



Florida Environmental Education Center “Zoo School” at Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo

Facilities

The Florida Environmental Education Center (known as “Zoo School”) at Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo is dedicated to serving as an educational resource for the community. The facility offers:

- ◆ 17,400 square-feet of hands-on learning areas;
- ◆ 13 classrooms equipped with computers, TVs and VCRs to support innovative learning;
- ◆ The Frank E. Duckwall Foundation Exhibit Hall for conservation education programs and meetings; and
- ◆ A special, dedicated entrance off North Boulevard that enables school buses and children a safe entry without crossing traffic.

Programs

Zoo School programs are designed to be fun, innovative, imaginative and investigative for all ages. The vision of the education department is to provide quality experiences and build new programs for new audiences based on the needs of the community.

Zoo School offers onsite kindergarten and year-round preschool and daycare programs, licensed by the Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing Office. As the only accredited school in the country run by a zoo itself, Zoo School is designed to meet Sunshine State curriculum objectives for FL state schools.

History

Plans to build the Zoo School were accelerated in 1998 by then chairman of the Lowry Park Zoological Society board, Richard L. Stohler, president of Cummins Southeastern Power. The zoo was previously accommodating nearly 70,000 schoolchildren a year without classrooms.

Tampa resident and Lowry Park Zoological Society board member Patricia C. Sullivan, herself a former school teacher, provided a \$1 million leadership gift for construction. The Frank E. Duckwall Foundation provided a \$500,000 grant as the namesake for the exhibit hall. Classes began in fall 2000.

In 2008, construction was completed on new annex with additional classrooms, restrooms and office space. The annex was designed to meet the needs of preschool-age children now, and provide for expanding teen programs as future funding permits. The new annex was made possible by board member and Zoo School founder Patricia C. Sullivan, the Thomas Family, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and U.S. Senator Mel Martinez.

Zoo School facilities enable the educational department to serve more children, teachers and parents more efficiently, year-round. In Fiscal Year 2007, the zoo served more than 203,000 children in education programs.