



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 10, 2019



## Birmingham Zoo and Spire Partnership Yields National Award-Winning Program

**BIRMINGHAM, AL** – The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) announced that Birmingham Zoo has been recognized with the 2019 Education Award for the Zoo's significant achievement in the Spire ZooSchool program. Birmingham Zoo received this national award during AZA's September conference in New Orleans. The Birmingham Zoo is pleased to announce that Spire is naming ZooSchool for the 2019-2020 for the third school year.

The AZA Education Award recognizes outstanding achievement in educational program design, judging programs on their ability to promote conservation knowledge, attitudes and behavior, show innovation, and measure success.

Now in its ninth year, Spire ZooSchool at the Birmingham Zoo is a week-long program focusing on conservation, the environment and the Zoo. This partnership with Spire as the lead sponsor and Birmingham City Schools serves over 700 seventh graders each year and provides a rich learning experience, aligned with state education standards, to a population of students who may not have frequent access to the Zoo.

"Spire ZooSchool is a perfect example of the many collaborative projects done between the Birmingham Zoo and partnering organizations to serve the citizens of Birmingham," said Chris Pfefferkorn, Birmingham Zoo President & CEO. "Our unique approach uses innovative curriculum, hands-on learning, and critical thinking to create an environment for every student enrolled in our Spire ZooSchool program to build a personal connection to conservation. Zoo Educators strive to ensure that each student departs with an abundance of knowledge and a greater appreciation for the natural world."

Partners on this project include 2019-2020 sponsors: Spire, Birmingham City Schools and the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Center for Education Accountability. "The Spire ZooSchool opens a whole new world of learning and possibilities to Birmingham City Schools students," said Joe Hampton, President, Spire Alabama and Mississippi. "It's a program that enriches lives and strengthens our community. We are proud to support this very impactful education initiative."

"Education at AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums is marked by a sharing of scientific discovery and a love of nature," said AZA President and CEO Dan Ashe. "By sharing their knowledge and passion for wildlife through ZooSchool, educators at Birmingham Zoo are inspiring the next generation of conservationists." To date, Spire ZooSchool has served over 2,000 urban students who have limited exposure to wildlife and its surrounding habitats.

To learn more about AZA's Honors and Awards, please visit [www.aza.org/honors-awards](http://www.aza.org/honors-awards).

## Zoo & Spire Logos and ZooSchool Photos



###

### MEDIA CONTACT

#### Birmingham Zoo

Samil Baker

Public Relations & Social Media Manager

[sbaker@birminghamzoo.com](mailto:sbaker@birminghamzoo.com) | 205.397.3874

#### Spire

Aaron Schmidt

Manager, Communications

[Aaron.Schmidt@spireenergy.com](mailto:Aaron.Schmidt@spireenergy.com) | 205.326.2688

### SOCIAL

[facebook.com/BirminghamZoo](https://facebook.com/BirminghamZoo)

[twitter.com/BirminghamZoo](https://twitter.com/BirminghamZoo)

[instagram.com/bhamzoo](https://instagram.com/bhamzoo)

[facebook.com/spireenergy](https://facebook.com/spireenergy)

[twitter.com/spireenergy](https://twitter.com/spireenergy)

[instagram.com/spire\\_energy](https://instagram.com/spire_energy)

### ABOUT ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS (AZA)

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the accrediting body for the top zoos and aquariums in the United States and eleven other countries. Look for the AZA accreditation logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in saving species and your link to helping animals all over the world. To learn more, visit [www.aza.org](http://www.aza.org).

### ABOUT SPIRE ZOOSCHOOL AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

Spire ZooSchool is made possible by our wonderful sponsor, Spire, as a weeklong environmental education experience offered at the Birmingham Zoo. Spire ZooSchool provides each participating student a "passion for the natural world" through innovative learning experiences shaped by critical thinking skills and hands-on activities, as well as real world applications in an environment outside of the standard classroom. The curriculum follows the Alabama State Department of Education's Course of Study standards in the core areas of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Sciences and Science. The program strives to ensure that each student leaves with a greater appreciation for the environment; both globally and locally! To learn more about Spire ZooSchool and our sponsor Spire, visit [www.birminghamzoo.com/education/schools-groups/zoo-school](http://www.birminghamzoo.com/education/schools-groups/zoo-school) and [www.spireenergy.com/serving-our-communities](http://www.spireenergy.com/serving-our-communities).

### ABOUT BIRMINGHAM ZOO

The Birmingham Zoo is an independent, not for profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

**OUR MISSION** *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*

Approximately 700 animals of 230 species call the Birmingham Zoo home, including sea lions, zebras, rhinos and endangered species from six continents. The Birmingham Zoo is a non-profit and is open daily from 9am to 5pm, except during special, seasonal and extended hours. Regular admission is \$17\* for adults and \$14\* for senior citizens and military and \$12\* for children ages 2-12 (\*Price not including tax). All Birmingham Zoo Members and children under two-years-old receive free admission. The Birmingham Zoo is the only AZA accredited Zoo in the state of Alabama.

[www.birminghamzoo.com](http://www.birminghamzoo.com) | 2630 Cahaba Road | Birmingham, AL 35223