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One of the Country's Largest Public Education Events Coming to Zoo Atlanta

The Brain Expo features hands-on science stations such as "Sparky" the 40-foot neuron

ATLANTA – March 31, 2008 - "Sparky" the giant neuron and "Vomit!" are just two of the whimsical, mind-boggling, and curious hands-on displays to appear during the sixth annual Brain Expo at Zoo Atlanta. Two days of exploring, fun and education will begin on Friday, April 4, 2008, private education event, and Saturday, April 5, 2008, for the general public.

The Brain Expo is the brainchild of Atlanta neuroscientists, and sponsored by the Atlanta-based Center for Behavioral Neuroscience (CBN) and Zoo Atlanta. The Expo directed by Kyle Frantz, Ph.D., an assistant professor of biology at Georgia State University is one of the largest public education events of its kind in the country, attracting more than 4,000 visitors each year.

This two-day event will begin on Friday, April 4, 2008, (*Zoo Atlanta's Ford Pavilion*) with more than 160 seventh-grade students from the City of Decatur's Renfroe Middle School. Students will judge their favorite interactive neuroscience learning station based on effectiveness and fun, a day-long reverse science fair.

"Science literacy is a challenge nationwide, and our scores compared with scores of other countries are declining. So it is important we work with our local schools and community on science education events such as the Expo," said Dr. Frantz. "Our surveys have shown that most high school seniors are not ready to make a C or better in college science, so we are trying to get them more excited about science at a younger age. Our data indicate that students find neuroscience more 'fun' and more 'interesting' and are more likely to see neuroscience as a potential career choice after participating in the Expo."

On Saturday, April 5, 2008, the Brain Expo is open to the public (*with general Zoo Atlanta admission*) to participate in interactive booths on a range of topics from brain anatomy to learning and memory. In addition to walking through "Sparky," and discovering how the brain mediates our ability to vomit, visitors can also take part in more than 30 hands-on activity stations such as:

Why they do what they do at the zoo – Learn how to use ethograms to record animal behavior while touring the zoo.

Incredible Edible Neuron – Explore neuron anatomy using yummy cookie creations.

Marine Mammal Brain Games – Answer probing questions about marine mammals. Check out real marine mammal brains.

Wired to Win – *Wired to Win* is an IMAX (and DVD) film that uses the Tour de France as a storyline to explore the brain and peripheral mechanisms of motivation, fear, sensory processing, decision-making and pain.

Play the Animal Way – Animal enrichment keeps zoo animals active in cognitive and physical domains. Play some of the "games" the animals play to forage for food or establish a nest.

Spin the Prize Wheel – Spin the big wheel to win a host of take-home prizes, including *Wired to Win* DVD, books on neuroscience, and more.

For a complete station listing, log on to: www.cbn-atl.org/education/brainsrule.shtml

"It takes more than 200 volunteer scientists and college students at metro Atlanta colleges and hundreds of man hours to design the stations and plan the event, so it is very rewarding to see more people coming each year. Touring the zoo, seeing the animals, learning about the brain and behavior at the same time – who could ask for a better day than that?" Dr. Frantz said.

In addition to CBN's stations, several local advocacy and science education organizations are participating the Brain Expo and will have informational booths set up which include: Alzheimer's Disease Association, American Parkinson's Disease Association, Atlanta Center for Cognitive Therapy, Autism Speaks, Collegiate Neuroscience Society at Georgia State University, Fernbank Museum of Natural History, Institute for Biomedical Philosophy, Mental Health America of Georgia, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), Society for Neuroscience, and the Society for Science and the Public (INTEL ISEF).

National funding for the Expo is provided by the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives and the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

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Note: Photos and video footage of the 2007 event are available upon request.

About the CBN

The Center for Behavioral Neuroscience is a consortium of seven metro Atlanta colleges and universities including: Georgia State University, Emory University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Spelman College. More than 100 neuroscientists are engaged in the research program with the goal of understanding the basic neurobiology of social behaviors. The CBN also directs a comprehensive education program designed to educate the next generation of scientists.

About Zoo Atlanta

An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta inspires public value and protection of wildlife by providing an educational, engaging family experience, committing to critical conservation projects and applying world-class dedication to the stewardship of animals living in naturalistic habitats. One of only four zoos in the U.S. exhibiting giant pandas, Zoo Atlanta recently welcomed the birth of its first cub, Mei Lan. Other highlights include a preeminent great ape collection, featuring a rare set of mother-reared gorilla twins, a world-renowned herpetology department, and *Wild Like Me*, an innovative play space sponsored by Turner Broadcasting Systems, Inc. Zoo Atlanta is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. For more information, call 404.624.WILD or visit zooatlanta.org.