

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nature Discovery Center to Reveal Park Renovations During Free Public Event

BELLAIRE (4/18/2017) On Saturday, May 6, 2017 the Nature Discovery Center will reveal their recently completed renovations and park improvements at a free event, Gateway to Nature: Experience our Park Transformation. The event will begin at 10:00 am with a short ceremony to thank donors and contributors. Following opening remarks by City of Bellaire Mayor Andrew Friedberg and Nature Discovery Center Executive Director Henry Owen, gathered guests will be invited to walk the nature trails through Russ Pitman Park to the nature center to experience the complete transformation. From 10:30 am to 1:00 pm, the Center's education team will lead a series of fun, family-centered activities throughout the renovated nature park, highlighting various improvements and encouraging guests to explore the park.

This reveal event celebrates the completion of the final phase of the Center's major capital renovation, the Gateway Project, as well as the completion of several noteworthy park improvement projects, none of which would have been possible without significant public support and without the generous contributions of donors and volunteers.

The Gateway Project represented a \$1.26 million capital initiative to improve the historic Henshaw House (Phase One) and Russ Pitman Park (Phase Two), both of which are managed by the Center. The public/private capital funding included a \$500,000 City of Bellaire bond referendum as well as \$760,000 from private citizens and foundations including: The Brown Foundation, Inc., The Cullen Foundation, Fondren Foundation, The Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Houston Endowment, Patrons for Bellaire Parks, and The Wortham Foundation. Renovations recently completed during Phase Two of Gateway include an outdoor restroom, a revamped pavilion area, pathway lighting, and an outdoor Critter Classroom, as well as improved irrigation and drainage, removal of non-native species and their replacement with native plants, and the new split-rail fence.

Additional park improvements completed this spring fulfilled parts of the Center's Park Master Plan, enhancing the park's ADA accessibility and its usability for both everyday visitors and school groups. These updates, which focus attention on the park's 4 habitat zones, will increase opportunities for environmental education in the nature park, improve the park's biodiversity, and generate public awareness of its abundant wildlife through interpretive signage. A key partnership with Resource Environmental Solutions (RES) -- the largest habitat restoration company in the country, made many of these improvements possible. RES donated services to enhance the 4 habitat zones in the park through pond restoration, nonnative plant removal, and native plantings throughout the park. They also removed old concrete pavers in the park,

allowing for a new meandering center path with a Porous Pave surface. The new center path was generously funded by a donation from the Robert L. Cook Charitable Fund. Patrons for Bellaire Parks provided funds for a new boardwalk through the Prairie Wetlands. The family of long-time volunteer Gene Bullard donated the new teaching deck and a water feature to be installed at Cypress Pond, both of which were given in Gene's memory.

Nature Discovery Center staff are eager to share the transformation of the nature center and the park with you on May 6 during their reveal event. To learn more about this event and about additional upcoming programming at the Center, visit them online at www.naturediscoverycenter.org.

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ABOUT THE HANA AND ARTHUR GINZBARG NATURE DISCOVERY CENTER

Founded in 1988, the Hana and Arthur Ginzburg Nature Discovery Center sparks interest in nature and science through high-quality educational programming and its four-acre outdoor classroom, the Russ Pitman Park. The 501(c)(3) organization aims to stimulate a desire to explore, discover, learn, nourish the inquiring mind, and keep a sense of wonder alive for all ages.