



PRESS RELEASE

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Santa Barbara Zoo Makes History as First Zoo Preschool in California

(March 1, 2021) Santa Barbara, CA -- Last year when so many parents were navigating new challenges surrounding remote learning due to coronavirus concerns, the [Santa Barbara Zoo](#) expanded its existing Outdoor Education programs, and also launched [Early Explorers](#), a play-based early education program for children age 3 to 5. After a successful first session, the Zoo is pleased to announce the Early Explorers program has received the green light to operate full time, and is the very first Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited Zoo in California with a full-time preschool, providing one of the most unique educational experiences available.

"We are so proud to offer a truly one-of-a-kind outdoor preschool experience for parents that is rich with hands-on learning, provides kinder readiness, and most importantly is at a Zoo," shared JJ McLeod, Director of Education at the Santa Barbara Zoo. "Children are surrounded by wildlife that they get to learn about, visit regularly, and develop a natural appreciation for their conservation! Where else do you get to hear the roar of lion while at school?"

The **Early Explorers** program is a play-based early education program that focuses on teaching through rich experiences. Early Explorers will learn a deep appreciation for the natural world through gardening, outdoor play, art and exploration in the Zoo's 28-acre outdoor "classroom." With a student to teacher ratio of 9 to 1, students are placed in mixed-age groups to enhance the development of both academic and social skills through STEAM activities, and prepare them for kindergarten. Animal encounters, sustainability and garden education, art, and Zoo train rides are incorporated into this outdoor childcare program. Early Explorer educators follow all safety protocols as per COVID-19 guidelines, including wearing masks and frequent sanitizing.

Registration is now open for preschool at the Zoo. T-shirt included with registration. This program is for children ages 3–5. Schedule options vary from full-time to part-time, and more. For full details and to register, [click here](#).

About the Santa Barbara Zoo

The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 9 am for members and 9:30 am for general admission until 5 pm with select seasonal extended days open until 7 pm; general admission is \$19.95 for adults, \$14.95 for children 2-12, and free for children under 2. Parking is \$11. The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA zoos are dedicated to providing excellent care for

animals, a great visitor experience, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation and is the public's link to helping animals in their native habitats. Visit www.sbzoo.org.

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