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Animal Embassy opens in April on Heckscher Farm

**New home for exotic animals
Opens at Stamford Museum & Nature Center**

(Stamford, Connecticut—April 2007) ... As far back as he can remember Chris Evers has been fascinated with the natural world. He rescued his first exotic animal – a Burmese python – when he was 18 years old.

He was working at the Stamford Museum & Nature Center as the Assistant Director for the summer camp when a family called the Museum saying they had bought the python and because of its rapid growth quickly realized they had made a serious mistake. No one else would take the snake, so Evers got into his car and drove to New Rochelle, N.Y., to get the python that eventually grew to 12 feet long, and which he would take care of for the next 16 years. Looking back, Sydney, the python, was the first Embassy ambassador, and in a way this was the beginning of Animal Embassy.

“She was an amazing animal and helped me to convert the fear of many into fascination and respect,” explains Evers, a Stamford resident who was raised in Darien, and is the founder of Animal Embassy, an environmental education program that brings



exotic animals into schools and brings kids into nature. Animal Embassy opened a semi-permanent home for some of its exotic animals at Stamford Museum & Nature Center this month.

Since he was a small boy, Chris has been connecting human action to its effect on the environment. His earliest memories are of countless hours searching the pond in his Darien backyard for new life – maybe a dragonfly nymph or a new kind of frog.

He didn't yet have the vocabulary to identify these creatures, but he studied them nonetheless.

"I just knew that it was new, something I hadn't seen before," he explained.

As he got older, Evers started making connections between the pond and forest in his backyard, the stream that flowed from it, and the Long Island Sound that the stream flowed into.

"It wasn't studying. It was just what I liked to do in my free time," Evers said.

Later, through work at the Darien Nature Center, Stamford Museum & Nature Center, Maritime Aquarium, and SoundWaters, and when he went on to study wildlife biology and environmental science at the University of Maine, he was able to put words to the systems he had observed as a child.

Evers has his bachelors degree in environmental science and has worked with an incredible diversity of animals, including wolves, bears, raptors, big cats, reptiles, and birds of prey.

As an environmental educator, his goal is to share natural wonders with students of all ages. To better his knowledge Evers travels extensively throughout the United States and the world. Each August Evers heads up to Alaska to guide kayak trips along



Frederick Sound where he and his guests view and photograph whales, wolves, bears and eagles.

“Somebody has to teach children why we have to care about our surroundings and how our actions impact our environment,” he said. Evers is in high demand. He teaches 20-40 classes per week, while still finding time to tend to the more than 50 animals he cares for.

Evers also has Discovery Studios, which house 15 to 20 small animals each, at Hillandale and Palmers Hill pre-schools, and is in the process of setting up another one at Temple Sholom in Greenwich.

Animal Embassy on Heckscher Farm is currently home to about 15 animals and is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and in the summer until 3:30 p.m. It will also be open during Spring on the Farm, a family festival Sunday, May 20, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Stamford Museum & Nature Center’s Heckscher Farm showcases more than 50 heritage breed and traditional farm animals including cows, horses, goats, sheep and pigs. Heckscher Farm, a 16-acre working educational farm is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Stamford Museum & Nature Center is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of art, the natural and agricultural sciences, and history. The Museum is a vital cultural and educational resource for the community, and a focal point for family activity and interaction, seeking to inspire creativity, foster self-discovery, and nurture an appreciation for lifelong learning through exhibitions, educational programs, and special events that enhance the visitor’s experience on its unique site.



Stamford Museum & Nature Center is located at 39 Scofieldtown Road, Stamford, CT (3/4 mile North of Merritt Parkway Exit 35.) For more information call 203.322.1646 or visit www.stamfordmuseum.org.

Hours

Heckscher Farm
Daily 9am-5pm

Animal Embassy
Tues-Sun 10am-2pm
Summer 10am-3:30pm

Nature's Playground
Daily 9am-5pm

Bendel Mansion (main building)
Mon-Sat 9am-5pm
Sun 11am-5pm

Admission Fees*

SM&NC members – always free

Stamford residents – always free on Wednesdays

Adults \$8

Seniors (65+) \$6

Students (18+) \$6 (with valid ID)

Children (4-17) \$4

Children (3 and younger) Free **Excludes festival days*

Planetarium Show: Members Free. Adults \$3; Children 5 and older \$2

Observatory: Members Free. Adults \$3; Children \$2

Friday nights, 8-10 pm, weather permitting.