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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEARTS MELT AS NEW PENGUIN CHICK ARRIVES JUST IN TIME FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Moody Gardens Celebrates Successful Breeding Season With Baby King Penguin

GALVESTON, Texas (February 9, 2018)— Love is in the air at Moody Gardens. A King penguin chick hatched earlier this week is being well cared for by its single mother and is the newest addition to the Aquarium Pyramid.

"This is certainly an exciting way to kick off the month of love with Valentine's Day just around the corner," said Assistant Curator Diane Olsen. "We completed the renovation of our Aquarium Pyramid last year, including tweaking the exhibit to provide the best environment possible for the birds' breeding success and this just shows that all that dedication has paid off."

Kings penguin mating season usually begins with a series of courtship rituals including different callings and "parading." King penguin males work to impress females by standing tall and showing off their physique. Females choose the male they like and they will call and parade with each other before mating. King penguins incubate their eggs on their feet, so no nest is needed.

Typically once an egg is laid both the male and female will stay with the egg and take turns incubating it; however this was not the case with this particular chick and penguin mom Simone. This three-year-old penguin is a first-time mother who came to Moody Gardens a year ago from Sea World San Antonio and nurtured the egg by herself until it hatched. The mother continues to rear the chick on her own, leaving all to wonder who and where the father is.

"Simone is doing a doing a great job caring for this chick. While we are keeping a watchful eye on it and her I have full confidence that she will continue to take excellent care of her chick," Olsen said. King Penguin eggs usually take about 54 days to hatch and the chick will become full grown after about 10 months.

The arrival of the new chick comes just as some of the Aquarium Pyramid's newest residents, the Humboldt penguins, are starting their mating season. Humboldt penguins are warm-climate penguins that live in Southern Hemisphere waters off the coast of Chile and Peru.

Humboldt breeding season usually occurs in the fall, which is spring in their native Southern

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Hemisphere, but since they are on Northern Hemisphere time their mating season is occurring now.

“We have the nest boxes ready and nesting materials out for them in their exhibit, and now the rest is up to them,” Olsen said, as biologists have observed some burrowing activity. “While it’s too early to tell if anything will come of it, it is certainly encouraging to see this kind of behavior among these birds since this is their first year in their new home here at Moody Gardens.”

Now that we have a new penguin to love in the exhibit, the next step is choosing a name. Stay tuned to Moody Gardens social media where a poll will be posted allowing visitors to choose between named selected by the Moody Gardens Penguin Biologists.

Moody Gardens Aquarium Pyramid is one of the largest and most diverse aquariums in Texas. In addition to the King penguins, five other species including Gentoo, Chinstrap, Macaroni, and Rockhopper penguins also call the South Atlantic Exhibit home. The warm-climate Humboldt penguins live in a new exhibit right next door to their chilly-aired friends. With over one million gallons of water, the building houses marine life from five distinct environments and the collection includes not only penguins but sting rays, sharks, seals and sea lions as well as several different species of fish.

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