



For Immediate Release
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COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO ANNOUNCES AFRICAN ELEPHANT JOINS SENECA PARK ZOO'S HERD

Felix, a 43-year-old female, finds permanent home in Rochester

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and Seneca Park Zoo officials announce the arrival of Felix, a female African elephant, to Seneca Park Zoo. Seneca Park Zoo was chosen specifically by the elephant care staff at the Maryland Zoo as the ideal place for Felix.

"Seneca Park Zoo has been home to elephants for more than a century, and our current herd of Genny C, Lilac, and Moki have introduced more than ten million people to this extraordinary and endangered species," **said County Executive Adam Bello**. "Seneca Park Zoo is the only zoo in New York State with African elephants, and adding Felix to our herd confirms our ongoing commitment to be the leader in care for geriatric African elephants."

Felix was born in Zimbabwe and has been resident at the Maryland Zoo for nearly 20 years. As the Maryland Zoo transitions to be a facility hosting all-male elephants, their staff sought a place specializing in geriatric elephant care for Felix, their lone female elephant.

"Seneca Park Zoo is known for its expertise in caring for post-reproductive female elephants," **said Monroe County Zoo Director Bob Lee**. "Our staff has a combined 86 years of elephant care experience, but just as important is the trust they have built with the elephants over many years. Those relationships, combined with that depth of experience, allow us to understand and respond to the complex physical, physiological, psychological, and social needs of each individual elephant."

Seneca Park Zoo is a leader in elephant care and also in elephant conservation, providing grants through the Zoo Society to the International Elephant Foundation for more than a decade. Through efforts such as ZooBrew, the Zoo Society has been able to grant nearly \$100,000 to the International Elephant Foundation over the years, funding efforts to mitigate elephant/human conflict and anti-poaching efforts.

"We also play a very specific role among zoos caring for elephants," **Lee stated**. "By providing an exceptional home for older, post-reproductive females, we help create opportunities for other institutions to grow and strengthen breeding herds. It is one

piece of a much larger conservation puzzle, with all of us working together toward the long-term survival of African elephants.”

“Cooperation between AZA-accredited members like Seneca Park Zoo and Maryland Zoo is the essential ingredient in caring for elephants. The skilled animal care teams and veterinary professionals make this a wonderful next step in Felix’s journey,” **said Dan Ashe, president and CEO for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.** “The Seneca Park Zoo has been AZA-accredited since 1979, reflecting its commitment to achieving and maintaining the global gold standard for modern zoos and aquariums. We commend the Seneca Park Zoo for their specialized care, allowing these four ladies to grow older in a socialized herd with both grace and dignity.”

Both Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Chris McKinney and Assistant Curator Lindsay Brinda made a preparatory trip the Maryland Zoo in advance of the decision to bring Felix to Seneca Park Zoo. They were able to evaluate and compare the training work that Felix is accustomed to in Maryland to understand how to acclimate her to Seneca Park Zoo.

“Felix has a great temperament and is easy to work with,” **said McKinney.** “I was able to discuss her medical history with Maryland’s veterinary staff and Felix is in good health overall. She does have a cataract in one eye and is blind on that side but she has learned how to still monitor her surroundings.”

“We have successfully managed geriatric elephants for years and are passionate with their care,” **said Brinda.** “Early in my career I was able to work with Felix and fell in love with her back then. It is an honor to be able to be part of her life now.”

“We chose Seneca Park Zoo because they have a great elephant program that will continue Felix’s excellent care within a herd of similarly-aged females that will provide many social opportunities for Felix,” **said Erin Cantwell Grimm, Mammal Curator at Maryland Zoo.**

Felix arrived safely on the afternoon of Tuesday, August 25, accompanied by animal care staff from the Maryland Zoo. Felix and the other elephants will be introduced gradually over the next several weeks, allowing the team to move at a pace that is comfortable for each individual. In the meantime, guests may be able to catch a glimpse of Felix as she settles in and explores her new surroundings.

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Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.

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