

Taking Flight: the Campaign for the National Aviary

by Patricia Rambasek, CFRE, Director of Development



The National Aviary has a bold vision for the future – to become an internationally important avian institution, a preeminent avian conservation organization, and a regional economic engine. A first step in realizing the Aviary's tremendous potential is to create a unique and innovative attraction that will excite not only people of southwest Pennsylvania, but also the growing ranks of bird enthusiasts and cultural tourists everywhere.

That attraction will be the world's first indoor, live-bird show to be presented year-round in a new FliteZone Immersion Theater and Classroom. In this innovative setting, realistic habitats, actors, expertly trained birds, and state of the art technology will combine to offer adults and children an experience like no other – entertaining, educational, and inspiring – with all the emotional impact that can only be created through personal experiences with nature.

Steve Martin, the world's foremost bird trainer, will produce the new conservation education productions. The space will be intimate, seating 250 to 300 in a "reverse-round" format, with four stages representing different natural environments. Birds will fly over the audience to and from all points in the theater, dramatically demonstrating their natural behaviors – flying, hunting, diving and more. The total effect will be a unique and unforgettable educational and entertainment experience.

After many hours of research and planning, we are ready to take flight! We are excited to share the news of this expansion project with you, and hope each and every one of you will come fly with us!

Aviary Enlists Campaign Leaders



Campaign Co-Chair Mel Rex, known to many in Pittsburgh as the long-time manager of the Duquesne Club, has been on the Aviary Board of Trustees for six years, serving as President for the past two years. While continuing to consult for the Duquesne Club and other national clubs, Mel works in business development for Citizent's Bank.



Campaign Co-Chair Mike Flinn, a Buchanan Ingersoll partner, helped privatize the Aviary in 1992. A founding trustee, he was Board President for six years and currently chairs the Development Committee.

The National Aviary is pleased to announce Mel Rex and Mike Flinn will co-chair a multi-million dollar capital campaign for the 38,000 square foot expansion which will include the FliteZone Immersion Theater and Classroom and a Rare and Endangered Bird Exhibit. As leaders of the campaign, they will be responsible for major strategic decisions affecting the campaign, and serving as spokespersons and chief advocates of the campaign.

In a recent interview, Mel stated "We have a very strong board and they're all excited and energized about the new Immersion Theater and Classroom. I saw the summer bird show at least six times and it was terrific, but it's only the tip of the iceberg compared to what the new theater will be. With so much happening on the North Shore, I think it's the perfect time and perfect place for the National Aviary."

Adding to Mel's comments, Mike said, "I believe this can be a transforming event, not just for the National Aviary, but for

the entire Pittsburgh community. Pittsburgh has a number of wonderful cultural institutions, but only one National Aviary. It's unique. We view this as an opportunity for Pittsburgh to show that it has great future and great opportunity for everyone. The National Aviary project can be the poster child for the Pittsburgh of the 21st century. The entire Board is in support of this and we're looking for the community to help us realize our vision."

The National Aviary is indeed fortunate to have such dedicated leaders to propel the Aviary toward its goals and to lead the capital campaign.