



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**TAKING ON HURRICANES IVAN, DENNIS AND KATRINA  
ZOOKEEPERS BATTLE TO SAVE THEIR ANIMALS**

***THE LITTLE ZOO THAT COULD Documents the Keepers at the  
Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo as They Fight to Save 270 Exotic Animals***

In September 2004, Hurricane Ivan steamed toward Gulf Shores, Alabama. Residents boarded up their windows and braced themselves for the worst. But for the animals at the Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo, there was no shelter from the coming storm. To save the animals, the zoo's team made the extraordinary decision to undertake a full-scale off-site evacuation, something no U.S. zoo had ever done. With less than 36 hours to coordinate, zookeepers scrambled to get the animals rounded up and shipped out, but to where? Public facilities won't shelter animals, and with no time to ship them to other zoos, there was only one place to go -- Zoo Director Patti Hall's house, 20 miles inland. Like a modern Noah's Ark, Hall's house was home to all of the zoo's animals, from big Siberian tigers to tiny bushbabies. **THE LITTLE ZOO THAT COULD** follows the staff's struggle to save their animals and rebuild their zoo. The 13-part series premieres **Wednesday, February 15, 2006 from 9-10 PM (ET/PT.)**

After Ivan, the 17-acre zoo was forced to close, and the staff got to work fixing \$500,000 worth of damage. Then, less than 10 months after Ivan, forecasters warned of a new threat brewing offshore, Hurricane Dennis. The staff rallied again and evacuated the animals back to Patti's house. This time, the hurricane turned at the last minute and the zoo wasn't damaged. But that luck wouldn't last. Less than two months later, Katrina barreled into the coast, flooding the zoo yet again. Each time, all of the animals were evacuated to Patti's house, and each time zookeepers braved dangerous conditions to do what was best for their animals.

For days after each storm, Hall's house was a zoo, literally. She had a Black bear cub and Bengal tiger cubs swimming in her pool. Guanacos, miniature donkeys, goats and sheep grazed in her backyard. Her kitchen was turned into a nursery for all of the zoo's babies, including Kinkajous, deer and Capuchin monkeys. Hall took it all in stride. She said, "These animals are a part of my family. Every day I spend time in their homes at the zoo, so for me to welcome them into my home is an honor and a privilege."

Despite the adversity, or perhaps because of it, the team at the Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo is more dedicated than ever to educating the public about the natural world, regardless of how cruel nature has been to them recently. "Actions speak louder than words, and the staff at this zoo has demonstrated, again and again, just how strong the bond between people and animals can be. Their trials, and their triumph, are wonderful to see," said Maureen Smith, general manager of Animal Planet.

**THE LITTLE ZOO THAT COULD** is co-produced by Organic Entertainment Inc. and Animal Planet. Julie Leifermann is the Executive Producer for Organic Entertainment Inc. and for Animal Planet, Margo Kent is the Executive Producer.