Many of us know the story of the “backyard zoo” starting in 1983. However, December 2016 marks the 25th year of “The Best Little Zoo in the World” being located at its official site in 1991: Mile 29, George Price Highway. And what an interesting and progressive 25 years it has been!

Our unique history has seen the start and development of the Harpy Eagle education program, featuring female DaQueen, and her male friend, Panama. These two magnificent birds of prey have provided thousands with a close up look at one of the rarest birds in all of Central America.

The Belize Zoo is the ONLY zoo in the world with a rehabilitation program for the dynamic Jaguar. “Problem Jaguars”, cats who turn from prey such as deer and peccary and instead stalk animals such as cattle and sheep, were being destroyed. Today, thanks to our Problem Jaguar Rehabilitation Program, these naughty big cats are safely trapped, brought to the zoo, and then go through behavior modification training. As a result, they are used for education and research, as opposed to being destroyed. What a “lemon-into-lemonade” story this is!

“Tapir Town” provides a close encounter experience with our iconic National Animal, the Central
American Tapir. Our tapir troop is so friendly and eager to meet inquisitive visitors. It is difficult to imagine that, at one time, a local and prevalent belief was that the tapir was a dangerous animal. Why? Because they could “skin you alive with their flexible nose”. The late, great, April the tapir was the first to do a fine job in helping to see this myth fade into the back roads. For 30 years, she brought a new insight to so many about the importance of the Central American tapir. Rather than being feared, tapirs are now beloved “members of society”.

Providing opportunities to young people in the field of wildlife care has been a priority during these past 25 years. Our student volunteers and zoo interns learn about rare and endangered species. They are provided with a unique “hands on” and memorable learning experience. The photo of high school student Janean Jones from neighbouring Mahogany Heights village, showing her caring attention to Simone the baby spider monkey, is a strong example of the positive action provided by our student program.
The Zoo’s tree-shaded and accessible walkways provide the perfect arena for wildlife education and awareness. All at The Belize Zoo are celebrating 25 important years in Belize history and look forward to further years of fun progress.