

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



CASE STUDY

Seneca Park Zoo's Center for Biodiversity Exploration Creates Interactive "My Genesee" Game Exhibition to Address and Prevent Water Pollution

Seneca Park Zoo opened in 1894 in Seneca Park and is on 15.5-acres in Rochester, New York. The Zoo is home to over 90 species including mammals, reptiles, birds, amphibians, fish, and arachnids and is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). It is operated by Monroe County with support from the Seneca Park Zoo Society and is visited by more than 350,000 people each year.

Challenge

Rochester, New York is situated on the banks of the Genesee River, which is a central part of the history and culture of the region. The river suffers from multiple pollution threats from local industry and community activity. The Zoo, and its community partners, believe it is imperative to raise awareness of the environmental issues related to the River, call attention to the freshwater resources in our region, and educate the public about how changing personal behaviors can have a positive impact on river health.

Solution

With support of the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), the Zoo launched the new Center for Biodiversity Exploration (CBE), an immersive experience designed to expose visitors of all ages to the impacts individuals' actions have upon the health of ecosystems. In its first year, the CBE focused on the ecosystem of the Genesee River, and participant learning addressed major causes of water pollution, including the role that individuals often unknowingly play in contributing to water pollution. Through "My Genesee," Zoo visitors witness the Genesee River's decline or improvement in biodiversity and overall health, based upon actions they take during their interactive experience. They will leave the experience more aware of the factors leading to pollution, and their own role in contributing to river health.

Results

An interactive "My Genesee" game experience was developed and a rough prototype was installed at the Zoo in September of 2016. The game incorporates group quest and group learning concepts into problem-solving on individual actions for a healthy ecosystem. The prototype application utilizes projection mapping software technology featuring videos, virtual tours, touch actions and more. Content for the game was developed by Seneca Park Zoo Society key staff, a portion of the Zoo's One Cubic Foot Community Advisory Committee, a Water Education Collaborative consultant, and a Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County consultant. Dr. Joy Kubarek of PEER Associates oversaw project evaluation design, which included formative and summative evaluations, and RIT co-op students and faculty implemented content. A survey of initial users was developed and distributed. The 85 survey respondents

CHALLENGE

- Raise awareness of the environmental issues related to the Genesee River, call attention to the freshwater resources in the region and educate the public

SOLUTION

- With funding provided by NYSP2I, Seneca Park Zoo launched the Biodiversity Exploration, an immersive experience designed to expose visitors of all ages to the impacts individuals' actions have upon the health of ecosystems

RESULTS

- An interactive "My Genesee" game experience was developed and a rough prototype was installed at Seneca Park Zoo in September 2016



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provided key input to refine the game and led to improved user experience. A promotional plan was launched and completed, including showcasing final "MY Genesee" game version at Imagine RIT: Innovation and Creativity Festival with an audience of upwards of 30,000. The final exhibition at the CBE will be installed at the Zoo in 2018.

Rochester Business Journal:

<https://rbj.net/2016/04/08/zoo-to-get-game-centered-exhibit/>

Resources

Website

senecaparkzoo.org/

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/senecaparkzoo/>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/SenecaParkZoo>

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/senecaparkzoo/?hl=en>

TESTIMONIAL

"Receiving support from NYSP2I has helped immeasurably in our ability to increase impact, extend our project, and ultimately provide a better end product. Our NYSP2I grant built a solid framework that will allow us to be flexible in the future for an engaging guest experience which will increase responsible individual actions that lead us to a more sustainable future."

– Tom Snyder

Director of Program & Conservation Action
Seneca Park Zoo Society

NYSP2I PARTNERS

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