
News Release

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Thousands of Dakota County third graders visit the Minnesota Zoo for hands-on STEM learning

Zoo Safari program infuses STEM curriculum requirements for students

Apple Valley, Minn. – More than 1,800 third-grade students from 19 elementary schools in 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 partnership with Flint Hills Resources that began in 1989, this field trip is free for all third-grade students and is the first visit to the Minnesota Zoo for many of them.

The goal of these field trips is to spark students' interest in science and promote academic achievement. Learning outside the classroom engages kids in new and creative ways and fulfills curriculum requirements. During Zoo Safari field trips, zoo naturalists bring STEM concepts to life as students learn about habitat design, animal behavior and environmental impacts.

“Authentic and engaging experiences are crucial to learning, and Zoo Safari provides students with an unforgettable opportunity to see STEM concepts and conservation practices in action,” said John Frawley, director/president of the Minnesota Zoo. “Kids are naturally drawn to animals – they make learning fun. We’re grateful for community partners like Flint Hills 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 download photos of District 196 students experiencing the Zoo Safari program.

“The Zoo Safari program gives young students in our community the opportunity to visit the world-class Minnesota Zoo – some for the very first time – to explore and enjoy an exciting educational experience,” said Heather Rein, director of community affairs at Flint Hills

Resources. “We are proud of our 30-year partnership with the zoo to provide students access to one of our state’s greatest treasures.”

The elementary schools participating in the program include:

School	City	Zoo Safari date
Cedar Park Elementary School	Apple Valley	10/21/2019
Deerwood Elementary School	Eagan	3/3/2020
Diamond Path Elementary School	Apple Valley	9/26/2019
East Lake Elementary School	Lakeville	11/22/2019
Echo Park Elementary School	Burnsville	11/21/2019
Glacier Hills Elementary School	Eagan	10/29/2019
Greenleaf Elementary School	Apple Valley	11/25/2019
Highland Elementary School	Apple Valley	1/14/2020
Northview Elementary School	Eagan	11/14/2019
Oak Ridge Elementary School	Eagan	12/20/2019
Parkview Elementary School	Rosemount	11/15/2019
Pinewood Community School	Eagan	1/17/2020
Red Pine Elementary School	Eagan	10/4/2019
Rosemount Elementary School	Rosemount	10/22/2019
Shannon Park Elementary School	Rosemount	10/30/2019
Southview Elementary School	Apple Valley	TBD
Thomas Lake Elementary School	Eagan	10/24/2019
Westview Elementary School	Apple Valley	1/17/2020
Woodland Elementary School	Eagan	10/14/2019

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.

About Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery

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 345,000 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 1,000 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.