



MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2010

GREAT APE HEART PROJECT SET TO BEGIN AT ZOO ATLANTA

WHO: Zoo Atlanta will host the Executive Steering Committee Meeting of the Great Ape Heart Project (GAHP) on November 13 and 14, 2010. The meeting will gather 20 skilled stakeholders representing the zoological community, as well as outside experts. This weekend's Steering Committee gathering is a precursor to a February 2011 workshop that will underline an official plan of action for a historic multi-institutional effort to examine the long misunderstood veterinary field of great ape cardiac health.

WHAT: In August 2010, Zoo Atlanta received a prestigious grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to organize and lead GAHP, which will seek to reduce barriers to understanding ape heart disease; improve resources for animals who are currently at risk; and enhance the ability of zoological professionals to develop strategic population management plans for these endangered species. The program will be led by Hayley Murphy, DVM, Director of Veterinary Services at Zoo Atlanta, as well as partners at the University of Georgia; Cleveland Metroparks Zoo; and more than 15 other zoos, universities and scientists.

Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death among apes living in zoological settings. Zoo Atlanta is a likely candidate for leadership in this initiative, as the organization is home to the nation's largest collection of western lowland gorillas, with 23 individuals. Four of the Zoo's great apes are over the age of 45.

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ABOUT: **About Zoo Atlanta**
An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta inspires value and preservation of wildlife through a unique mix of education and outdoor family fun. From well-known native

wildlife to critically endangered species on the brink of extinction, the Zoo offers memorable close encounters with more than 1,000 animals from around the world. The Zoo's newest attraction, Trader's Alley: Wildlife's Fading Footprints, featuring the debut of two new sun bears, opened in June 1010. Other highlights include the nation's largest collection of western lowland gorillas, the nation's largest zoological collection of orangutans, and a global center of excellence for the care and study of vanishing reptiles and amphibians. Zoo Atlanta is also proud to be one of only four zoos in the U.S. that giant pandas call home. The Zoo is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Keeper talks, interactive wildlife shows, education programs and special events run year-round. For more information, call 404.624.WILD or visit zooatlanta.org.

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