2018 | Annual Report

touch points
Dear Como Friends Supporters,

A welcome coming to millions of visitors from every walk of life. Classrooms and close encounters to teach the next generation about the wonders of nature. Back-in-class updates for Como Zoo’s polar bears, primates and sea lions. And a sparkling turn-of-the-century Madeline Michaelis Conservatory with flourishing front-door gardens.

Back in 1999, this was the vision Como Friends foresaw for the future of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, as our nonprofit fundraising organization was just getting off the ground. In those early days, we were on a mission to introduce ourselves to the community, and to mobilize the funds memories we all have of Como into real momentum to secure a strong future for this Minnesota treasure.

Twenty years later, those ambitious blueprints are now part of our everyday experience at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, with growing gardens. Thanks to the commitment and energy of our board, staff and supporters, Como Friends has connected with hundreds of new donors, leveraged millions in new private commitments, boosted revenues from our gift shop operation and successfully advocated for greater public investment in Como Zoo and Conservatory. Twenty years later, those ambitious blueprints are now part of our everyday experience at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, with growing gardens. Thanks to the commitment and energy of our board, staff and supporters, Como Friends has connected with hundreds of new donors, leveraged millions in new private commitments, boosted revenues from our gift shop operation and successfully advocated for greater public investment in Como Zoo and Conservatory.

None of it would be possible without the support of people like you—donors, volunteers, and friends who touch us with your commitment to Como every day of the year. Thanks to you, Como has the resources it needs to thrive.

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Enjoy the following text:

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What's your favorite time of the day at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory?

“I love the moment that Como opens to the public every day. Before that, it’s quiet as all the Como staff are working hard to get Como Zoo and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory ready for our visitors. And then at 10 a.m. the doors open and people start pouring in, talking and laughing and looking forward to their day. The energy and excitement of that moment is inspiring every day.”

–Jackie Sticha, Como Friends President

A Glimpse of Como by the Numbers

In 2018, 1,696,177 different answers came through Como’s front door, each visitor touched by something powerful and personal in our beautiful public oasis.

A Glimpse of Como by the Numbers

Guests who came to hear “Music Under Glass” | 7,384
Self-Guided Field Trip Participants | 33,329
Children and adults who talked with one of Como’s Nature Walk teen volunteers | 88,213
Visitors who walked through Blooming Butterflies | 146,694
Guests who saw a public animal training session, zookeeper talk or gardener talk | 321,039
Total Visitors | 1,696,177

The gorgeous gardens.
The gift of a special day with a grandchild.
The chance to get up close to a gorilla.

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What brings you to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory?

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What do you wish everyone in the community got a chance to see behind the scenes at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory?

Without hesitation, I would say the quality and professionalism of the staff. They’re so impressive. The passion, the care, and the love that zookeepers and horticulturists bring to what they do every day at Como is just incredible.

When it comes to improving lives in the communities it serves, the Otto Bremer Trust is always looking for a strategic investment with a great rate of return.

“Our mission is to invest in people, places and opportunities, and for us, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory represents all three,” says Co-CEO and trustee Daniel Reardon, a board member of Como Friends. “Como is a place where social and civic engagement happens, where you see multiple generations and people from a mix of cultures and ethnicities interacting and experiencing things together. And with its free admission, it’s just a great resource to cash-strapped schools, giving them a fantastic place to take their kids to learn about the environment and what we can do to protect it. Where else can you have that experience?”

Como’s unparalleled position as a community gathering place inspired the Otto Bremer Trust to make the lead gift for the Como Harbor campaign in 2018, committing $1 million toward this transformative seals and sea lions habitat now under construction. While the splashy new public amphitheater, year-round salt water pools, and state-of-the-art animal care facilities of Como Harbor were all part of the calculation, Reardon says the chance to tell a whole new story about one of Minnesota’s most beloved institutions also figured into the decision.

“Almost everyone has a connection to Como, but this is not the place you may remember as a kid, or even as a parent,” he says. “The campus is being refreshed in a way that will help a whole new generation rediscover it. The more you understand about making strategic investments that benefit our community, the question becomes how can you not invest in Como Friends?”

Daniel Reardon
Co-CEO and Trustee
Otto Bremer Trust

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What does Como Park Zoo and Conservatory mean to the corporate community?

It’s fabulous to tell people from out of town that there’s a great zoo and conservatory just 15 minutes from our headquarters, and it’s completely free. The fact that Como Friends has helped make that possible is just outstanding in this day and age, and it says something about us as a city and a community that we believe there should be equal access for all people—children and adults.

St. Paul’s Eastern Heights Elementary School is a short bus ride from Como’s Visitor Center, but every time teacher Pang Thao brings her second-grade students to Como for the annual class field trip, she finds there are always a few kids stepping on Como’s campus for the very first time.

“It’s exciting for all of my students—even the ones who’ve been to Como Zoo before have sometimes never realized there was a Conservatory to see, too,” says Thao. “It’s fun to watch their faces when they feel how warm it is in the winter, or when they see these plants, and say, ‘Wow, that’s where chocolate comes from!’”

Field trips to Como have been a Minnesota tradition for generations, and making sure they’re free is part of the culture of Como Friends. In 2018, for instance, private contributions made it possible to offer free transportation and cover the program costs to invite every second grader in the St. Paul public schools to Como to learn a little more about plants and help meet statewide science standards.

“We think it’s excellent St. Paul teachers can bring their students to Como and have a curriculum that aligns with what’s going on in their classrooms,” says Kris Taylor, Vice President of Community Relations for Ecolab, one of the lead philanthropic grantmakers behind Como’s education programs. “When it comes to reaching youth, it makes a lot of sense for organizations to collaborate and take advantage of the expertise we already have in our community, so we see the Second Grade Field Trip program as another great partnership between Como and the schools.”

Ecolab also contributed to the Como Harbor campaign in 2018 with a major grant to support the underwater viewing areas in the new state-of-the-art habitat. “We feel very strongly there should be equal access to arts and culture and environmental experiences in our community, which is why we’ve been Como Friends’ supporters from the beginning,” Taylor says. “To have one of the only free urban zoos in the country right in our own backyard is really important to us.”

Kris Taylor
Vice President of Community Relations
Ecolab

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How does Como Friends elevate the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory’s curb appeal?

Como Friends’ funding makes sure our foundation is strong, and through their generosity and their intuitive eye for opportunities, they recognize lovely grace notes and special aesthetic touches that really elevate the experience for every visitor.

Garden lovers admiring the new gardens at Como’s front door may wonder how the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory has managed to cultivate such a fast-growing and flourishing new landscape in just a few seasons.

“The trick,” says Horticultural Curator Tina Dombrowski, “is community support.”

The work that Como Friends does to promote growth at the Conservatory just can’t be underestimated,” she says. This year, contributions to Como Friends made it possible for the Sunken Gardens crowd-pleasing seasonal flower shows and to upgrade the light, temperature and humidity controls in Como’s 30,000-square-foot greenhouse, where nearly every plant and flower on campus is grown from seed. Como Friends’ advocacy efforts have also been essential to securing the Legacy Amendment funding behind the new Cleveland Court opening this spring, the final project in a phased plan that’s turned Como’s once well-worn lawn into a far more inviting suite of flowering landscapes.

Another critical asset the nonprofit has added to the Conservatory’s tool kit is the Japanese Garden Endowment, which provides the historic Charlotte Partridge Ordway Japanese Garden with a reliable source of funding far into the future. In 2018, it helped build the new Japanese Garden walkway that will be unveiled this spring, creating a more inviting circular path to stroll through the historic Tea House Garden. “As any gardener learns, planting is only part of the process,” says Dombrowski. “Continuing to care for Japanese style gardens requires specialized skills, restorative costs and commitment, and that’s why Como Friends’ support is so valuable.”

Tina Dombrowski
Horticultural Curator
Marjorie McNeely Conservatory

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Fast-growing green spaces that make our community flourish
Has your experience as a Conservation Champion changed how you do your work at Como Zoo?

When you get to see a tiny little sea lion pup swimming in the big ocean, it makes you appreciate how impressive these animals really are in the wild, and also what they’re up against. Going out in the field has given me so much more knowledge about marine mammals, and it makes me feel more confident talking to people about conservation when you can say, ‘This is really happening. I’ve seen it myself.’

Como Zoo has long provided safe harbor to orphaned and unreleasable seals and sea lions like Subee, the star of the Sparky the Sea Lion Show, who is entering a very active second life at Como since surviving a life-threatening shark attack. Now as Subee’s wild cousins confront the growing dangers of ecosystem change and water pollution, aquatics keepers Julie Yarrington and Becky Sievers decided it was time to see first-hand what conservation partners in the field are doing to protect endangered marine mammals—and how those new skills can be part of the solution.

As part of the Como Friends’-funded Conservation Champions program, the pair ventured to the Pacific coast to work for the Channel Islands Marine and Wildlife Institute, an all-volunteer conservation group based in Santa Barbara. “Sea lions are thought of as a sentinel species that can signal important changes in ocean health, so the more we understand about why growing numbers are being stranded, the better,” says Sievers, who pitched in to feed orphaned pups, prepare diets and provide health care for stranded animals during her volunteer stay.

The new skills the pair picked up as Conservation Champions were soon put to good use back at Como Zoo, when the aquatics team administered subcutaneous fluid on CC the sea lion when she was recovering from eye surgery. “Previously, we might have had the veterinarian do that, which would have raised CC’s stress level, but because of our experience in California, we knew this was something we could be comfortable doing on our own,” Yarrington says, adding that those skills could come in very handy if Como Harbor becomes the home for other orphaned animals in the future. “Como Friends’ support is giving us opportunities that we wouldn’t have otherwise, and that really can benefit the care we give to our animals every day.”
Six years ago, Como Friends adopted an ambitious strategic plan designed to grow organizational capacity, increase community engagement, drive up philanthropy, and increase retail sales in Garden Safari Gifts. By 2018, the plan had hit every mark, putting the organization on a whole new footing as it begins its third decade as Como’s nonprofit fundraising partner.

“Having a large board isn’t without its challenges, and you have to put effort into engaging everyone,” says Roeder, who points with pride to a 2018 case study in Nonprofit Quarterly showcasing Como Friends’ success in ensuring that every member of the larger board feels like they’re contributing something valuable. “What’s interesting is we have board members who want to engage at many different levels—some bring the voice of the community, some bring the voice of business acumen or management strategy, and then you have folks who are passionate about sustainability, passionate about critters, passionate about plants.

“The diversity of our board brings together a broader group of thought partners who can help shape the mission of Como Friends in a way that can be more visionary. It puts us in a great position as we look ahead to the future.”

Susan Roeder
Strategic Accounts Manager
Andersen Corporation

Why are volunteers so valuable at Como?

Every year, Como mobilizes around 1,100 individuals who share their time and talents to benefit Como, including the Board of Como Friends. When people feel like what they’re contributing is critical and appreciated, they want to do more. That’s why the volunteer engagement is so strong. The effectiveness of an organization is a strong reflection of the strength of the relationships its nonprofit fundraising partner.”

Strengthening Como’s future with strategic growth and engagement
## Statements of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2018 2017

### ASSETS

#### CURRENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$1,552,852</td>
<td>$840,036</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Funds</td>
<td>$1,645,796</td>
<td>$1,630,120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificates of Deposit</td>
<td>$817,361</td>
<td>$811,990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions Receivable</td>
<td>$661,963</td>
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<td>Inventory</td>
<td>$265,435</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepaid Expenses</td>
<td>$42,056</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current Assets</strong></td>
<td>$4,168,102</td>
<td>$3,314,460</td>
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#### OTHER

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions Receivable–Net of Current Portion</td>
<td>$1,800,350</td>
<td>$1,259,388</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property and Equipment–Net</td>
<td>$125,188</td>
<td>$123,937</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beneficial Interests in Assets Held by Others</td>
<td>$7,676,634</td>
<td>$8,346,823</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Other Assets</strong></td>
<td>$9,602,172</td>
<td>$9,730,148</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL ASSETS** $13,770,274 $13,044,608

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### CURRENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable</td>
<td>$16,988</td>
<td>$7,199</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accrued Expenses and Other Liabilities</td>
<td>$111,046</td>
<td>$156,394</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current Liabilities</strong></td>
<td>$128,034</td>
<td>$163,593</td>
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</table>

#### NET ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Designated Reserve and Project Funds</td>
<td>$1,645,796</td>
<td>$1,630,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Designated Endowment</td>
<td>$125,188</td>
<td>$123,937</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Undesignated</strong></td>
<td>$704,302</td>
<td>$701,112</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions</strong></td>
<td>$2,476,065</td>
<td>$2,469,748</td>
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### PROJECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board and Exhibit Furniture</strong></td>
<td>$40,690</td>
<td>$40,690</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Capital Campaign</strong></td>
<td>$3,038,903</td>
<td>$3,038,903</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Management Expense</strong></td>
<td>$652,315</td>
<td>$652,315</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fundraising Expense</strong></td>
<td>$487,876</td>
<td>$487,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Mainstream Activities</strong></td>
<td>$1,800,350</td>
<td>$1,259,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Assets</strong></td>
<td>$9,602,172</td>
<td>$9,730,148</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>$13,770,274</td>
<td>$13,044,608</td>
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</tbody>
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## Statements of Activities

### Sources of Revenue

- Gifts for Capital Campaign $2,307,581
- Individual Giving $1,113,314
- Gift Shop Revenue $893,409
- Management Expense (less cost of goods sold) $487,876
- Corporate and Foundation Giving $312,487
- Events $101,685
- Investment and Other Income $323,148
- **TOTAL REVENUE** $5,426,161

### Program and Mission Support

- **Program Support** $2,063,912
- **Mission Support** $952,315
- **Financial Aid** $457,876
- **Fundraising Expense** $487,876

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52% 0% 0% 7% 7% 4% 19% 25% 69% 13% 18% 52% 0% 0% 7% 7% 4% 19% 25% 69% 13% 18%
We are Como Friends, decades old and thousands strong. From all walks of life and every corner of the community. Dedicated to making Como Park Zoo and Conservatory the best it can be today, and even better tomorrow.

We make sure Como Park Zoo and Conservatory thrives!

Thank you donors!

$1,000,000
Otto Bremer Trust
$200,000 – $999,999
Katherine B. Andersen Fund of The Saint Paul Foundation
Estate of Otis D. Kibbey
Hubbard Broadcasting, Inc. The Donald McNeely Family
The Saint Paul Foundation
$100,000 – $199,999
F. R. Bigelow Foundation
Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
John and Ruth Huss Howard Kidder Foundation
$50,000 – $99,999
E.M. Pearson Foundation Endowment
Fund of Como Friends
Huelsmann Foundation
Mardag Foundation
Xcel Energy
$15,000 – $49,999
Anonymous
Renewal by Andersen
Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation
Charlotte Parridge Ordway Japanese Garden Foundation
Endowment Fund of Como Friends
Best Buy
ECMC Foundation
Georgina E. Herman
Dab and Mike Hodgson
Horton Holding
KSP-TV 5 Eyewitness News
M Group
McGough Companies
Martha and Brock Nelson
Travelers Foundation
The Donald Weesner Foundation
$10,000 – $14,999
Anonymous
Ameriprise Financial
Andersen Corporation
Berger Transfer
The Cedar Fund of The Saint Paul Foundation
Estate of Emilie L. Dennis
Scott and Lisa Dorganke
Lancer Hospitality, an Eltor Company
McIntyre Family Foundation
Erik Ordway
Bill and Anne Parker
Wayne G. Patten-Marsh
Dawn and Dean Sherick
The Suzuki Family
U.S. Bancorp Foundation
Lillian Wright & C. Emil Berglund Foundation
Xcel Energy Foundation
$5,000 – $9,999
Anonymous
Hugh J. Andersen Foundation
Barn Foundation
Baron Foundation
Kevin and Mary Barton
Bois Foundation
Tom Cavanaugh
Cheyne Family
CFMI
David and Gerdeen Cray
Stephen Doss and Peggy Sauer
Jennifer Debow and Ed focusing on the Herk
Dellwood Foundation
Ellis Family Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation
Litton Field, Jr. and Anne Field
Sherry Anne Fonseth-Lais and Charles Lais
Mary Fosler
Google
John W. Harris
Nancy and Tom Hodnefield
Horton Holding
Foundation
Liz and Ben Smith
Stinson Leonard Street LLP
Wells Fargo Family Donor Advised Fund
Weitz Foundation
Philanthropy Fund
David K. and Ruth V. Wells
Chesapeake Trust
Matt Kramer and Mary Rowles
Anne and William Langford
McCarthy Birkland Foundation
Ronald and Marilyn Mitsch
Nicky and Tim Nagle
Paul and Diane Adelson
Lynette and Bob Palmgren
Helen and Ruth Peterson
Fund of Como Friends
David E. Brownin
Susan M. Rowler
Kari and Dan Romnini
Wendy and Steve Rublin
Kenneth C. and Laffier T. Savage Family Foundation
Fund of the Community Foundation of Utah
Melissa and Ian Scott
Securian Financial Foundation
Kenneth and Diane Simon
Liz and Ben Smith
Strain Leonard Street LLP
Wells Fargo Donor Advised Fund
Weitz Foundation
Philanthropy Fund
David K. and Ruth V. Wells
Chesapeake Trust