

Animals and people had a good time



Nearly 200 guests attended the grand opening Friday of the Bucks County Zoo.



Wildlife expert Jack Hanna joins "Jungle" Joe Fortunato welcoming Sydney to the Bucks County Zoo.

Zoo opens for business with celebrity guest Jack Hanna on hand

The humans milled about admiring the animals – from Arthur the Aardvark to Ziggy, the Blue and Gold Macaw – who all seemed to have a good time too.

Nearly 200 guests joined the staff and volunteers of the Bucks County Zoo at its grand opening celebration Friday.

The Bucks County Zoo, the first exotic animal zoo in the county, is the result of efforts by Joe Fortunato, a.k.a. Jungle Joe. The Warminster zoo is housed in a 5,000 square-foot facility while Fortunato works to reach his next goal: a piece of land large enough to provide outdoor areas for the animals as well as indoor, and the ability to expand his educational program.

"Education is at the center of what we do here," he said. "We are sworn to protect and preserve our natural environment, and part of our goal is getting our message out today."

Special guest at the opening was wildlife expert Jack Hanna, director emeritus of the Columbus Zoo and host of television show, Jack Hanna's "Into the Wild." He

encouraged the audience to support the zoo through conservation, volunteering and educating others.

"If we can't save our animals and other natural resources, what's next?" he asked. "We are."

Fortunato also runs Animal Junction, the traveling zoo that

brings the exotic zoo animals to schools, parties and other gatherings, where he and his assistants teach appreciation for the animals, preach the importance of recycling and conservation and raise awareness and respect for the natural world.

buckscountyzoo.com

Grateful fans

Howard and Lori Rubin of Southampton went to the opening of Animal Junction, not so much to see the new zoo but to show support for Jungle Joe Fortunato.

Howard and Lori have been animal lovers forever. The two have been on trips to view different animals including safaris.

In 2007 Lori was treated for breast cancer. Then in January 2008 Lori was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

In March as she went through her treatments, Howard wanted to do something special for his wife. He called Jungle Joe and booked a one-hour visit from the traveling zoo.

The day before Lori's next chemotherapy treatment, Joe and three of the zoo's volunteer keepers, with numerous animals, arrived at the Rubin home. The adventure began and Howard said, "It just kept going." At the end of three and a half hours, Joe's presentation was complete and Lori was ecstatic.

Howard approached Joe to settle up and Joe told him the visit was his gift.

Howard and Lori were at the opening to thank Joe and to support him any way they can. As to Lori's health, Howard said, "She's doing great."



Amy Kart, volunteer with the Bucks County Zoo, holds 3-month-old Sierra, a Syrian Bear who will weigh in at about 550 pounds when she is full grown.



Hootie is a South American Spectacled Owl, named for the white markings around his eyes.

Photographs and text by Brenda Lange



Michele Mauldin of New Mexico is donating Sydney, a ten-month old Red Kangaroo she's been raising since his mother died several months ago, to the zoo. She explains to Lynn Lubing of Yardley that raising Sydney has been "labor intensive."



Howard and Lori Rubin with "Jungle" Joe Fortunato.