Como Insider
A Publication of Como Friends

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Como Friends sets sail for Baja and Cuba

A Diamond Anniversary
FOR A Minnesota Treasure
THE MARJORIE MCNEELY CONSERVATORY AT 100
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Party Central

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Access Travel

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

Como is open every day of the year!
Winter Hours (October 1 – March 31) 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Summer Hours (April 1 – September 30) 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Look for the AZA 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.

Como Insider

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Join Como Friends’ Heritage Society and provide for Como’s future

Como Zoo is about to unveil a new outdoor giraffe feeding station near the newly remodeled African hoofstock building that will allow visitors an eye-to-eye view of our herd of gentle giants. This exciting new improvement is just one of the projects at Como provided in part through planned gifts to Como Friends.

“Planned giving through our Heritage Society program is a great way to ensure that Como has all it needs to welcome the next generation,” says Laurel Lundberg, Como Friends’ Director of Individual Giving. “Many of our supporters want to make sure their commitment to Como lasts long into the future, and including Como Friends in your will is a great way to do that.”

It’s easy to include Como Friends in your estate plan. Simply designate Como Friends, the nonprofit fundraising partner of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory (Federal Tax ID #41-1943928), as one of the organizations you’ve chosen as a beneficiary for your estate. If you wish, you can also restrict your gift to invest only in Como Zoo or in the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory.

“If you’ve included Como Friends in your will, we encourage you to let us know so that we can thank you for your contribution, and show you how that investment will benefit Como for many years to come,” says Lundberg. To learn more about Como Friends’ Heritage Society, contact Laurel Lundberg at 651-487-8296 or by email at laurel.lundberg@comofriends.org.

Make Tracks to Tiger Trax

Come to Como Town Amusement Park for a roaring good ride on Tiger Trax, a family-friendly, figure-eight roller coaster designed especially for Como Town by SBF Group in Italy. The jungle-themed Tiger Trax coaster cars are custom-painted to look like Como Zoo’s Amur tigers, with 1,100 feet of roller coaster thrills.

Tiger Trax is the newest arrival in Como Town’s collection of 18 rides and attractions for kids of all ages. Another new favorite is the Soaring Eagle Zip Ride that takes visitors 85 feet in the air for a panoramic bird’s-eye view of Como Town, Como Zoo and Como Park that zips 420 feet from one end of the amusement park and back.

Other rides include the SS Swashbuckler Pirate Ship, Tilt-A-Whirl, Drop Zone, Tornado, Traffic Jam! Bumper Cars, Como Town Driving School and more.
At 100 years old, the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory is looking better than ever.

Over the last several months, Como’s campus has taken great care to give one of Minnesota’s most iconic buildings a special buff and shine—a sparkle that guests of Travelers Sunset Affair will see as soon as they approach the entrance for this annual summer fund-raiser on July 16.

“For the last several years, we’ve invited our Sunset Affair guests to enter through Como Zoo, but this year, with our ‘Perennials & Centennials’ theme, we’re looking forward to ‘unveiling’ how great the Conservatory looks at its centennial,” says Caroline Mehlhop, Como Friends’ Director of Sponsorships and Events. “The Conservatory still has all the charm that attracted people at the turn-of-the-century, but with a modern twist, which was part of our inspiration as we planned Sunset Affair.”

This year, Como’s expansive Visitor Center grounds will be transformed by extravagant exterior flower displays, strolling musicians, and a variety of “modern garden party” games arranged across the lawn. Guests will also be invited to enjoy a dessert course served inside the new Centennial Garden, the focal point for a series of centennial celebrations this season.

With sold-out crowds for the last five years, Como Friends created seating for 90 additional guests this season. A limited number of individual, couple and group seating options are still available. “If you’ve missed the chance to grab tickets in previous years, this is a great time to check out an event that helps fund some of Como’s most critical needs,” Mehlhop says.

For instance, the Sunken Garden—which is featuring a series of extravagant Victorian-themed flower shows to honor Como’s centennial season—relies on private funding provided through Travelers Sunset Affair and other fund-raising efforts.

“Donations of all sizes can make a big difference at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory,” Mehlhop says, adding that the free flower shows in the Sunken Garden are in full bloom 322 days a year, with flower costs that average $83 a day. “Every year, it takes 35,000 flowers to make the Sunken Garden the most beautiful room in Minnesota. That’s why we rely on the community support generated by Travelers Sunset Affair. It’s a fun night, and a great investment in an institution that really matters to Minnesotans.”

Limited seating still available for this festive celebration of the Conservatory’s 100th year

Call 651-487-8229 to grab your tickets today!

Travelers Sunset Affair: Perennials & Centennials
The Toro Company’s roots go back to 1914—the same year construction workers broke ground on what became the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory. A century later both Minnesota institutions are still growing strong, with a shared legacy now coming to life in the new Centennial Garden. 

As part of Toro’s own 100th anniversary celebration last year, the Toro Foundation awarded Como Friends a special $40,000 legacy grant toward the creation of the new landscape garden to mark the Conservatory’s upcoming diamond anniversary in November.

“As we looked at the ways we wanted to align our legacy giving with Toro’s centennial celebration, we knew we wanted to support organizations that beautify and preserve outdoor environments for communities to enjoy,” says Judson McNeil, president of the Toro Foundation. “When our committee members saw this grant request from Como Friends, we were thrilled because it tied in with everything we were hoping to achieve with the grant program.”

What’s Toro’s history when it comes to giving back to the community?
Celebrating our 100th anniversary gave us all a chance to look back on Toro’s history, and it’s very clear that philanthropy has been part of our culture from the start. We have early photos of the company contributing to the American Red Cross and renovating homes for new immigrants in the 1940s. The Toro Foundation got its start in 1988, and we’ve been a Minnesota Keystone member since 1997, contributing at least 2 percent of pre-tax earnings to the community annually. It’s part of our heritage and part of our culture.

Toro has been a long-time Como supporter. How has Toro’s approach to philanthropy shifted over the years?
Today, we focus on the beautification and enrichment of outdoor landscapes, as well as the efficient use of water, which is one of the reasons why we were proud to provide the irrigation system for Polar Bear Odyssey. At Toro, we have advanced irrigation solutions that apply just the right amount of water to help our customers use water in the most efficient way. Precise water use is important when you value conservation, so that’s one of the ways our technology can have an impact in the community and at Como. We’re very interested in sustainable landscapes, but a well-managed zoo also gives people exposure to wildlife and conservation efforts.

Why are parks and green spaces a good philanthropic investment?
Outdoor beautification is good for a community. It’s good for mental health and it’s good for physical health. Research has shown that giving young people the opportunity to be outdoors in green spaces where they can dream, use their imaginations, and get exercise leads to better lifestyles, better health and even improved grades in school. To have a resource like Como that is available to everyone in the Greater Twin Cities is just amazing.

What’s the secret to staying in business for 100 years?
Any institution that’s able to service customers for a period of 100 years really understands the people that they serve, they’re adaptable to change, they treat people right, and they’re true to their culture. I’m sure that’s how Como has succeeded all of these years, and that’s how Toro has succeeded, too.
Meet Arlene,

Como Zoo’s New Gorilla Girl

Humans and gorillas share approximately 96 percent of the same DNA, but the family bonds between Como Zoo’s great apes and the Scheunemann family of Saint Paul may go even deeper. In the days before Como Zoo had the facilities to care for animal newborns, Arlene and Joe Scheunemann and their four children shared their home with a long series of large cats, orangutans and gorillas as part of Como Zoo’s docent program.

“I remember we all got in the car for a drive one day, and went to pick out a lion cub from an incubator, and that’s how it started,” says daughter Terri Scheunemann, Manager of Como Friends’ Garden Safari Gifts. “Having a gorilla at the kitchen table seemed normal to us.”

Over the course of 48 years, Arlene Scheunemann, who died in 2013, fostered more than 200 animals in her Saint Paul home—a long legacy of care Como Zoo honored in February by naming the first female gorilla, born to 11-year-old Dara and 29-year-old Schroeder, “Arlene.”

“She was such a great advocate for Como Zoo’s great apes over the years that ‘Arlene’ was everyone’s first choice for a name,” says Jackie Sticha, President of Como Friends, where Ar-

**Daddy’s Girl:** As Arlene grows, she’ll move out of the cradle of her mother’s arms, climb onto Dara’s back for a better view of the world. Keepers say she’s also likely to start spending more quality time with father Schroeder. After more than 20 years as a bachelor, silverback Schroeder seems to be adjusting well to fatherhood.

“He’s become Dara’s 500-pound shadow. He’s always checking in with her, and when she moves, he moves,” says Jungheim. “As the baby grows it’s going to be really fun to see how he plays with her.”

**Other Recent Births and Hatches:** Storm, a new Dall’s sheep from the Dakota Zoo in Bismarck, gave birth to an 8-pound male lamb on May 13. And a golf-ball sized pancake tortoise—the first ever hatched at Como Zoo—broke out of its shell April 4.

**Tiny Tamarin:** Born in March to first-time mother Lara, this tiny emperor tamarin — named Franklin — now sports the beginnings of the “moustache” that gives this species its distinctive look. Fathers carry and groom tamarin infants more than females do.
Making Way for Baby: Becoming a mother is a major life transition, but first-time gorilla mother Dara is making it look easy. Since delivering Arlene on her own during the evening hours of February 22, the western lowland gorilla has taken readily to her new role, showing a relaxed and nurturing side that visitors have been seeing up close all summer.

"Dara is a fantastic mother," says Como Zoo Senior Zookeeper Allison Jungheim. "Right from the get go she knew how to hold the baby properly, and she’s got a very nurturing way about her. When she’s holding the baby, she’ll tap her fingers, and bounce her up and down a little—it’s a very human-like way to soothe a baby."

The healthy bond between mother and baby comes as a great relief to zookeepers, who kept a round-the-clock watch on the pair during the first few days after Arlene’s birth, separating them briefly to provide fluids to the gorilla baby before a successful pattern of breastfeeding was established. Once they were reunited, Jungheim says, keepers “heard Dara make sort of a contented noise, almost like purring, that was sort of like, ‘Don’t worry, I’ve got this now.’”

“Like” Como Friends on Facebook to see videos of the tiny Dall’s sheep, pancake tortoise and emperor tamarin.

lene Scheunemann also served on the board of directors. “She passed away before Gorilla Forest was complete, but the progressive primate care she supported at Como Zoo, and her deep commitment to animals is a tradition she helped put in place.”

After Dara and Arlene and the rest of the family troop moved into Gorilla Forest’s outdoor habitat this spring, Terri Scheunemann brought her niece and grand-niece to pay their respects to the little gorilla named for their grandmother. “Dara brought the baby right to the window to show off,” says Terri. "It was like she was saying, ‘Here she is!’"
In the National Spotlight:
Minnesota's great gardens were on display in late June as the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum played host to the 75th annual American Public Gardens Association conference. Nearly 900 horticultural leaders from across the country came to the Twin Cities for a five-day conference exploring how gardens can help grow communities, with a final capstone dinner at Como that highlighted the Conservatory’s century of service.

Still Growing, and Glowing:
As the Como Insider went to print, planting continued in the Centennial Garden, the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory’s newest garden. It opened in June with a festive weekend of ribbon-cutting, history talks, live music, and even a screening of the horticultural horror flick “Little Shop of Horrors.” The Conservatory’s historic palm dome was all aglow in purple, the proper color to mark the diamond anniversary of this Minnesota landmark.

Perennials & Centennials:
Como Friends’ summer fundraising gala, Travelers Sunset Affair, will showcase the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory’s 100th anniversary on July 16. With live music, a silent auction, gardener talks and animal ambassadors arrayed through the grounds of the Conservatory, the event will host more than 500 supporters. To learn more or find out how you can contribute to Sunset Affair’s Fund-a-Need campaign, visit como-friends.org.
It’s a Season of Celebration of the past and future of The Marjorie McNeely Conservatory

I Do, Renew:
A favorite wedding site for five generations, the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory invited couples to renew their vows in the Centennial Garden in a special rededication ceremony on June 20.

Topical Tropicals:
As part of the Conservatory’s centennial celebration, horticultural staff are recreating the historic Palm Walk, a popular turn of the century attraction. Visitors are also enjoying a fresh crop of historic horticultural elements in the Sunken Garden’s stunning summer flower show this season, featuring living mosaics, banana trees, and other Victorian-era flora that flourished at Como’s founding in 1915.
Como Friends’ Travel Program Opens New Doors to Adventure

Panama’s Barro Colorado Island is one of the most studied ecosystems on earth, but few tourists ever get to step foot in this rare rainforest ecosystem. The world-renowned nature reserve is managed by the Smithsonian Institution Tropical Research Institute, which allows just a limited number of groups to visit each year—a select list that included Como Friends’ recent tour to Panama.

“We spent a whole day in this unspoiled tropical rainforest with a scientist on staff who was completing her Ph.D.,” says Ruth Erkkila, a retired 3M chemist and longtime Como volunteer who took part in the eight-day tour in March. “I would say it was one of the high points of the trip. Traveling with Como Friends meant being part of a group of people who share the same interest in nature and animals. Our guide was impressed by how much we all knew about plants.” Creating more connections between Como’s collections and the natural world is one of the goals of the Como Friends travel program, which will be taking guests to Japan this fall for a tour focused on the country’s great garden traditions.

“We know our supporters want exclusive elements they can’t access on their own so every tour we design is truly customized to take in the natural and cultural experiences that are special to these destinations, and to introduce guests to local guides and other experts in the field who can provide a really rich

For instance, in addition to seeing the country’s top gardens, museums, and cultural sites, the Japan: Gardens, Cities and Culture tour will allow Como Friends travelers to take part in a rare tea ceremony at a 16th century tea house that is the home of a famous Kyoto artisan family, one of just two such events that take place there each year. The Como Friends tour group will also spend an evening in Gion, one of Japan’s most renowned geisha districts, to converse with a local “geiko” about the training, musicianship and artistry necessary to become a “child of the arts.”
experience for our travel group," says Sticha.

For instance, the just-announced February 2016 Whales of Baja trip will take guests on a six-day excursion following the grand finale of the gray whales’ nearly 6,000-mile migration from Alaska’s Bering Sea to the lagoons of Baja, Mexico. Small skiffs provided by our partners at Natural Habitat Adventures will allow Como Friends travelers to have a nearly eye-to-eye view of the gentle giants that have made a dramatic conservation come-back in the birthing and breeding grounds of the sheltered San Ignacio Lagoon.

That low-to-the-ground approach will also be the guiding mission of Como Friends' upcoming trip to Cuba, set for February 2017. The customized itinerary, created in partnership with nature travel leader International Expeditions, will engage with Cuban naturalists, birders, biologists and conservation groups, while taking in all of Cuba’s cultural “must sees” including Trinidad, the Bay of Pigs, Vinales and, of course, Havana.

“I think the travel program is a good way for Como Friends to raise awareness and a little bit of money, and it’s a nice way to see the world,” says Erkkila. “They take care of everything so you don’t have to worry about where you’re going to stay, where you’re going to eat or how you’re going to get there. You can just enjoy your surroundings.”

Want to get packing?

Find out more about the February 2016 Whales of Baja trip, just confirmed for February 9-14. Information meetings will be held on July 21 and August 25 from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

R.S.V.P. for any of the travel information sessions to comomembership@comofriends.org or call 651-487-8229 to reserve your spot.
Let a little bit of Como bloom in your own backyard with Conservatory-grown plants, garden gloves, tools and accessories now in stock at Garden Safari Gifts. Como Friends members receive 15 percent off every gift shop purchase. Proceeds go toward great improvements such as the Centennial Garden opening this season!