the Special Needs Spooktacular. Several staff members and volunteers commented that this was one of their most rewarding experiences. This event marked the first ever visit to the Birmingham Zoo for many of these families and served as a welcome call for future visits."

With the Zoo's partnership with KultureCity, families with children who have Sensory Processing Disorders now have access to many resources at the Zoo including noise canceling headphones, fidget toys and weighted lap pads. The Zoo has installed signage identifying "quiet zones" and "headphone zones" to help visitors as they explore the Zoo grounds. In addition, the Zoo's Education Department made adjustments to classes and summer camps to make them more sensory friendly.

One of the most powerful aspects of the Sensory Friendly Zoo Initiative was the training Zoo staff members received to increase understanding of SPDs, informing them about the efforts the Birmingham Zoo is making to better serve the community and to discuss simple strategies each employee can implement to support this initiative. "Our work with KultureCity is a 'game

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changer' for many families in our community," Torbert says. "The wonderful thing about this entire process is that we discovered that the changes brought about by the Sensory Friendly Zoo Initiative not only improves access for visitors with Sensory Processing Disorders, but also improved the quality of service for all of our guests."

Approximately 950 animals of 230 species call the Birmingham Zoo home, including sea lions, zebras, rhinos and endangered species from six continents. The Birmingham Zoo is open daily from 9am to 5pm. Regular admission is \$15 for adults and \$10* for senior citizens and children ages 2-12 (*Price not including tax). All Birmingham Zoo Members and children under two-years-old receive free admission.*

For more information about the Birmingham Zoo, please visit the Zoo on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter or at birminghamzoo.com.

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