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The LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex honors the Mississippi state flower by planting 100 Magnolias as part of beautification project

PRESS RELEASE • FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jackson, Miss. – The Mississippi Children's Museum and MDWFP's Museum of Natural Science celebrate **100 Magnolias** planted at the LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex in the LeFleur's Bluff State Park.

LeFleur's Bluff Complex is now home to over 100 Magnolias of various shapes, sizes, and varieties. Sweetbay, Saucer, Star, and several Southern Magnolia varieties now adorn the complex's gateway entrance and along the picturesque Spotter's Adventure Trail. These beautiful trees will bloom throughout the seasons, offering a year-round sensory experience to visitors. Spotter's Adventure Trail connects MDWFP's Mississippi Museum of Natural Science (MMNS), the Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM), and the LeFleur's Bluff Playground, so guests can safely and conveniently visit both museums and the playground.

The planting of 100 Magnolias at the LeFleur's Bluff Complex is not only about landscaping; it symbolizes the deep roots of this project in the heart of Mississippi. It is a heartfelt gesture that expresses our unwavering hospitality and gratitude to all who come to experience this remarkable site.

Recent enhancements during this completed phase include the introduction of new landscaping, featuring a scenic path bordered by Magnolia trees and various native plant species. Additionally, decorative park benches have been thoughtfully placed along Spotter's Adventure Trail, providing comfortable resting spots for visitors to immerse themselves in the natural beauty of the area. The Den, a focal point of the complex, which can be seen by travelers on Interstate 55, now boasts a striking metal mural, designed by Wier Boerner Allin Architecture, and installed by Mitchell Signs. These captivating additions infuse the complex with charm and offer a visually inviting space for thousands of guests annually.

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation funded the LeFleur's Bluff Playground, Outdoor Classroom and Pavilion ("The Den") and Spotter's Adventure Trail. The Foundation's generous \$4.2 million grant made this innovative project possible, and the Foundation's leadership team played a visionary role in developing the state-of-the-art playground and complex.

"With a vision for a healthy Mississippi, the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is impacting communities and setting the future course for healthy living among all Mississippians," said Foundation Director Eugenia King. "The LeFleur's Bluff playground, outdoor classroom and pavilion and Spotter's Adventure Trail align with the Foundation's mission to provide sustainable healthy opportunities encouraging Mississippians to set life-long goals for health and well-being."

While the new joint entrance at LeFleur’s Bluff Complex has been successfully completed, it is not yet open for full-time public access. The next phase of the project includes parking lot updates that will require the joint entrance to remain closed for a few more months.

“The vision of the masterplan for the LeFleur’s Bluff Complex and surrounding area will provide numerous recreational and educational opportunities to attract visitors to our state and city, as well as increasing the well-being of our local community. Tourism is a major economic driver for our state and the collaboration between MCM, MDWFP, MMNS and the MDWFP Foundation has resulted in inspirational state-of-the-art amenities, which are leading the way in our state for destination development,” said Susan Garrard, President of MCM.

The LeFleur’s Bluff Education and Tourism Complex is a popular attraction for visitors and locals, alike. As the holiday season approaches and school breaks beckon, we look forward to welcoming visitors from across the country and our state to this premier family destination.

“We are excited about the completion of another great project at LeFleur’s Bluff State Park and appreciate all of the partners who continue to pour into this space. This development is a testament to our shared commitment to enhancing the recreational experiences for our communities and visitors to our great state. We look forward to seeing this fun and exciting complex welcome and inspire outdoor enthusiasts and families for generations to come,” says Lynn Posey, Executive Director of Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.

Since the playground opened in December of 2021, the LeFleur’s Bluff Complex has seen over 700,000 visitors. This project has had tremendous economic and tourism benefits for the entire region.

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About the Mississippi Children’s Museum

The Mississippi Children’s Museum (MCM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission of creating unparalleled experiences to inspire excellence and a lifelong joy of learning in all children. MCM’s two award-winning museums in Jackson and Meridian collectively offer over 100,000-square feet of exhibits and educational programming designed around five primary initiatives, Literacy, STEAM, Health and Nutrition, Cultural Arts, and Mississippi Heritage – the keys to helping our children mature into healthy and productive adult learners. MCM offers exceptional resources for children, families, and educators through The LIFT, traveling exhibits and programs, community outreach, *Launch into Learning* afterschool program, professional development for educators, and innovative literacy and language development programs: *Talk from the Start and Reach Out and Read*. MCM is honored to have received an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Medal, the Mississippi Tourism Association Governor’s Award for Travel Attraction of the Year, and USA Today’s ‘10Best Travel Award for Best Children’s Museum. To learn more about MCM visit www.mschildrensmuseum.org.

About the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) is a governing body with the mission of conserving and enhancing Mississippi's wildlife, fisheries, and parks while providing quality outdoor recreation and engaging the public in natural resource conservation. MDWFP is structured into six distinct bureaus, each with a unique and vital role in fulfilling our mission: Wildlife, Fisheries, State Parks, Law Enforcement, Museum of Natural Science, and Support Services. MDWFP manages an award-winning Museum of Natural Science, 20 state fishing lakes, 25 State Parks, 53 Wildlife Management Areas, and 3 Shooting Facilities all to provide quality public outdoor recreation across the state. We strategically engage the public with outdoor conservation throughout the year through education programs, nationally recognized exhibits, youth outreach events, industry partnerships, research, and so much more.

About the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation has a vision for a healthy Mississippi and provides leadership and targeted grant funding for sustainable initiatives and programs to improve the overall health and well-being of Mississippians. Learn more about the Foundation and its partnerships at www.healthiermississippi.org.