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THE LIVING DESERT TO WELCOME GUESTS WITH EXCITING NEW ENTRANCE
Public Grand Opening Celebration to be held Saturday, November 3

PALM DESERT/INDIAN WELLS, CA – (October 22, 2018) – The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is excited to unveil and officially greet guests through its new entrance plaza on Saturday, November 3, 2018. The opening celebration, from 9 a.m. to noon, includes live entertainment and giveaways.

Attendees will be welcomed into the **Patti and Jack Grundhofer Plaza** with palm-lined walkways and new guest service amenities. This beautiful complex completes the first of a three-phase construction project funded through The Living Desert's *Pride of the Desert* capital campaign.

Known as **Grundhofer Plaza**, the entrance includes a variety of innovative features enhancing the visitor's experience, including self-service kiosks for ticket and membership purchases. Zoo members and online ticket purchasers can take advantage of the new scan-and-go entry system. For those interested in membership, train and animal adoptions, private and group tours, or private parties, a dedicated guest relations office will be open during regular park hours.

"Our beautiful, new Grundhofer Plaza will provide guests a seamless and convenient gateway into The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens. It is designed to immerse visitors in the beauty of the desert and provide an exceptional guest service experience from the start," said Dawn Petrick, Director of Park Services and Guest Relations.

The new Welcome Center serves as a pivotal stop where guests can discover the exciting activities happening throughout the day and plan their visit by watching the state-of-the-art video wall. They can also relax under magnificent 50-foot fever trees in the Living Legacy Endowment Garden. This Garden recognizes the generosity of donors who have made gifts to The Living Desert's endowment fund, which provides a continuing and growing base of financial support, ensuring this treasured resource will continue for generations to come. The new **Suzan and Bill Appel Gift Shop** gives attendees the opportunity to purchase from a unique collection of souvenirs, Zoo-branded merchandise, gifts, books, as well as timeless memorabilia.

The completion of the plaza, gift shop, and endowment garden is the culmination of the first phase of The Living Desert's Crossroads of Conservation, a \$30 million capital improvement and park expansion that provides visitors the opportunity to interact with and learn about the world's desert wildlife. Future plans include new animal habitats to tell the conservation stories of lions, rhinoceros and hyena, plus a modern, indoor event space.

"As we complete the first phase of our expansion, our mission of desert conservation through preservation, education, and appreciation remains at the heart of what we do, drives our current operations, and guides our future plans," said Allen Monroe, President

and CEO. "We invite the community to join us in celebrating the opening, and help us with our vision of inspiring the current and future generations to conserve the world's wild places and wild life."

The Living Desert is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information: (760) 346-5694 or visit LivingDesert.org.

About the Living Desert:

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit, accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, ensuring the highest standards of all aspects of animal care, education, conservation, public service, and operations. The Zoo is active in conservation research, habitat protection, breeding programs and education initiatives around the world, as well as in its own community. The Zoo has been a top attraction in the Palm Springs area for nearly 50 years. The Living Desert is located at 47900 Portola Ave, Palm Desert, CA 92260. For more information: (760) 346-5694 or visit livingdesert.org.

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