Northwestern Mutual Animal Encounter
Opened at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo

Syracuse, NY (June 5, 2013) – The Rosamond Gifford Zoo hosted the grand opening of Northwestern Mutual Animal Encounter today. Once home to the zoo’s Asian elephants—now permanently residing at Asian Elephant Preserve, which opened in 2011—the space has been transformed into a destination for families and visitors to watch animal shows and to view some of the animals up close.

“Onondaga County and Friends of the Zoo have demonstrated over the years how a public-private partnership can benefit the zoo and the community and this is yet another example of that partnership,” said County Executive Joanne M. Mahoney. “It’s no secret that animal encounters and meet and greets are among the most popular activities here at the zoo and it is great to have a beautifully renovated facility in which we can do just that.”

Features of the new show yard include:
- Amphitheater-style seating for more than 100 guests to enjoy the beautiful creatures and their handlers as they entertain and educate zoo guests
- Designated areas for guests in wheelchairs and their companions
- Stroller parking
- Expanded fence line viewing for keeper, animal and visitor interaction
- New substrate for animal exhibit and demonstration areas
- Animal shade umbrellas with simulated tree bark structures
- Renovations to the pool
- A fresh coat of paint on structure walls, exhibit fencing and the elephant pool

“With the help of many donors, Friends of the Zoo raised more than $1.7 million dollars in support of the projects of the Conserving What We Love capital campaign,” said Janet Agostini, president of Friends of the Zoo. “We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Northwestern Mutual, the Central New York Community Foundation, and the Tresness family, whose generous gifts provided the funds for these specific renovations and projects.”

“We are happy to have contributed to this project and look forward to seeing families enjoying animal demonstrations this summer and beyond,” said Paul Dodd, managing partner of the Northwestern Mutual Financial Network’s Greater New York Group.
The Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is among the top 10 percent of zoos in the country as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is focused on conserving, exhibiting and interpreting a living animal collection in order to promote public recreation, understanding of the relationships between animals and people, and action to sustain the environment we share.

Committed to conservation, the zoo actively collaborates with Friends of the Zoo to save endangered Asian elephants, Amur tigers, golden lion tamarins and amphibians, which are facing a global crisis due to the Chytrid fungus. Other projects include studies on Chittenango ovate amber snails, Turkmenian markhors and Humboldt penguins.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is $4 for youth (3-18), $8 for adults (19-61) and $5 for seniors (62+). Children two and under are free. For more information, call the zoo at (315) 435-8511 or visit the zoo’s website at www.RosamondGiffordZoo.org.