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Zoo receives \$1 million gift from pizza magnate for exhibit

John and Annette Schnatter are donating \$1 million to the Louisville Zoo for the planned Glacier Run exhibit, which is expected to open in 2010.

The gift from the founder of Papa John's pizza and his wife pushes the drive to raise \$25 million for Glacier Run and several smaller exhibits past the halfway mark. More than \$12.6 million has been pledged, with an additional \$6 million for the exhibit pending in the state budget that awaits legislative approval.

Also, the city has pledged an additional \$3 million in an upcoming bond issue for the project.

The Schnatters, who were major contributors several years ago to the zoo's Gorilla Forest, previously pledged \$100,000 to Glacier Run.

"Glacier Run will be a trailblazing exhibit that will set a new standard for zoos," Mayor Jerry Abramson said under a small tent at a rainy press conference yesterday morning at the zoo.

He said the Schnatters were making a major investment in both education and conservation in supporting Glacier Run.

Glacier Run will feature polar bears, seals, sea lions, otters and other arctic creatures that will live in an exhibit that simulates a 19th-century frontier town on the edge of the Arctic Circle.

Glacier Run alone will cost about \$20 million. The fund drive also covers the cost of an Australian Outback train station and splash park that opened last year, an exhibit for tigers and leopards due to open in a year or so, and an animal sanctuary to open after Glacier Run.

Director John Walczak said the zoo plans to solicit construction bids for the Glacier Run exhibit in a month or so and will start building later this year with the money that is in hand. Zoo officials say they expect that Glacier Run will increase attendance and revenue.

In honor of the Schnatters' latest gift, zoo officials announced that the new splash park adjacent to where Glacier Run will go has been named the Calistoga Splash Park. Calistoga Bakery Café is a new upscale restaurant chain in which John Schnatter has invested.

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