



Thursday, April 02, 2009

Anniversary party planned for Evidence, the zebra

Thursday, April 02, 2009



By Valerie Baldowski

vbaldowski@henryherald.com

Noah's Ark will celebrate an anniversary this weekend for one its most widely-known inhabitants.

Evidence, the zebra, came to the Locust Grove facility in April 2008, after being found severely injured along Interstate 75. Officials suspect he fell from a vehicle transporting him, and was then struck by a car.

Estimated to be about 3 months old, Evidence was taken to the Auburn University veterinary school in Alabama for surgery to repair pelvic injuries.

He was moved to Noah's Ark to recover.

To mark the zebra's first year living at Noah's Ark, a party is planned Saturday from 12 p.m., to 3 p.m., at the facility, located at 712 Locust Grove-Griffin Road.

Diane Smith, a spokesperson for Noah's Ark, said the celebration is open to the public, and it will offer a chance for Evidence's fans to greet him again.

Special Photo - Evidence the zebra was taken to Noah's Ark, co-founded by Charles "Pop" Hedgecoth, Sr., after being found injured along Interstate 75.

"People have been so supportive of him," said Smith. "He has touched a lot of people's lives."

The event includes refreshments and door prizes, and visitors will be able to buy Evidence books and T-shirts. The first 100 visitors to sign in at the

facility's welcome center will receive a paperback edition of the book "I'm Evidence."

Guests are requested to wear black and white.

Smith said when the public learned of Evidence's injuries last year, donations began coming in to help with the cost of his medical care, which included a second surgery in June.

The story of how the animal recovered touched a nerve with the public, she said.

"He was a fighter and a survivor," Smith said. "He wanted to live. It really made a connection."

Since coming to Noah's Ark, Evidence has become friends with a miniature horse named Gracie. The tiny 3-year-old horse, Smith said, is half his size, but the two have become inseparable.

The zebra also has developed a close bond with the facility's co-founder, Charles "Pop" Hedgecoth, Sr.

Smith said because Evidence is technically still a wild animal, the other Noah's Ark employees keep a safe distance, talking to him and petting him through the fence of his habitat area. But Hedgecoth, Smith said, is able to walk up to the zebra and handle him without getting nipped or kicked.

"Pop is his surrogate mother," Smith said. "He's still very attached to [him.]"

Hedgecoth acknowledged he spent a lot of time with Evidence when he first arrived at Noah's Ark.

Evidence was still being bottle fed upon his arrival, Hedgecoth said, adding he fed and handled him the most.

"We became the best of friends," said Hedgecoth. "We bonded. He'd rather have me than anybody. It's a blessing that he came to us."

Supporters of Noah's Ark read reports of the young zebra's injuries last year, he said, and more the 500 fans were waiting at Noah's Ark when the zebra was brought there from Auburn University.

Hedgecoth said he expects at least that many will show up for the anniversary party.

"It's going to be pretty big," he said.

Content © 2009

Software © 1998-2009 **1up! Software**, All Rights Reserved