



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is Certified Sensory Inclusive**

April 23, 2019 -- *Jacksonville, FL* – Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) has partnered with KultureCity to become certified as a sensory inclusive organization. This new initiative offers an accommodating experience for guests and members that may require a sensory-sensitive experience.

Certification included training of the Zoo's staff by leading medical professionals on how to recognize guests that may have sensory needs and how to handle a sensory overload situation. Sensory bags for guests feeling overwhelmed during a Zoo visit are now available at the Train Booth. Each bag is equipped with noise canceling headphones, fidget tools, and verbal cue cards.

Sensory sensitivities and sensory regulation are often experienced by individuals with autism, dementia, PTSD and other similar conditions. Large public venues like the Zoo can be overwhelming and limiting; as a sensory certified organization, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is now better prepared to assist guests with sensory sensitivities and enhancing their visit.

Families planning a trip to the Zoo can now download the free KultureCity App that shares how to access sensory features at the Zoo. Additionally, on the App is the Social Story which will provide a preview of what to expect while enjoying an event at Zoo.

The Zoo is proud to add this certification and continue our partnerships with The HEAL Foundation as the Heal Walk host, and K9s for Warriors as a training site for their service dogs and warriors. This is also the 12<sup>th</sup> year Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens will host Dreamnight, an event that hosts families with children with special healthcare needs for an evening of free fun and festivities.

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### **About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens**

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. **The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and a portion of every ticket sold goes to the over 45 conservation initiatives Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens**

**supports around the world, and here in NE Florida.** JZG is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit [jacksonvillezoo.org](http://jacksonvillezoo.org)

### **About KultureCity**

KultureCity is a leading non-profit recognized nationwide for using their resources to revolutionize and effect change in the community for those with sensory needs; not just those with Autism. Since the program's inception, KultureCity has created over 200 sensory inclusive venues in 3 countries; this includes special events such as: NFL Pro-Bowl, NFL Super Bowl, MLB All Star Weekend. KultureCity has won many awards for its efforts: NASCAR Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award in 2017, Cleveland Cavaliers' Quiet Space Sensory Room at Quicken Loans Arena was a finalist for the 2018 Stadium Business Award, and the 2018 Clio Sports Silver for social good in partnership with Cleveland Cavaliers/Quicken Loans Arena. Recently, KultureCity was awarded one of the World's Most Innovative Companies for 2019 by FastCompany.