Dear Educator:

Thank you for signing up for *Critter Communities*, a 50-minute program designed to help students learn about the importance of diversity in making healthy communities for both plants and animals.

*Critter Communities* will answer the following Essential and Guiding questions:

- Why do healthy communities need diversity in order to thrive?
  - What is a community?
  - What happens to the health of a community when there isn’t diversity?
  - What actions can you take to protect healthy communities?

The Oregon Zoo hopes that as a result of this program, students will be able to:

- Define community as a group of organisms that depend on one another for survival.
- Explain why healthy communities depend on a diversity of plant and animal life.
- Describe what happens to the health of a community when diversity is lost.
- Name two things they can do to protect healthy communities.

The program is correlated to the following academic standards:

**NGSS:**
2-LS4-1. Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats

**Oregon Social Science Standards:**
2.21. Evaluate information relating to an issue or problem.

*In an effort to prepare students for their Zoo School program, please consider the following activities:*

1. Explore the characteristics of a classroom community.
   *Our Classroom Community* (Emily Newbold)

2. Explore the concept of diversity by discovering the variety of colors found in nature.
   *Colour Me* (Investing In Nature: A Partnership for Plants in Canada)
   [https://www.bgci.org/files/Canada/english_docs/colour_me.pdf](https://www.bgci.org/files/Canada/english_docs/colour_me.pdf)

3. Read a community or diversity-related story written for young children
   - *The Tree in the Ancient Forest* (Carol Reed-Jones) – Story portrays the amazing ways in which the inhabitants of the forest depend upon one another for survival.
   - *Whose Hands Are These?: A Community Helper Guessing Book* (Miranda Paul) – Meet the helpers that make their community a safe and fun place to live.
I’m Like You, You’re Like Me: A Book About Understanding and Appreciating Each Other (Cindy Gainer) – Kids learn how to appreciate they ways they are alike and affirm their individual differences.

**Continue the learning after we leave your classroom with the following enrichment activities:**

1. Explore the important role each animal plays in its community and what happens to the health of the community when the animal disappears. A great activity to reinforce the concepts introduced in the Zoo School program.
   *Endangered Species* (Education World: Connecting Educators to What Works)
   [http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp310-03.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp310-03.shtml)

2. Increase the biodiversity at your school by creating a wildlife garden.
   Both the National Wildlife Federation and Oregon State University Extension offer valuable information and support to teachers and schools.
   - National Wildlife Federation
     For additional information contact Morgan Parks ([parksm@nwf.org](mailto:parksm@nwf.org)) at the National Wildlife Federation’s office in Portland.
   - Oregon State University Extension
     [http://extension.oregonstate.edu/4hwildlifestewards/](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/4hwildlifestewards/)
     For additional information and support contact Maureen Hosty ([maureen.hosty@oregonstate.edu](mailto:maureen.hosty@oregonstate.edu)) at Oregon State University Extension 4-H – Multnomah County.

3. Encourage students to take action outside the classroom by planting their seed paper in a garden at home.

4. Take a fieldtrip to Sauvie Island Center and learn more about the unique role pollinators plays in creating healthy communities.
   For additional information contact Sarah Philips at [sarah@sauvieislandcenter.org](mailto:sarah@sauvieislandcenter.org)