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## News Release

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### **Dakota County Third Graders flock to the Minnesota Zoo for hands-on learning**

*Students follow a syllabus that fulfills STEM curriculum requirements*

**Apple Valley, Minn.** – More than 2,000 third grade students from School District 196 are learning to think like scientists and wildlife conservationists by participating in the Zoo Safari program at the Minnesota Zoo – made possible by a longstanding partnership with Flint Hills Resources.

STEM learning outside the classroom brings science to life, engages kids in new and creative ways, and fulfills curriculum requirements. During Zoo Safari field trips, the meandering pathways of the Zoo are filled with eager faces as they get up-close and personal with the zoo's residences. District 196 students experience hands-on animal encounters from a friendly hedgehog or curious armadillo. They will learn about the animal's habitat, food habits, and environmental impacts as zoo naturalists help students learn beyond textbooks.

These field trips spark students' interest in science and promote academic achievement. The field trip is free for all third grade students, and for some, the Minnesota Zoo Safari field trip is their first and only visit to The Minnesota Zoo.

“Zoo Safari is an unforgettable experience for these third graders,” said John Frawley, director/president of the Minnesota Zoo. “They get to connect to wildlife and nature, and learn and have fun while doing it. We're grateful for community partners like Flint Hill Resources who help make this program possible for thousands of students every school year.”

Studies show that hands-on STEM learning can help develop children's problem solving skills and understanding of the natural world. [Click here](#) to see a photo of District 196 students experiencing the Zoo Safari program.

“The Zoo Safari program provides an opportunity for students in our community to grow and learn right in their own backyard,” said Heather Rein, director of community affairs at Flint Hills Resources. “The Minnesota Zoo is an asset to Minnesota, and we are proud to have partnered with them since 1989.”

The elementary schools participating in the program include:

<b>School</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Zoo Safari date</b>
Cedar Park Elementary	Apple Valley	11/28/17
Diamond Path Elementary	Apple Valley	10/26/17
Greenleaf Elementary	Apple Valley	1/18/17
Echo Park Elementary	Burnsville	11/22/17
Deerwood Elementary	Eagan	03/07/17
Oak Ridge Elementary	Eagan	10/23/17
Pinewood Community School	Eagan	03/19/17
Red Pine Elementary	Eagan	10/12/17
Thomas Lake Elementary	Eagan	11/27/17
Woodland Elementary	Eagan	11/09/17
East Lake Elementary	Lakeville	11/30/17
Parkview Elementary	Rosemount	11/16/17
Rosemount Elementary	Rosemount	10/27/17
Shannon Park Elementary	Rosemount	11/20/17

### **About the Minnesota Zoo**

The Minnesota Zoo is a year-round destination located in Apple Valley, just minutes south of Mall of America. Its mission is to connect people, animals and the natural world to save wildlife. The Minnesota Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and an institutional member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. More information about the zoo is available at [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org).

### **About Flint Hills Resources**

Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery produces transportation fuels used throughout the Midwest, including most of Minnesota’s gasoline, diesel fuel, jet fuel, as well as other products people rely on such as propane and asphalt. Located 17 miles southeast of Minneapolis, Pine Bend has a capacity of 339,000 barrels per day and is among the cleanest, most efficient, and safest oil refineries in the country. Flint Hills Resources directly and indirectly supports more than 4,000 Minnesota jobs and has invested nearly \$1.7 billion on upgrades and improvements to its Minnesota facilities since 2010. With 1,300 full-time employees, the Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery is one of the largest employers in Dakota County. More information about the company is available at [pinebendrefinery.com](http://pinebendrefinery.com).

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