



## **JUMP STORY**

Ruth Jones, a former John Ball Zoo board member and principal for Grand Rapids Public Schools, imagined a program that would make the Zoo accessible to families regardless of income. All while encouraging an enriching, educational, and cultural experience. In 1998, the JUMP program was piloted and has since sponsored admission for hundreds of thousands of families.

## **JUMP GOALS**

Remove accessibility barriers to economically disadvantaged families by providing sponsored admission to John Ball Zoo. Provide opportunities for meaningful family experiences, unstructured play, and education; seeding a life-long love of learning, wildlife, and conservation.

## **JUMP IMPACT**

**Educational value of zoos and aquariums.** The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) have spent years studying the impact of a zoo or aquarium visit. This includes interactive programs, conservation messaging, and an immersive wildlife experience. Both have concluded that visits prompt guests to reconsider their role in conservation action, guests experience a stronger connection to nature, and have an enhanced understanding of wildlife and the conservation of the places animals live.

**Family connections and student success.** Families are a major influence on a child's achievement in school and through life. The National Center for Family and Community, Connections with Schools has concluded in their synthesis *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* that when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.

**Health effects of nature play.** For many years, researchers have studied the relationship between children's health and outdoor play. Studies have theorized, and in many cases proven, that spending time outdoors has a multitude of positive health outcomes. This includes reduced stress, lower obesity and depression rates, higher levels of creativity and focus, and a greater appreciation for nature. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources encourages children to make a pledge to get outdoors, and leave no child left inside.

## **JUMP ELIGIBILITY**

Families who live in Kent and Ottawa Area Intermediate School Districts, have children five to fourteen years of age present in the household, and meet the income guidelines as defined by the U.S. Department of Education's National School Lunch Program, will receive JUMP admission for up to five family members. JUMP passes are valid May 1 through August 31.

## **SUPPORTING JUMP**

Making a gift to the JUMP program provides unique educational opportunities and helps cultivate important family connections that will foster healthy learning and living. John Ball Zoo seeks funding for JUMP from sponsors by grant application and philanthropic giving. Donors receive recognition on the Zoo's website and annual report.

Questions or comments?

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