



Butterfly Pavilion Announces Changes to Its Tarantula Handling Program

*Rosie, Butterfly Pavilion's Beloved Tarantula Ambassador, is Entering Her Next Chapter
Connecting Guests to the Wonders of Invertebrates*

Westminster, CO — August 18, 2025 — Butterfly Pavilion today announced changes to its tarantula handling experience. These changes include Rosie the Chilean rose hair tarantula, Butterfly Pavilion's most beloved and recognizable ambassador animal, transitioning from public handling to a dedicated exhibit display. Beginning September 8, Rosie will transition from a public handling experience to a dedicated exhibit home, where she can continue inspiring visitors in comfort and safety.

Since 1995, Rosie has introduced millions of guests to the fascinating world of invertebrates, breaking down fears and misconceptions with each gentle encounter. Her transition from handling to a full-time exhibit role ensures her continued care and well-being while allowing guests to visit, observe, and celebrate her for years to come.

"Rosie has been the face of Butterfly Pavilion since our very first day," said Ryan Welch, President and CEO of Butterfly Pavilion. "She's changed how people see spiders, invertebrates, and the natural world. While we are phasing out her handling experience, Rosie will remain an enduring presence, inspiring new generations from her exhibit."

A Thoughtful Decision Grounded in Animal Welfare

As Rosie and her fellow ambassador tarantula, Goldie the Chaco golden knee, age, Butterfly Pavilion's expert animal care team has observed that public handling can create stress on the animals. After a comprehensive evaluation, the decision was made to conclude tarantula handling experiences to prioritize the animals' health and comfort.

Additionally, finding mature, handleable tarantulas has become increasingly challenging, prompting Butterfly Pavilion to evolve its guest experiences toward more sustainable, welfare-first interactions in line with the highest standards of care set by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA).

"The science around ambassador animal care has evolved, and Butterfly Pavilion is evolving with it" said Sara Stevens, Director of Animal Collections. "As our tarantulas age, current science tells us that reducing handling is key to their wellbeing. This transition reflects the highest standards in ambassador animal care."

"Rosie and Goldie aren't retiring from their roles as educators and advocates — they're simply trading the palm of your hand for thoughtfully designed spaces on exhibit where they can be observed and celebrated," Stevens added.



Continuing Rosie's Legacy

Rosie's transition marks a shift toward the future of invertebrate education and guest engagement. Butterfly Pavilion is developing new interpretive elements and guest experiences to share Rosie's story and the vital role invertebrates play in ecosystems worldwide.

"Rosie's transition isn't an end — it's a new beginning," Welch said. "She will continue to be a powerful ambassador, and we are committed to creating innovative experiences that connect people to nature in meaningful, magical and unexpected ways."

Guests are invited to visit Rosie in her new exhibit after September 7 and celebrate her remarkable legacy. The community is encouraged to share their favorite Rosie memories using #ThanksRosie on social media.

A New Era of Guest Experiences

Butterfly Pavilion remains at the forefront of animal welfare and guest engagement, offering dynamic programs like *What's for Lunch?* and showcasing a rotating lineup of fascinating invertebrates such as beetles, millipedes, and cockroaches. These experiences reflect Butterfly Pavilion's unwavering dedication to education, conservation, and exceptional animal care.

Looking ahead, a brand-new immersive exhibit and animal experience will debut in spring 2026, offering guests fresh opportunities to explore the wonders of invertebrates and the ecosystems they support.

"Invertebrates make up 97 percent of all animal species on the planet, and Rosie is just one of them," Welch said. "With so many options to explore, I'm excited to see what our team comes up with. Rest assured, our new experiences will be designed for up-close connection, discovery, and will align with our mission and the next generation of ambassador animal care."

About Butterfly Pavilion

Celebrating its 30th year in 2025, Butterfly Pavilion has been part of the Colorado community since 1995 and is the first Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited, stand-alone, non-profit invertebrate zoo in the world, located in Westminster, Colorado. Butterfly Pavilion's mission is to foster an appreciation of invertebrates by educating the public about the need to protect and care for threatened habitats globally, while conducting research for solutions in invertebrate conservation. Beyond Colorado and the United States, Butterfly Pavilion conservationists are doing important invertebrate research, conservation, and education projects around the world from Mongolia and Mexico to Tanzania and Sumatra, Indonesia. www.butterflies.org.

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