

Media Contact: Michele Fiore, michele.fiore@glenviewparks.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Giant Sloth Exhibit Kicks off Interpretive Center Grand Reopening Feb. 22

After eight months of construction the Interpretive Center opens again to the public with a day-long event

GLENVIEW, IL (February 20, 2020) – Glenview Park District is celebrating the reopening of The Grove Interpretive Center, 1421 Milwaukee Ave. with a public open house from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 22. The public will be able to see all the new renovations and displays, including a giant ground sloth skeleton.

Additional improvements include a state-of-the-art animal habitat and a new exhibit highlighting the fascinating life and accomplishments of 19th Century Glenview native, naturalist Robert Kennicott.

Visitors can follow Kennicott’s life from his early years as a boy growing up at The Grove to his days as a renowned scientist at the Smithsonian Institution and as an explorer in Alaska. Letters, artifacts, specimens and interactive exhibits help illustrate Kennicott’s amazing achievements and his ongoing influence on contemporary science.

Over 100,000 people — including more than 900 student groups — visit The Grove each year. The Interpretive Center serves as a showcase for local history and nature, and as an educational programming space. The new exhibits provide interpretational and experiential learning which align with educational standards and field trips.

Construction began in June 2019 after voters approved a \$17 million Glenview Park District bond measure to fund improvements to The Grove Interpretive Center and entrance, renovation of the 44-year-old-Glenview Ice Center and the creation of a fund to purchase open space. The total estimated cost for all three projects is \$33.1 million. The Park District is using accumulated fund balances, alternative revenue bonds and other existing revenue streams to cover the rest of the amount. About \$2.6 million was earmarked for The Grove.

The main attraction, the four-ton “Turtle Island,” is the new home of The Grove’s resident alligator snapping turtle, Al.

Designed by Paul Bluestone, former vice president at The Shedd Aquarium, this multi-habitat structure also houses native turtles and snakes and birds. It features million-year-old fossils, tunnels for visitors and a waterfall. Fabrication work was done by Cemrock Landscapes, Inc. in Tucson, Arizona, and shipped to The Grove for installation.

Also, a new 1,600-gallon aquarium filled with native Illinois fish species has replaced five tanks on the east wall of the main room.

“We’re focusing on animals that Robert Kennicott described in his work, like garter snakes and American kestrels,” said Ashley DeAngeles, the Glenview Park District’s supervisor of customer service and operations. “Visitors will find it’s like discovering nature in your own backyard.

A towering 10-foot tall Alaskan brown bear, part of The Grove’s collections, was completely refurbished and now stands just inside the Interpretive Center, ready to greet all who enter.

But Robert Kennicott’s favorite display would likely be the Megatherium exhibit that features a life-size skeleton of the Harlan’s Ground Sloth, an extinct relative of both the South American tree sloth and the prehistoric Megatherium. Interpretive Center visitors may be surprised to learn giant ground sloths were once native to the Midwest before dying out following the last ice age.

The giant sloth exhibit was funded by a \$50,000 donation from the Glenview Park Foundation. The exhibit focuses on Robert Kennicott’s adventures in Washington DC, as part of a group of Smithsonian scientists know as the Megatherium Club.

Infrastructure upgrades to the Interpretive Center include new lighting, HVAC and alarm systems, plumbing, a fire suppression system and a new aquatic life support system for the animals. A wall was removed to create a welcoming reception and retail area.

“We believe the end result is a recreational facility that is safer, more secure, energy efficient, more accessible to persons with disabilities, and positioned to better meet the needs of our district residents well into the future,” said Lorin Ottlinger, Grove Director.”

ABOUT GLENVIEW PARK DISTRICT:

“The Glenview Park District Serves more than 50,000 residents, including all of Glenview and Golf, small portions of Niles, Northbrook, Northfield and Skokie, and unincorporated areas beyond the village limits. The district owns, maintains and operates more than 845 acres. Connect with us at www.glenviewparks.org.

ABOUT THE GROVE:

The Grove is 152.23 acres of ecologically diverse prairie grove land preserved and maintained by the Glenview Park District. The Grove was the home of visionary horticulturalist and educator Dr. John Kennicott, who bought his family from New Orleans to settle on this land in 1836. Because of its rich history, The Grove was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1976. It’s on the National Registry of Historic Places.

###

THE GROVE PROJECTS SNAPSHOT

Interpretive Center Renovation

- The park district enlisted the architectural and engineering firm Wight & Company. They designed a number of improvements including the creation of new exhibit space, a new front desk and office support space, a new retail area, new fire alarm and sprinkler systems, new restrooms, lighting, electrical and HVAC system upgrades, structural improvements as well as making ADA improvements.
- New concrete pads were poured for the generator, condensing units and a new electrical transformer.
- A larger sump pit to better handle rain water was installed.
- Overseeing and managing the contractors and construction for this project was the Construction Management firm Frederick Quinn Corporation.
- The amazing new exhibits were designed and created by Bluestone and Associates.
- Cemrock Landscapes, Inc. built and installed Turtle Island.
- Benvenuti & Stein built the casework.
- Benchmark Imaging and Display created the exhibit graphics.
- Aquamoon designed and installed new life support and filtration systems to support Turtle Island and the new fish tank.
- The Owners Representative on the project for the Park District was the AT Group
- The Glenview Park Board approved a guaranteed maximum price for the project at \$1,392,601, minus costs for exhibits.
- The project did see a few delays along the way due to inspection schedules and delays with utilities.

Front Entrance Safety Improvements

- The park district engaged the civil engineering firm Gewalt Hamilton Associates, Inc. for The Grove Entrance project. They designed a number of safety improvements and enhancements including the installation of separate pedestrian walkways, widening the entrance and driveway, adding a right turn lane from Milwaukee Avenue, the creation of a storm water detention basin, improved lighting, signage and security and resurfacing the four west parking lots using environmentally-friendly materials. The design, engineering and construction observation work was done by Gewalt Hamilton Associates and the general contractor for the project was Lenny Hoffman Excavating, Inc.
- The Glenview Park District worked collaboratively with Village of Glenview staff and various village boards and commissions including the Plan and Appearance Commissions, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Natural Resources Commission and the Environmental Review Commission.
- The new storm water detention basin holds 1.5-acre feet of water, which is equivalent to 488,777 gallons of water. The project team worked with through the permitting process with the following agencies: the Village of Glenview, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, the Illinois Department of Transportation and the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers.

Open Space Purchases at The Grove

- **April 2019** -- The Park District acquired an additional 3.04 acres of open space after purchasing two parcels of land at 1500 and 6500 Portage Run, adjacent to The Grove. Funding for the \$660,000 purchase was provided by The Grove Heritage Association, which donated \$380,000, an Illinois Natural Resources grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which covered \$280,000 and \$10,000 from the Glenview Park District Open Space Fund, which covered the balance. As part of the original Kennicott Grove, this particular property is important for ecology, cultural history and

for Grove operations. It will allow easier access to the back 70 acres of the historical site and nature preserve and provide opportunities for new programming.

- **June 2019** -- The Grove acquired an additional 1.56 acres of land through a donation by Life Storage Corporation. This acquisition brings the total acreage at The Grove to 152.23 acres.