



May 21, 2008

Contact: Sheelah Medved, 253-404-3636 or [sheelah.medved@tacomaparks.com](mailto:sheelah.medved@tacomaparks.com)

### **Meerkats and Lemurs and Mole Rats – Oh My!**

*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium adds 17 species with new exhibit Animal Avenue*

TACOMA, Wash. — Animal Avenue, the newest exhibit at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, opens May 31, 2008. The exhibit brings meerkats, lemurs, mole rats, and 14 other new species to the PDZA neighborhood.

The \$4.3 million project, completing the popular Kids' Zone, focuses on families, homes, and communities. The exhibit, tailored for children aged 3 to 8 years old, features a variety of kid-friendly interactives and animal exhibits, but will excite crowds of all ages. Kid-focused highlights include a giant climbable spider web, a darkened scorpion tunnel, a child-sized viewing cave, and a sandpit for toddlers.

The eye-catching meerkats and lemurs will grab visitors' attention – adults and kids alike – and draw them into to Animal Avenue. Once inside, other animals that will keep visitors enthralled include mole rats that live only underground, a tarantula the size of a dinner plate, glowing scorpions, and fish who raise their babies in their mouths.

“One of our core mission areas is to provide the community unique places to visit,” said Victoria Woodards, president of the Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners. “I’d say Animal Avenue certainly fits that bill.”

The Zoo worked in collaboration with a diverse team of designers including BCRA architectural firm, Dillon Works! Inc., and Ray Mendez from Work As Play, Inc. Jody Miller Construction is the general contractor. Company president Jody Miller said “Animal Avenue is fabulously designed with lots of special nooks and crannies that will show off the animals to the best advantage. Everyone is really going to have fun at Animal Avenue.”

For more information on Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, visit [www.pdza.org](http://www.pdza.org) or call 253-591-5337.

###

*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only Zoo & Aquarium, is located in Tacoma's beautiful Point Defiance Park, 5400 North Pearl Street. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The Zoo, a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).*