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Brevard Zoo receives \$2 million gift from Ron Jon Surf Shop and Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation for Aquarium and Conservation Center in Port Canaveral, passes two-thirds mark of \$100 million campaign

MELBOURNE, FL—Brevard Zoo has received a transformative \$2 million gift from Ron Jon's founder and his wife, Ron and Lynne DiMenna. These dollars will help construct the beach-themed entrance complex at the Zoo's world-class Aquarium and Conservation Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Half of the gift, \$1 million, will be donated from their retail company, Ron Jon Surf Shop, and the other \$1 million as a grant from their foundation, Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation. The Aquarium and Conservation Center is a once-in-a-generation endeavor by Brevard Zoo to revolutionize coastal conservation, environmental education, and the rehabilitation of imperiled marine species throughout Central Florida. Following a \$25 million commitment from an anonymous donor in 2021 and a \$5 million gift from the DSF Charitable Foundation earlier this year, this gift represents the third-largest private donation to Brevard Zoo's [Our Legacy Campaign](#), a \$100 million community fundraising effort to build the future Aquarium.

In recognition of this gift, the Aquarium's beach-themed entrance complex will be named in honor of Ron Jon Surf Shop and the Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation. The 17,510-square-foot complex will be the first area visitors will experience upon arriving at the Aquarium, comprising a covered entry, orientation gallery, ticketing, restrooms, guest services, a gift shop, a sea turtle

nesting exhibit and more. The main feature of the complex will be an interactive dune exhibit, modeled to look like real coastal sand dunes, that highlights the work of [Brevard Zoo's Perdido Key beach mouse conservation program](#). Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation has supported the program annually since 2020, with grants totaling more than \$55,000. Signage will recognize Ron Jon and the foundation's generous support, while a Bait Ball Tank, Under the Weed Line Tank and Near Shore Reef Tank will add color and appeal to this exciting introduction to the Aquarium.

"Ron Jon Surf Shop is an iconic brand in East Central Florida, and we are overjoyed to recognize their incredible generosity—and the generosity of the Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation—at our Aquarium," said Brevard Zoo's chief executive officer, Keith Winsten. "This gift will have a major impact on our ability to bring this world-class facility to life, which will conserve and celebrate the coastal ecosystems and wildlife we share our region with, from manatees to the tiniest beach mouse.

"This naming is a fitting tribute to Ron Jon's philanthropic leadership and the Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation's conservation efforts throughout Florida as well as their loyal support of our beach mouse program," Winsten continued.

Groundbreaking for the Aquarium is expected in the fall of 2024, with a planned opening in early 2027. The future Aquarium will span 14 acres of shoreline along the Banana River at Port Canaveral, reflect the distinctive aesthetic of Brevard Zoo, and facilitate meaningful connections between visitors and Florida's marine life and coastal ecosystems through a joyful, accessible and relaxed experience. In addition to the beach-themed entrance complex, planned exhibits include a Manatee Critical Care Center and Habitat, Sea Turtle Care Complex, Shark Flats, Ray Encounter, Alligator Alley, Otter Run and a tarpon feeding experience. The project is expected to support more than 900 jobs and attract over 300,000 tourists annually, engaging at least 525,000 visitors each year.

With this gift, Brevard Zoo crosses the two-thirds mark of its \$100 million Our Legacy Campaign, with more than \$67 million in funds committed since the campaign formally launched in December 2021.

"We are immensely grateful to Ron Jon Surf Shop, the DiMennas, and the Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation, whose combined generosity has helped us reach this thrilling milestone and will help inspire a passion for the conservation of our beaches, waterways and the species that call them home for generations to come."

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About Ron Jon Surf Shop

Founded by Ron DiMenna in 1959, Ron Jon Surf Shop is recognized worldwide as an icon of the surf and beach lifestyle, visited by surf and beach lovers from around the globe. Since opening its first Florida location at Cocoa Beach in 1963, the company has grown into a world-famous destination with locations in New Jersey, Florida, South Carolina, Maryland, Alabama, online, and through licensed partnerships. More information is available at <https://www.ronjonsurfshop.com/>.

About the Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation

East Coast Surfing Hall of Fame legend, Ron DiMenna, and his wife, Lynne, created Surfing's Evolution & Preservation Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that supports organizations with likeminded missions to protect the health of Florida's beaches and address issues such as coastal pollution and beach ecology. Through the sale of the Endless Summer® specialty license plate, the Foundation financially supports meaningful programs, events and activities that impact protection of the beaches for future generations to enjoy. More information is available at <https://preservesurfingbeaches.org/>.

About Brevard Zoo

Recently named the third-best zoo in North America in the USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice awards, Brevard Zoo is home to more than 800 animals representing 170 species from all over the world. Brevard Zoo is an independent, nonprofit organization that receives no recurring government funding for operating costs. Generous public support enables the Zoo to continue serving its communities and maintain its leadership in vital animal wellness, education and conservation programs. More information is available at www.brevardzoo.org.