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DESERT MUSEUM MEDIA CONTACT: Tianna Holder, tholder@desertmuseum.org, (520) 883-3073

Pima County Honors Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's Craig Ivanyi with Proclamation

TUCSON, ARIZONA — Craig Ivanyi, the recently retired Executive Director of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, was recognized by Pima County with a proclamation in his honor on February 18, 2025. Just before 10:00 a.m. today, Supervisor Adelita Grijalva, Vice Chair District 5, said, "The Pima County Board of Supervisors hereby proclaims Tuesday, February 18, 2025 to be Craig Ivanyi Day, as we recognize and celebrate his career and success in promoting and highlighting the Sonoran Desert and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum." This distinguished recognition celebrates Ivanyi's remarkable 41 years of service to the Museum, including nearly 15 years as Executive Director. His leadership, dedication, and transformative contributions have left a permanent mark on our institution, the community, and the broader field of conservation.

Ivanyi's last day as Executive Director was February 7, 2025, marking the culmination of a career that began as a volunteer before transitioning into a 40-year tenure as a key member of the Museum's staff. Over the course of his leadership, Ivanyi has guided the Museum through significant growth and evolution, ensuring we remain a regional treasure and a globally recognized conservation leader.

Reflecting on his time at the Museum, Ivanyi remarked, "Though I do not take sole credit for the accomplishments during my tenure, I am incredibly proud of what we've achieved together as a team. From creating groundbreaking exhibits like the Packrat Playhouse and Spadefoot Splash—an interactive exhibit that uses play to teach about water in the desert, set to open in spring 2026—to advancing conservation and education initiatives like Save Our Saguaros and We Bee Scientists, we have worked to honor the Museum's legacy while evolving to meet the needs of today's audiences."

Under Ivanyi's leadership, the Museum earned numerous accolades, including the prestigious IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Services and recognition from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums for innovative exhibits. His tenure was marked by a focus on animal wellbeing, facility and strategic planning, elevating the Museum's commitment to accessibility and belonging for all audiences, and financial resilience. Ivanyi's efforts to increase reserves and endowments have provided a strong foundation for the Museum's future, ensuring long-term sustainability.

When asked about the Museum's impact, Ivanyi highlighted its role as a community cornerstone, helping residents and visitors alike learn to live in harmony with the Sonoran Desert. He also underscored its contributions to conservation, including efforts to combat invasive species and protect regional wildlife.

The public recognition by Pima County holds special significance for Ivanyi. "To have my contributions acknowledged at this level is deeply meaningful," he said. "It validates the work we've done together and inspires me to continue supporting the Museum's growth."

Ivanyi's successor, Hollie Colahan, joined the Museum on January 6, 2025. She brings extensive experience in conservation leadership and is committed to building on our legacy. While the focus of the recognition is on Ivanyi's extraordinary service, Colahan expressed her gratitude for his mentorship during the transition.

We invite the community to celebrate Craig Ivanyi's legacy and to continue supporting its mission to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world. In honor of Craig's long tenure and decades of service, we've established the Ivanyi Tribute Fund, to recognize and further Craig's many contributions to animal care and well-being, research, conservation, environmental education, and other special projects at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. This fund will support programs and projects consistent with Ivanyi's interests and causes related to the Museum, the first of which will reflect his longtime interest in animal well-being and research. To donate, please visit www.desertmuseum.org/donate and select "Ivanyi Tribute Fund" from the drop-down menu, or, if you wish to mail your gift simply make a note in the memo line that says "Ivanyi Tribute Fund".

"Leading the Museum has been the honor of a lifetime," Ivanyi reflected. "It has been deeply rewarding to work alongside such a passionate and talented team. I look forward to continuing my involvement with the Museum's mission, focusing on research and supporting the development of its master plan."

About the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Founded in 1952, the Desert Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization widely recognized as a model institution for immersive and innovative interpretation of native plants and animals in their natural habitat. The 98-acre Desert Museum in Tucson, AZ is regularly recognized as a top-tier facility due to its pioneering approach to interpreting the complete natural history of a single region. It is a zoo, aquarium, botanical garden, art institute and gallery, and natural history museum, all rolled into one. The mission of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the Sonoran Desert. To learn more, visit www.desertmuseum.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).