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**CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL CHEETAH DAY AT THE LIVING DESERT  
ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4**

**INDIAN WELLS/PALM DESERT, CA** -- (November 27, 2018) -- In celebration of International Cheetah Day, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is featuring a variety of activities and learning opportunities, fun for the entire family, on Tuesday, December 4, from 9 a.m. to Noon. Events are free to members and with paid park admission.

Guests visiting on International Cheetah Day will learn about the cheetah and The Living Desert's conservation endeavors through kinesthetic experiences around the park. Arts and crafts and other activities will be featured at the Discovery Center, Gecko Gulch, and the butterfly garden, plus near the pronghorn and cheetah habitats. At 10 and 11 a.m. the cheetah will show off their speed during the daily cheetah run. There will also be an opportunity to symbolically adopt a cheetah, through the Animal Adoption program.

In 2010, Dr. Laurie Marker, founder and Executive Director of Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) established December 4 as International Cheetah Day as a way to raise awareness to the plight of the cheetah. In Dr. Marker's award-winning work, she has gathered significant data on the cheetah for over two decades including vital information on cheetah health, reproduction, mortality, evolution and genetics, which has proven invaluable in the management of both wild and captive cheetah.

"The Living Desert supports the Cheetah Conservation Fund and the efforts of Dr. Marker, as well as other established cheetah conservation organizations such as Cheetah Conservation Botswana," said Allen Monroe, President/CEO of The Living Desert. "Participating in the observance of International Cheetah Day, not only helps show our support, but also educates our guests as to the plight of cheetah."

The Living Desert serves as the Public Engagement Coordinator for the AZA's Cheetah SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) Program. As such, The Living Desert has created curriculum that meets current science standards for use across the country. Locally, teachers have been offered free curriculum toolkits to implement in their classrooms on International Cheetah Day, and nationally, AZA-accredited organizations will be hosting similar events and activities.

"We are proud to act as a leader in the Cheetah SAFE Program nationally, and we are excited to see our fellow AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums utilize these great materials on International Cheetah Day," said Mike Chedester, Director of Education at The Living Desert. "Furthermore, we are proud to offer our local community of educators these wonderful, free resources to use in their lesson plans."

Cheetahs are now extinct in more than 20 countries and are Africa's most endangered cats. According to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), in less than 20 years, the cheetah could be extinct, as there are fewer than 7,500 remaining in the wild. Their main threats include habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as human-wildlife conflict.

Running up to speeds of 70 MPH, the cheetah is the fastest land animal in the world. Its main hunting strategy is to run down animals such as antelope species and hares. Cheetahs can be found in Africa and Southwestern Asia in areas with vast expanses where prey is abundant.

The Living Desert is located at 47900 Portola Ave, Palm Desert and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Closed Christmas Day). For more information: (760) 346-5694 or visit [LivingDesert.org](http://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](http://livingdesert.org).

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