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Press Release

For Immediate Release

Draft

Saving our Furry and Feathered Friends

Fox Valley Wildlife Center Needs Your Help...

Elburn, Illinois, October 20, 2005: This year the Fox Valley Wildlife Center, located in the Kane County Forest Preserve in Elburn, has seen more than 1,700 birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals pass through its door; many of whom were able to released back into the wild following intensive rehabilitation and care. Unfortunately, funding has not kept up with the volume of animals it has received or the rising costs of caring for them; so the Center made an extremely difficult decision to close its doors to animal care during the winter season.

The Center first opened in the spring of 2001. During that first year over 1,000 animals were admitted, and since then the Center has seen a dramatic increase in the number of injured and orphaned wildlife. Between 2003 and 2004 alone the staff observed a 58% increase in admissions. Barely halfway through the 2005 season, the Center found it necessary to stop admitting certain animals because of limited resources and space, and scrambled to find other area centers and rehabilitators that could care for them. According to Senior Wildlife Specialist Lori Schroeder Ross, "Funding simply has not kept up with the rising costs associated with Center operations and we are seriously looking at limiting the number of animals that we will be able to care for during the 2006 season." This would have a tremendous impact on local and neighboring communities since the Center is Kane County's only wildlife rehabilitation facility.

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The Center has accepted wildlife from as many as 130 cities in the Chicagoland area including Rockford, Chicago and Morris. They have worked regularly with Kane County & Aurora Animal Control, the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors Program and area shelters and police departments; taking in "urban wildlife" such as birds, squirrels, opossums, raccoons, and on occasion foxes, birds of prey (such as owls and hawks), and white-tail deer fawns. The need for funding and more volunteers to help care for these animals is very near crisis point, according to Ross. The Center has a small group of dedicated volunteers who work weekly four-hour shifts during the season. When you consider that one baby wren must be fed every half-hour for twelve hours a day, you can begin to see the work involved in caring for the hundreds of birds the Center sees each season. When you factor in the mammals also residing at the Center, the hundreds of telephone calls received each week, the workload is staggering.

While the majority of the wildlife caregivers are volunteers, as a federally and state licensed facility, the Center must employ certified wildlife specialists to run the facility and provide medical procedures restricted to licensed rehabilitation personnel. Vice President Sheila Morrison stated, "We strive to maintain the highest standards of animal care at the Center and we don't want to compromise that care by taking in more animals than we can handle." There are plenty of ways to earn a trip to the rehabilitation hospital recovery room. As encroaching urbanization displaces more and more native wildlife from their natural habitats, there are an increasing number of incidents where animals are accidentally or maliciously injured, or where babies become permanently separated from their mothers. Human intervention, automobiles and attacks by pets account for the vast majority of these incidents.

The Fox Valley Wildlife Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization financed entirely through memberships, donations, and grants. The Center does not receive any government funding. Various grants have been applied for and the Center has had early success including receipt of a generous grant from the Aurora Foundation which will allow for the building of new animal enclosures to replace aging pens. The Center has also recently applied for a grant to assist with covering the costs associated with veterinary and medical supplies, emergency veterinary care, medications and food. Additional fundraising efforts are being undertaken including a yearly Barn Sale and Open House, an Annual Winter Wildlife Gala, Membership Drives, and a Wildlife Baby Shower among others.

Morrison says an additional \$100,000 is needed just to sustain the nonprofit Center and help us get through next season. If more funding is not received, the Center will need to drastically cut back on the number of animals admitted or possibly make the decision to close its doors for good. "It's truly sad, we're seeing this happen to similar centers all across the nation. As funding for programs such as ours is cut, we are faced with trying to find more creative ways to obtain the money we need to survive. If we're unsuccessful...where will the wildlife go when we're all gone?"

The Center is concentrating on its educational programs which focus on wildlife conservation to help educate the public on this important resource. Programs have been developed for all ages, and are available for schools, service organizations and private groups. The center's educational animals, which include a Northern Bobwhite Quail named "Duke", serve as wildlife ambassadors to help spread the word.

During the winter hiatus from animal care, the Center's board, staff and volunteers have a full agenda planned. The Center will undergo many improvements and renovations impossible to complete with animals in residence due to the harmful effects of vapors from paint and chemicals on their delicate respiratory systems.

The Center urgently needs your support. Monetary donations from individuals, families and corporations will be greatly appreciated. Other ways you can help include becoming a member and/or volunteer, bring your ink-jet cartridges and aluminum cans in for recycling, finding out if your company offers a matching gift program and check out our wish list for items needed to help the animals.

For information on the Center's events, programs or opportunities to become involved in the quest to "help wildlife in need" please contact the Center at 630-365-3800 or visit our website at www.foxvalleywildlife.org Together, as a community, we can make a difference in maintaining the delicate balance of nature in a rapidly growing world.

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