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ZOO RECEIVES QUARTER CENTURY AWARD FROM ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS

January 18, 2016 – *Jacksonville, FL* – Recently, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) was bestowed with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) *Quarter Century Award* for maintaining continuous accreditation for 25 years or more.

Accreditation is given to organizations that uphold the highest standards in animal care, welfare, management, veterinary care, conservation, education, staffing, facilities, safety, guest services and more. JZG was first accredited in 1987 and goes through a re-accreditation process every five years.

“The Jacksonville community has been with the Zoo every step of the way through our growth and prosperity in recent years,” gleamed Tony Vecchio, Executive Director of JZG. “We’re proud to be a staple in our community and to provide a place that inspires and educates our citizens. This award proves the support from the community is strong and we look forward to continuing this journey with our guests and supporters.”

Board Chairman, Jed Davis said, "It's great news to hear the Zoo received this honor. Having grown up side-by-side, my family has seen the Zoo through every change over the past 25 years. It's a pleasure to serve as board chairman of our world-class zoo and have the opportunity to bring my children here, just as my parents did with me."

Fewer than 10% of the approximately 2,800 animal exhibitors licensed by the United States are AZA accredited. Less than half have been accredited for a continuous 25 years.

Landmark achievements over the past 25 years include:

- 1995 (June) – *Main Camp Safari Lodge* opens, and is the largest naturally-thatched building in the U.S. Zulu tribesmen from African were flown in to thatch the roof by hand.
- 1996 (July 5) – ‘Rani’ the Zoo’s first Asian elephant is born.

- 1997 (January) – *PepsiCo Education Campus* opens
- 1999 (August 7) – *Great Apes of the World* opens
- 2000 (January) – *River Branch Foundation Animal Medical Center* opens
- 2002 (March 9) – *Australian Adventure* opens
- 2004 (March 5) – *Range of the Jaguar* exhibit opens
- 2004 (June 1) – City of Jacksonville recognizes JZG as a Botanical Garden
- 2005 (April 9) – JaZoo, JZG's lion mascot is introduced
- 2005 (April 15) – *Giraffe Overlook* and *Savanna Blooms Garden* open to the public. Guests are able to see reticulated giraffes, a popular experience with Zoo guests.
- 2005 (September 18) – *Range of the Jaguar* wins coveted 'AZA Exhibit Award' catapulting JZG into the national spotlight.
- 2006 – Zoo initiates Marine Mammal Response Team
- 2007 (February 15) – Save the Frogs! Amphibian Conservation Center opens and begins a breed and release program for endangered amphibians.
- 2008 (March 1) – *Stingray Bay*, an interactive exhibit that gives guests the chance to pet and feed stingrays, opens
- 2009 (March 6) – *Asian Bamboo Gardens* and *Komodo Dragon* exhibit open to public.
- 2010 (March 5) – *Tuxedo Coast* penguin exhibit opens
- 2011 (March) – American Profile magazine names JZG one of top 9 animal attractions in the nation.
- 2012 (March 9) – *Butterfly Hollow* opens
- 2012 (December 10) – Inaugural *ZOOLights* event begins
- 2014 (March 8) – *Land of the Tiger* opens to public
- 2014 (May 12) – JZG celebrates its 100th birthday
- 2015 (July) – *TripAdvisor* announces JZG as one of the Top 25 Zoos in the nation according to visitor reviews.
- 2015 (August 20) – First Magellanic penguin hatches, a male named C.J.
- 2015 (September 20) – *Land of the Tiger* wins AZA Exhibit Award
- 2015 (October) – JZG announces 5th straight year of record attendance with over 938,000 visitors.
- 2015 (November 19) – Zoo's first Sumatran tiger cub birth, a female. It was the first tiger born at the Zoo in over 35 years.

About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000

species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.