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## News Release

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

*Zoo Safari program infuses STEM curriculum requirements for students*

**Apple Valley, Minn.** – More than 2,100 third grade students from 18 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.

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 zoo’s pathways are filled with eager faces as they get up-close and personal with the zoo’s residents. District 196 students experience hands-on animal encounters from a friendly hedgehog or curious armadillo. They learn about the animal habitats, food habits, and environmental impacts as zoo naturalists help bring textbook concepts to life.

These field trips spark students’ interest in science and promote academic achievement. The field trip is free for all third grade students and is the first visit to the Minnesota Zoo for many of them.

“Authentic hands-on learning experiences are crucial to learning, and Zoo Safari provides these 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 see 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 to partner with the zoo on this program and provide students access to one of our state’s greatest treasures.”

The elementary schools participating in the program include:

<b>School</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Zoo Safari date</b>
Cedar Park Elementary	Apple Valley	11/13/18
Diamond Path Elementary	Apple Valley	10/3/18
Greenleaf Elementary	Apple Valley	11/9/18
Highland Elementary	Apple Valley	1/8/19
Southview Elementary	Apple Valley	1/16/19
Westview Elementary	Apple Valley	TBD
Echo Park Elementary	Burnsville	11/11/18
Deerwood Elementary	Eagan	TBD
Glacier Hills Elementary	Eagan	TBD
Northview Elementary	Eagan	10/17/18
Oak Ridge Elementary	Eagan	TBD
Pinewood Community Elementary	Eagan	03/20/19
Red Pine Elementary	Eagan	TBD
Thomas Lake Elementary	Eagan	10/25/18
East Lake Elementary	Lakeville	10/25/18
Parkview Elementary	Rosemount	11/29/18
Rosemount Elementary	Rosemount	10/26/18
Shannon Park Elementary	Rosemount	11/19/18

### **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 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 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 1,000 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](http://pinebendrefinery.com).