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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

## **Zoo to Celebrate Opening of New Tortoise Exhibit**



Dickerson Park Zoo and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board will officially open the zoo's new Tortoise Exhibit Building Friday, Oct. 12, 10:30 a.m. at Dickerson Park Zoo, 3043 N. Fort Avenue. The Aldabra Tortoises who call the exhibit home will cut the ribbon.

The 1,070-square foot building houses the zoo's four Aldabra Tortoises, one of the world's largest land turtle species, weighing 250-550 pounds each. Since they arrived in 1979 and 1980, these giant tortoises were only visible to the public while outside during the warmer months. Because they are cold-blooded, the tortoises must move indoors and, formerly, off-exhibit during cold weather. The new building allows zoo visitors to see the tortoises year round.

The building has two rooms, allowing males and females to spend time together or apart. It includes water pools, a sand pit for potential egg-laying and special rubber-cushioned flooring for the comfort and health of the animals.

"The new building gives us the option of separating the males and females, which will improve our odds of successful breeding," said Mike Crocker, Director of Dickerson Park Zoo.

A pyramid skylight provides natural light and enhances the appearance of the building. The building connects to the summer exhibit yard.

The project is a part of Dickerson Park Zoo's last and newest master plan. H-Design Group designed the facility and Masonry Structures, Inc. was the general contractor. The approximately \$300,000 project was funded by the 2006 voter-approved 1/4-cent Countywide Parks Sales Tax.

For more information, contact: Melinda Arnold, Friends of the Zoo Public Relations and Marketing Director, at 417-833-1570 or 417-848-0162; or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Public Information Administrator for the Springfield-Greene County Park Board, at 417-874-2176 or 417-224-5510.