



como friends
THRIVE ON

OUR COMMITMENT

We envision a future where Como Friends ensures Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is a global leader in conservation, animal care and horticulture with barrier-free access for all.

2019 | Annual Report

2019 Contribution to Como Park Zoo & Conservatory

Total Donation | \$2,354,176

COMO ZOO.....\$1,215,450

Como Harbor New Seals and Sea Lions Habitat	\$800,000
Aquatic Animals Building Renovation	\$284,550
Zoo Keeper Positions & Annual Operations	\$91,050
Ultrasound Machine.	\$15,000
UV Sterilization Equipment	\$12,500
Restoration of Polar Bear Odyssey Landscape	\$5,000
Mobile Office Equipment for Zoo Keepers	\$3,500
Zoo Keeper Training Scholarships.	\$3,850

MARJORIE MCNEELY CONSERVATORY \$667,255

Gardener Positions, Training & Operations	\$304,451
Contribution to the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory Endowment Fund	\$273,479
Japanese Garden Restoration & Technical Training	\$34,325
Specialized Horticulture Pruning Equipment	\$35,000
Zen Garden.	\$7,500
Tropical Encounters Tree Replacement	\$5,000
Milkweed Pollinator Garden	\$4,000
Mobile Office Equipment for Gardeners.	\$3,500

COMO CAMPUS..... \$104,185

Advocacy	\$61,519
Step and Wash Stations for Bathrooms	\$2,200
Como Campus Improvement Projects and Equipment.	\$40,466

EDUCATION \$286,088

Development of New Guest Engagement Strategy	\$170,983
Education Positions & Annual Operations	\$71,200
New Education Vehicle	\$37,500
School Group Transportation Scholarships	\$4,371
Cheney Family Camp Scholarships	\$2,034

MARKETING \$30,198

In-Kind Services Promoting Como	\$30,198
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CONSERVATION..... \$20,000

Conservation Champion Projects	\$20,000
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VOLUNTEER SERVICES..... \$31,000

Staff Positions & Annual Operations	\$31,000
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In 2019, Como Friends celebrated its 20th anniversary, a milestone that's made us reflect on the extraordinary things we've accomplished together at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

While the coalition that became Como Friends was forged from the merging of different docent groups and fundraising organizations, we all shared a common purpose—ensuring that our community treasure had the resources it needed to thrive. Over the last two decades, that commitment has transformed Como Zoo and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory with more than \$42.5 million in private investments for improvements large and small, from the splashy new Como Harbor seals and sea lions habitat about to be unveiled this year, to the flashy new sodium light fixtures in the Conservatory's greenhouse making flowers grow faster than ever—while also shrinking Como's energy consumption.

Contributions from Como Friends have also helped turn Como into Minnesota's conservation classroom, with a passionate professional staff and strong partnerships with area schools that help teach nearly 750,000 school age visitors each year how to love and protect the earth's amazing plants and animals. Through popular new programs like Conservation Champions, we're even sending our zookeepers and horticulturists to assist with species preservation and field research around the world, bringing home fresh insights and experiences that strengthen Como's connections to conservation efforts everywhere.

By uniting community support and private philanthropy behind this beloved public institution, Como Friends also succeeded at preserving Como's most important commitment—providing free admission and a friendly welcome for every visitor. Como's open door policy and accessible education programs make it possible for field trip groups and families from every walk of life to experience the wonders of nature in an inspired public setting that belongs to each and every one of us.

We envision a future where Como is a global leader in conservation, animal care and horticulture with barrier-free access for all. Thank you for your support and partnership with Como Friends in keeping this true community treasure growing strong.



Jackie Sticha
President



Matt Kramer
Board Chair





Open Doors and Common Ground

Our Commitment to Access

It's 10 a.m. and the doors are open!

That daily announcement, delivered through Como Park Zoo and Conservatory's public address system, is the cue to keepers and horticulturists that the quiet morning hours of preparation are complete. It's time to welcome the public.

But it's also a reminder of what makes Como so special to the **1,716,752 visitors who walked through the doors in 2019**. Open every day with no admission fee, ever, Como's commitment to access is unrivaled by any cultural institution in the state.

"From its very founding, Como was a community project, and now that it's one of the largest free assets in the state, it's still very much community-led," says Dr. Eric Jolly, CEO and President of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation. "Como is a place where everyone is treated with the same dignity and respect, and to the same high quality experience, regardless of whether they've made a donation or not."

Supporting Como, he says, is not just about preserving a Minnesota tradition—it's also about fostering unforgettable educational experiences for the families and field trip groups that depend on free admission. "In one measure, we want to honor the history that brought us this treasure, and in another, it's about maintaining our position as a welcoming community for all. It's an asset that we can all access."





What I appreciate so much about Como Park Zoo and Conservatory's history is it never lost sight of using the community as its compass. You see that in the youth programming, which is inspiring and engaging young people with science. You see that in the trend toward ever more natural habitats for the animals that also enhance the visitor experience and create space for educators.

Como represents a quality of life value for our community that also creates a space for family. That's so important when we think about how to recruit and retain talent in the Twin Cities. The strong public/private partnership behind Como Friends is really a recognition from the community that we all gain value from keeping Como Park Zoo and Conservatory strong.

*Dr. Eric Jolly, President and CEO,
Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation*

Como's commitment to free admission made it possible to welcome more than 1.7 million visitors in 2019, the largest audience of any cultural institution in the state. Your support for Como Friends, combined with our advocacy efforts at the Legislature, support many of Como's most accessible public programs, from the Lil' Explorers learning about the natural world, to the admission-free Music Under Glass concert series in the Sunken Garden, the most beautiful place to hear live music in the Twin Cities.





Learning to Love Nature

Our Commitment to Conservation

Can picking the right products when I shop for groceries help protect orangutans in the wild?

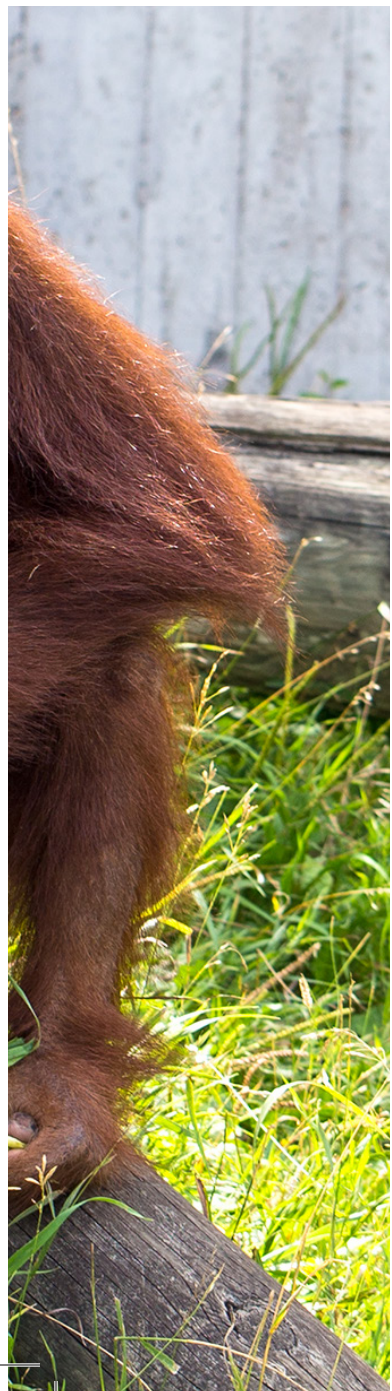
Could I turn my backyard garden into a haven for butterflies, bees and other pollinators?

Does cutting down on single use plastics really protect sea lions like Sparky?

An estimated 639,991 visitors discovered the answers (yes, yes, and yes) to these and countless other questions in 2019 by connecting to conservation through free daily programs and budget-friendly classroom experiences at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. From the powerful field trip partnership that invites every second grader in the Saint Paul School District to become a “plant detective” for a day, to the development of the new Como ROADMAP program designed to empower every member of Como’s staff to engage visitors on the value of conservation, Como’s commitment to teaching and modeling care for the environment is all-encompassing.

Your support for Como Friends made it possible to do all this and more in 2019, from promoting environmentally sustainable products in the Garden Safari Gift Shop, to teaching 26,986 students during on- and off-site school group programs about what we can all do to protect the animals and plants we love and the healthy habitats they depend on.





I've been a volunteer, a part-time Como educator and a board member at Como Friends, so I've seen Como from nearly every angle, and what makes me most proud is how far we've come on conservation education. Whether you're having a fun family visit to Como, or coming for a deeper classroom experience, you'll be educated about what's happening in the natural world, how climate change or loss of habitat is affecting animals and plants, and what we can do to help.

I've had the good fortune to travel all over the world and see many animals in the wild, but there's always something new at Como to open my eyes to just how amazing nature really is. Como reminds me that you never quit learning, and you can never know it all, and that's what keeps me coming back.

*Arta Cheney, Community Volunteer,
Como Friends Board Member*

Conservation Champions, Como Friends' popular microgrant program, helped Como's zookeepers and horticulturists connect with conservation and species preservation projects around the globe, bringing home professional skills and personal insights to share with the community. Como's conservation message also got a big boost from the dedication of our trained volunteer interpreters, who connected with 389,075 visitors in 2019, and from the energetic teen volunteers in Como's Nature Walk program. While much of Como's campus was under construction during summer 2019, Nature Walk youth struck up conservation-minded conversations with 120,089 visitors, teaching younger visitors that it's cool to care about the natural world.





Designed to Care

Our Commitment to Animal Care

Over the last 20 years, Como Zoo has been under near-constant construction, but the dust and occasional disruption have never bothered Senior Zookeeper Allison Jungheim (pictured right). “From Tropical Encounters, to Polar Bear Odyssey, to Gorilla Forest and Como Harbor, there’s really never been a break,” she says. “And every improvement has made it possible to do so much more for our animals.”

This year, your gifts to Como Friends were invested in animal care projects of all shapes and sizes, from a new UV water filtration system for Como’s penguin and puffin colonies, to Como Harbor, the state-of-the-art seals and sea lions habitat set to open to the public in 2020.

Community support also made it possible for Como to dig in on the design details for a floor-to-ceiling renovation of the Aquatic Animals Building that will include new spaces for amphibian conservation, lion fish and even a giant Pacific octopus. “We definitely feel the support of Como Friends,” says Jungheim. “Their investment makes it possible to elevate everything we do, and the progress has been amazing.”





As a veterinarian, I really appreciate the way Como Friends' funding allows keepers to care for animals in a way that Como Zoo's normal budget might not allow. Giving facelifts to various buildings or purchasing equipment like the UV sterilizer for the puffins, or providing mobile work stations for Como's professional staff all help give our keepers more time to look after the animals, which is so valuable.

Como's keepers are able to keep a sharp eye out for health problems or behavioral changes because they have such strong bonds—it's evident how much they love the animals they're caring for. When you consider the fact that Como is a free zoo, fully accredited with the AZA (Association of Zoos & Aquariums) and with some of the most cutting-edge animal care programs around, it says a lot about our donors, our board and our community and how much we all value great animal care.

*Sherry Fonseth-Lais, Community Volunteer,
Como Friends Board Member*

With three new penguins finding their place in the colony's social hierarchy, Como Zoo's Aquatic Animals Building has been a bit of a soap opera this year: "As the Sea Swirls," jokes Senior Zookeeper Jo Kelly. But the drama's been kept to a minimum thanks to Como's successful animal training program paid for, in part, by Como Friends. "Even before our new animals are out of quarantine we start training with them, which really helps keep things calm and positive," Kelly says. Your contributions also helped to purchase a new ultrasound machine—a valuable tool for tracking species breeding programs for Wyoming toads, snow leopards and many more.





Rooms for Every Color in the Rainbow

Our Commitment to Growth

During the Minnesota winter, the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's giant palms, vibrant orchids and climbing vines satisfy our craving for color and sensory delight. And just when it seems the season will never end, spring comes early to the Sunken Garden, as more than 10,000 bulbs burst to life, turning Minnesota's most beautiful room into a jewel box of color and fragrance.

This life cycle of growth, rest and rebirth is repeated in every corner of Como from the Minnesota Garden that now welcomes visitors to the front door, to the long-lived Bonsai on display in The Ordway Gardens. Thanks to your contributions in 2019, the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory had the resources it needed to cultivate nearly 60,000 plants for use all across Como's campus, to create a new Milkweed Garden to promote butterflies and other beneficial bugs, and to invite every visitor to take time to smell the roses.





The Marjorie McNeely Conservatory is the place where I find my peace. I don't think I feel as relaxed anywhere as I do here—I even studied for the bar exam in the Conservatory. That rush of humidity and warmth you feel when you walk in—there's just nothing better.

I love that there are features that are constant, like the soaring trees in the Palm Dome, but that there are always new plants and flowers to discover in the Sunken Garden and elsewhere. There are more than 2,200 plant species and cultivars growing at Como, which also connects visitors to how critical it is to solve the environmental challenges we're facing, so we can protect the incredible diversity of plant life on earth.

Sheryl Zaworski, VP, Director,
Global Ethics Office, U.S. Bancorp
Como Friends Board Member

Your contributions to Como Friends fueled a full year of growth at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory from the introduction of new rainforest plants and trees in Tropical Encounters to the new outside Milkweed Garden. Como Friends' endowment funds provide a sustainable source of support to ensure the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory has the professional staff and equipment needed to keep this botanical oasis growing year round and to support the continued renovation of the Charlotte Partridge Ordway Japanese Garden, a rising star in the world of *sansui* gardens.





Reaching Higher

Our Commitment to Continual Improv

Nearly 15 years after the first trees in Tropical Encounters were planted, the lush rainforest canopy of Como's first immersive habitat was about to grow through the roof. But thanks to specially designed pruning equipment provided by Como Friends in 2019, Como's horticultural staff had the long reach they needed to trim back the tallest branches and to navigate the narrow pathways inside the historic Marjorie McNeely Conservatory.

Helping everyone at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory reach a little higher is part of our mission at Como Friends, which also stocked bathrooms at Como with step stools to help our littlest visitors reach the sink to wash their hands. From small improvements, like the new minivan that keeps "Como in the Community" programs rolling to the upcoming renovation of the Aquatic Animals Building, your generosity makes Como more efficient, more inviting, and more fun.



rovements



Whether it's a \$20 million habitat improvement for our seals and sea lions, or a set of \$20 step stools to help young families, our goal at Como Friends is to invest donations strategically, and to do the most good for the plants, animals and people that connect here at Como.

Minnesota families have generations of memories from visits to Como. These memories are one of the reasons that our community of donors is so generous in their support for Como. But it's not just about preserving Como's history—it's also about safeguarding its future for the next generation of families. I think that forward vision is what inspires people to support Como Friends.

Jackie Sticha, President, Como Friends

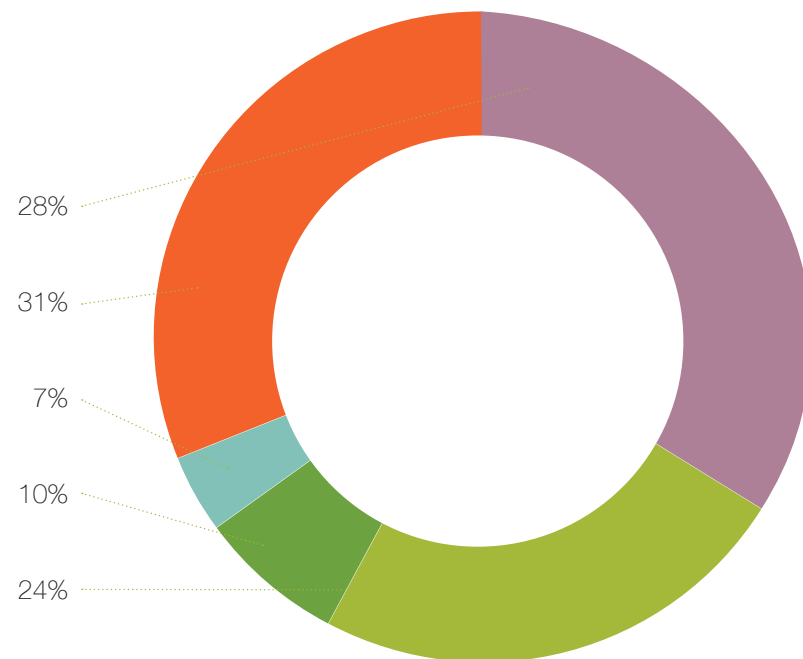
Minnesota's growing season slows after the September equinox, but in the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, flowers and plants are growing stronger than ever thanks to nearly 100 new high pressure, energy efficient sodium lights funded by Como Friends' endowment in 2019. "The new lights will give us more possibilities in terms of what we can grow, while we shave the growing time it takes for these plants," explains horticultural supervisor Paul Knuth. The increased heat generated by the energy efficient bulbs is also helping melt the snow fall off the greenhouse's glass roofs, bringing in more sunlight during the dreariest days of winter. "It's a win-win-win situation," says Knuth.



Statements of Financial Position

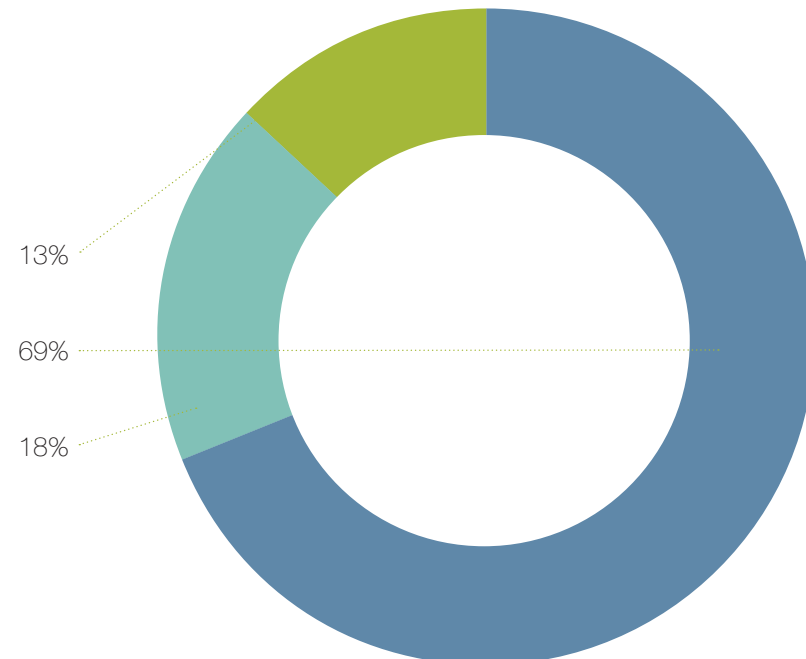
As of December 31,	2019	2018
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,298,596	\$ 1,548,785
Board Funds	1,648,618	1,645,796
Contributions Receivable	745,834	661,963
Inventory	272,305	265,435
Prepaid Expenses and Other	87,236	46,123
Total Current Assets	4,052,589	4,168,102
OTHER		
Contributions Receivable—Net of Current Portion	900,073	1,800,350
Property and Equipment—Net	131,249	125,188
Beneficial Interests in Assets Held by Others	8,743,311	7,676,634
Total Other Assets	9,774,633	9,602,172
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 13,827,222	\$ 13,770,274
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Accounts Payable	\$ 28,016	\$ 16,988
Accrued Expenses and Other Liabilities	105,384	111,046
Total Current Liabilities	133,400	128,034
NET ASSETS		
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions		
Board Designated Reserve and Project Funds	1,648,618	1,645,796
Board Designated Endowment	138,101	125,967
Undesignated	869,385	704,302
Total Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	2,656,104	2,476,065
Net Assets With Donor Restrictions		
Perpetual in Nature	6,754,325	6,480,846
Purpose Restrictions	3,933,789	4,471,611
Time-Restricted for Future Periods	349,604	213,718
Total Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	11,037,718	11,166,175
Total Net Assets	13,693,822	13,642,240
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 13,827,222	\$ 13,770,274

Statements of Activities



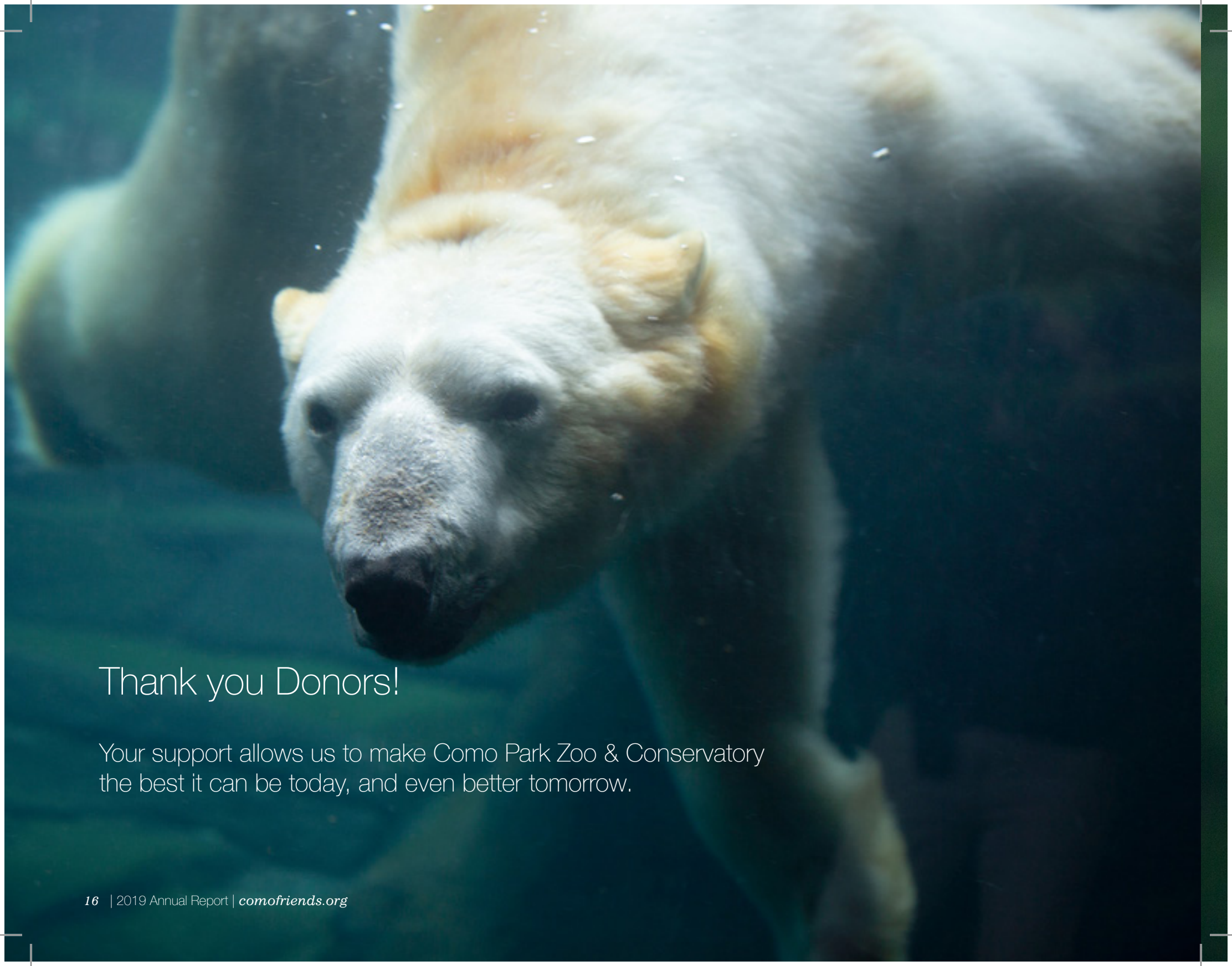
Sources of Revenue

Individual Giving	\$1,096,354
Gift Shop Revenue (less cost of goods sold)	\$906,773
Corporate and Foundation Giving (excluding Capital Campaign)	\$259,063
Events	\$371,456
Investment and Other Income	\$1,200,695



Program and Mission Support

Program Support	\$2,595,312
Mission Support Management Expense	\$702,616
Mission Support Fundraising Expense	\$484,841



Thank you Donors!

Your support allows us to make Como Park Zoo & Conservatory the best it can be today, and even better tomorrow.

\$200,000 +

The Donald McNeely Family
The Saint Paul Foundation

\$100,000 - \$199,999

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Katherine B. Andersen Fund of
The Saint Paul Foundation
Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
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\$50,000 - \$99,999

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John and Maire Kundla and Family
Katherine Lawler





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