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For Immediate Release

Chicago Gem Gets Set to Mark Centennial Milestone

Garfield Park Conservatory Celebrates 100th Birthday in 2008

CHICAGO (Sept. 25, 2007) – A beloved Chicago civic and cultural institution is preparing to celebrate 100 years of botanical contributions to the city and its visitors when the calendar flips to 2008.

Garfield Park Conservatory – which first opened its glass front doors to the public in April 1908 – will celebrate its 100th birthday with year-long events and programs, including the unwrapping of a sweet permanent exhibit called “Sugar from the Sun.”

Built in the former Sweet House, this ground-breaking immersion experience will plunge visitors into the life of the Conservatory’s tropical collection – from mangos and bananas to oranges and papayas. Visitors will use all five senses as they experience how a plant uses air, water and light to make sugar -- the energy source not only for plants, but for all life on earth.

The birthday party continues through summer 2008 with a variety of special events and programs, as well as a season-long music and arts festival featuring ethnic folk, jazz and blues musicians, dance troupes and visual artists.

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Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance Centennial Overview//Add One

A horticultural masterpiece and historic landmark located amid the beautiful boulevards of Chicago's West Side, Garfield Park Conservatory was designed by celebrated landscape architect Jens Jensen. The largest public "glass house" in the nation, Garfield Park Conservatory displays hundreds of exotic species of palms, ferns, cacti and tropical plants in landscaped settings under sparkling-clear ceilings, as well as a variety of flora showcased in beautiful outdoor gardens.

Garfield Park Conservatory has undergone dramatic revitalization during the past decade, including renovation of several show houses and the addition of a six-acre walking garden. The not-for-profit Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, which celebrates its 10th anniversary next year, was incorporated in 1998 to support the Conservatory through the development of programming, events and visitor services. Since it was formed, the Alliance has helped contribute to attendance growth from less than 10,000 annually to nearly 200,000 in 2006.

Through its work, the Alliance provides essential cultural, environmental and educational enrichment programming for Chicago visitors and residents, especially those living in the surrounding West Side communities. Thousands of adults and children learn about plant science and gardening through school tours, teacher development workshops, educational and recreational family activities, gardening classes, workshops and more.

The Conservatory, which is owned and operated by the Chicago Park District, is open every day of the year, with free admission and parking. (Special exhibit and activities fees may apply.) For the latest information regarding Garfield Park Conservatory's Centennial and programming, call 773-638-1766 extension 13, or visit www.garfieldconservatory.org.

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Garfield Park Conservatory turns 100 years old in 2008, celebrating its heritage as one of the world's largest botanical gardens under glass. Owned by the Chicago Park District and operated in partnership with the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, the innovative horticultural masterpiece was designed by renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen. Many activities and programs are planned to commemorate this Centennial. For the latest information, call the Alliance at 773-638-1766 ext. 13 or visit www.garfieldconservatory.org.