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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DECAL joins Zoo Atlanta for Educator Appreciation Day**

*Educators receive FREE admission and \$2 OFF General Admission for Family & Friends*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (February 29, 2016)** – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is partnering again this year with Zoo Atlanta for Educator Appreciation Day on **Saturday, March 19, 2016**, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Early care and education professionals throughout the state are encouraged to bring their family and friends to the zoo for a day of fun-filled activities. Educator Appreciation Day is presented by PNC Bank and sponsored by Kaiser Permanente and Macy's.

Educators will receive free admission and \$2 off general admission for each of their guests. Educator identification, such as an employee photo ID; a pay stub or name badge with school name or county and a state-issued photo ID; or a homeschool declaration of intent and a state-issued photo ID, is required.

Educators are encouraged to pre-register to attend at

<http://shop.zooatlanta.org/webstore/shop/ViewItems.aspx?&CG=105&C=55>.

“Educator Appreciation Day provides a great opportunity for educators and their guests from across the state to experience Zoo Atlanta,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “In addition to enjoying one of Georgia’s most interesting and extensive nature resources, educators can access the Educator Lounge at the Ford Pavilion to personally encounter exotic animals and to talk with the Zoo’s education staff.”

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“Educators play a tremendous role in shaping the lives of the next generation, and as a conservation organization, we rely on educators to introduce the concepts of wildlife and ecology that can be experienced firsthand at Zoo Atlanta,” said Raymond B. King, President and CEO of Zoo Atlanta. “We’re proud to partner with DECAL on helping Georgia students not only excel in the sciences, but also grow into stewards of our state’s priceless natural resources.”

In addition, guests will receive a coupon for 10 percent off purchases in the gift shop and food outlets (coupon valid on March 19 only). For more information on Zoo Atlanta’s Educator Appreciation Day, call 404.624.WILD or e-mail [education@zooatlanta.org](mailto:education@zooatlanta.org).

### **About Zoo Atlanta**

Viewed as one of the finest zoological institutions in the U.S. and a proud accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta has a mission to inspire value and preservation of wildlife through a unique mix of education and outdoor family experiences. From well-known wildlife to critically endangered species on the brink of extinction, the Zoo offers memorable close encounters with some 1,300 animals from around the world. The Zoo’s newest destination, Scaly Slimy Spectacular: The Amphibian and Reptile Experience, featuring more than 60 species in a 111,000 square-foot complex, opened in 2015 and is the world’s first LEED Gold-certified reptile and amphibian exhibit.

Zoo collection highlights include Mei Lun and Mei Huan, the only giant panda twins in the U.S.; North America’s largest zoological collection of great apes; and a global center of excellence for the care and study of reptiles and amphibians. Up-close-and-personal animal experiences include behind-the-scenes Wild Encounters with African elephants, giant pandas, lemurs and Aldabra giant tortoises. Zoo Atlanta is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Keeper talks, interactive wildlife shows, education programs and special events run year-round. For more information, visit [zooatlanta.org](http://zooatlanta.org).

### **About Bright from the Start**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages *Quality Rated*, Georgia’s community powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.state.ga.us](http://www.dec.state.ga.us).