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### **James Hitz steps down as Executive Director of Taltree Arboretum & Gardens**

Valparaiso, IN....James Hitz will resign as Taltree Arboretum & Gardens' Executive Director effective February 11, 2011 in order to effectively implement an organizational restructuring, a result of the updated Master Plan and forthcoming Strategic Plan.

Hitz has been the Executive Director of Taltree Arboretum & Gardens since its establishment in 1998. He has worked with the founders, Damien and Rita Gabis, to bring Taltree to its present state of development. Some of Hitz's accomplishments include the establishment of a number of plant collections, most significantly Oak Islands, initiating the Music in Nature Concert Series, and developing many of the adult and youth educational programs. Going forward, Hitz will consult as needed with Taltree to assist in an effective leadership transition, advise Taltree on the oak collection, and act as Taltree's liaison to the North American Plant Collections Consortium.

Damien Gabis, President of Taltree Arboretum & Gardens Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors, has announced that Taltree is conducting a search for a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Gabis will continue to serve on the Board of Directors and will work closely with the Board and new CEO until Taltree's transition to the new leadership team is completed.

*Taltree Arboretum & Gardens, a 501(c)3 public charity, offers over 300 acres of reserved woody plant collections, gardens, woodlands, savanna, wetlands, and prairie with more than three miles of hiking trails that allow visitors to experience the natural biodiversity of the landscape. Themed displays include the Hitz Family Rose Garden, Native Plant Garden, Oak Islands, and coming in 2011, the Taltree Railway Garden. Taltree Arboretum & Gardens is open all year round and located just south of U.S. Hwy. 30 between Merrillville and Valparaiso, IN at 450 West 100 North. Admission to the grounds is \$5 for guests; free for Taltree members and children under 5. For more information, please visit [www.taltree.org](http://www.taltree.org), e-mail [info@taltree.org](mailto:info@taltree.org) or call (219) 462-0025.*