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For Immediate Release

“Sugar from the Sun”

Opens March 1 at Garfield Park Conservatory

Why an Exhibit on Photosynthesis?

Informal survey shows few understand the life-giving process

CHICAGO (Jan. 29, 2008) – A team of “reporters” and photographers from the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance took to the streets of Chicago in February 2002 to ask residents what they knew about photosynthesis. This is what some of them remembered about the topic:

- It has something to do with plants.
- It’s how plants use light.
- The word sounds familiar, but I can’t tell you what it is.
- It’s a biological term.
- Not much.
- Don’t have a clue.
- It has something to do with plants.
- Something clever -- have I heard it as a Web site or new band?
- It’s the process where the sun changes things in plants into energy that helps them to grow.
- Who can remember? I’m 60.
- Jeeze, I can’t even remember my own phone number.
- It’s the process for like...for like...
- Effect of light on plants, it changes into sucrose and something like air comes out.
- I should know...
- I’ve heard of it, but off the top of my head...something to do with...I wanna say...
- I’m a political scientist, I know nothing about photosynthesis.
- Disruption of...
- Scientific term for plants.
- They produce some type of...something that starts with a C.
- Light transmits...
- Plants...I can’t think of it off the top of my head.

- more -

“Sugar from the Sun” Research//Add One

Through an extensive evaluation process, the Alliance team learned that people generally know very little about photosynthesis, what they do remember is often inaccurate, and they often create their own information and misconceptions about the topic. It is traditionally taught in the classroom in reference to the chemistry of the process and does not involve experiential learning and relevant connections to students’ lives, which would give the information long-term, meaningful impact.

The ground-breaking “Sugar from the Sun” exhibit presents the difficult topic of photosynthesis in novel and experiential ways that are designed to inspire wonder and appreciation for the important role that plants play in all our lives. One of the exhibit’s four main areas is devoted to sugar – or energy, the product of photosynthesis. Three additional areas feature the building blocks of photosynthesis – air, water and sunlight – and show how plants use these elements to produce energy within their leaves. Using plants, water features, tons of stone and innovative sound and lighting technologies, the living exhibit tells the story of how plants grow and ultimately provide everything we need to live.

“Sugar from the Sun” is a highlight of “Chicagoasis: The Greenest Show on Earth” – a year-long celebration of the Conservatory’s 100th birthday in 2008. A series of centennial events and programs are planned to honor the world’s largest botanical collection under glass, designed on Chicago’s West Side by renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen

“Sugar from the Sun” is made possible in part by a \$1.65 million grant from the National Science Foundation. Support also has been received from the “Public Museum Capital Grants Program” of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois State Museum.

Admission to “Sugar from the Sun” is free. Owned by the Chicago Park District and operated in partnership with the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, the Conservatory is open every day of the year, with free admission and convenient free parking. (Special exhibit and activity fees may apply.) For information about Garfield Park Conservatory’s Centennial and related 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.

