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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Grand Opening of Lake Houston Park Nature Center Provides Educational Opportunity for Our Youth**

The New Lake Houston Park Nature Center will officially open on Friday, November 9, 2007, with a ribbon cutting ceremony scheduled for 10:00 a.m. The Center is designed to enhance the wilderness experience for all Lake Houston Park visitors while serving as an educational focal point where Harris and Montgomery county youth can learn about the natural world and its inhabitants.

"We're living in a great time where technology offers all of us and especially our children opportunities to improve our lives," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department, "but at the same time we are losing our touch with the natural world and the benefits it provides for us all. That's why we're so excited about our new nature center. Now we have a place where we can bring that world to life for children we serve."

The Lake Houston Park Nature Center was made possible by a \$100,000 donation from the George Mitchell Foundation.

"Mr. Mitchell is a great admirer of nature and our environment. When he learned of our plans to develop Lake Houston Park he stepped right in to make it happen as rapidly as possible. We are very grateful for his support and his commitment to providing a place where all our children can learn to appreciate the forest and its creatures," Turner continued.

The Lake Houston Park Nature Center has 4 eco-system rooms which allow visitors to get up close and personal with forest and wetland invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles, including turtles, alligators, lizards, and snakes. With its opening the center allows Lake Houston Park programming to be expanded.

(more)

**New Nature Center to Provide Educational Opportunities for Inner-City Youth page 2 of 2**

Other opening day activities include an early morning Guided Bird Walk (8:30 a.m.) and an Off the Beaten Path Safari Tour of Lake Isabel (1:00 p.m.). A mural, created through a partnership the Artist Boat and MD Anderson YMCA will be unveiled following the ribbon cutting ceremony. Funding for the mural was provided by a United Way Kids Way grant. Field trips to the Nature Center are being planned for the summer for youth enrolled in HPARD Summer Enrichment Programs.

"This past summer we were able to bring some of our kids to Lake Houston Park. Some had never seen a forest before or even been out of a big city," said Kay Joshua, Division Manager Recreation Programming, H.P.A.R.D. "They had a great time and I think it gave them an appreciation for a world they had never even thought existed before that trip. This coming summer we're hoping to expand that experience for more children and the Nature Center is going to be a big part of that."

Lake Houston Park was transferred to the city in August of 2006 and has been managed by the Houston Parks and Recreation Department along with our partner, Montgomery County Precinct 4 Commissioner Ed Rhinehart, since its transfer. The new nature center is the latest addition to the park's amenities. Lake Houston Park is located at 22031 Baptist Encampment Road, New Caney, Texas.

To make camping reservations at Lake Houston Park call (281) 354-6881. For more information on Lake Houston Park or the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (713) 845-1135 or visit us online at [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).