



FRIENDS
OF THE
ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO

2025
ANNUAL
REPORT

Providing a level of excellence
that makes the Rosamond
Gifford Zoo a national leader in
animal care, conservation, and
visitor experience.

A JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD



Andrew Brazill
Interim Executive Director
Friends of the Rosamond
Gifford Zoo



Terry Hopkins
Chair
Board of Directors

To our beloved zoo family,

2025 was a year of renewed vision for the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo! With your invaluable support, we didn't just meet our goals, we set a new standard for what a modern, community-focused zoo can achieve. Throughout the year, we championed our mission to ensure the Rosamond Gifford Zoo remains a global leader in wildlife conservation, animal welfare, and public education. We are deeply grateful to our team and our Board of Directors for their tireless work and innovative spirit during this transformative period.

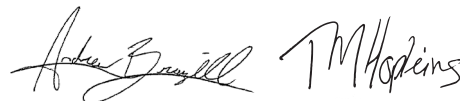
Building on our successful AZA Accreditation renewal in 2024, 2025 saw the Friends of the Zoo take a leading role in elevating our facility to the next level. Your contributions provided the critical funding needed to launch transformative exhibit enhancements across the Wildlife Trail. In 2025, we successfully reached our primary goal of funding the upcoming Amur Tiger pool renovation. This project represents our unwavering commitment to "Conservation in Action." By providing these magnificent apex predators with a modernized, aquatic enrichment environment, we are ensuring world-class care and mental stimulation for our tigers while offering guests a breathtaking new perspective on their strength and agility. This milestone is a direct result of your generosity and a shared vision for the zoo's future.

Our impact continues to extend far beyond the zoo's gates. In 2025, the Friends proudly sustained our support for groundbreaking research that is making a global difference. Most notably, we reached significant new milestones in our ongoing partnership to develop a vaccine for Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV). By continuing to fund the clinical trials for our own miracle twins, Yaad and Tukada, the Friends of the Zoo is directly contributing to a future where this fatal virus no longer threatens Asian elephant populations. This long-term commitment to elephant health serves as a primary example of how your support protects biodiversity on a global scale.

At the heart of our mission is the connection between humans and the natural world. Building on the successful launch of our MyZooEXTRA e-newsletter in late 2024, the past year has been defined by a digital transformation of the guest experience. In 2025, we scaled this infrastructure to bridge the gap between our physical campus and the digital world, utilizing technology to offer "Conservation in Action" through an entirely modern lens. By integrating these high-tech tools directly into the visitor journey, we have made significant strides in accessibility and sustainability, ensuring that every member of our community, regardless of how they visit us, can connect with nature in a way that is inclusive, responsible, and immersive.

As we look toward 2026, we are prepared to navigate new milestones with a singular focus: the continued excellence of our animal care. None of our progress would be possible without our world-class animal care team, whose expertise and passion ensure that every individual, from our smallest invertebrates to our majestic Amur tigers, thrives. The Friends of the Zoo remains a steadfast guardian of this mission, dedicated to providing the resources necessary to support these incredible animals and the people who care for them every single day. On behalf of the entire Friends of the Zoo team, we extend a wholehearted thank you for your unwavering dedication in 2025. Together, we are building a brighter, more sustainable future for the animals we love and the community we serve.

Wishing you the best day ever,



Andrew Brazill
Interim Executive Director

Terry Hopkins
Board Chair

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16,786

people joined us to participate in
conservation education programs.



OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RECOGNIZING THE FRIENDS OF THE ZOO BOARD

The Board of Directors of Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is a supportive group of community members who advance the zoo's mission. By attending monthly meetings, serving on planning committees, providing creative insights, and engaging in collaborative innovations, the Board of Directors ushered in a variety of exciting enhancements and achievements during 2025. The Board of Directors collectively functions to help sustain our organization, and we couldn't be more grateful to them. We extend massive thanks to our entire board for their guidance, expertise, and support.

2025 Board of Directors

Terry Hopkins, Chair*

Megan Thomas, Vice Chair

Natalie Scavone, Secretary*

Amanda Foster, Treasurer*

Dr. Zina Berry

Debra Cody*

Susan Cole

Tim Crosby*

Savannah Gibbs

John Harris

Melissa Hicks

Amanda Hull*

Daniel Jenkins

Beth King

Steven Lickstein

Susan Lobdell*

Ryan Lynch

Jody Manning

Deborah Messina

Kathy O'Connell

Melissa Oliver

Austin Philleo

Sabrina Webster

** Indicates an outgoing board member. We thank these two devoted individuals for their heartfelt service.*

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2025

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2025

2025 was a year of incredible growth, closer community connections, and deeper dedication to saving wildlife. Thanks to amazing members, donors, and corporate partners, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo made a real difference across our campus and community:

New Garden Spaces: The Friends funded and planted beautiful new gardens around the zoo, including a peaceful new green space at the Animal Health Center. These updates give pollinators new homes and guests a more scenic visit.

Airport Welcome Display: The Friends set up an eye-catching zoo display at the Syracuse airport. This helps welcome out-of-town visitors and reminds travelers that the zoo is a must-see Central New York destination. After a time at the airport the sign now resides in The Canyon at Destiny USA

Argali Species Transfer: The Friends proudly assisted with the complex logistics and care required for a cloned Marco Polo argali sheep transfer to our facility. This animal's incredible story has a happy ending thanks to the incredible work of our animal care team and wildlife protection agencies

Welcoming a New Red Wolf: The Friends helped bring Sage, a four-year-old male Red Wolf, to the preserve. This important move is part of ongoing work with the national Red Wolf Species Survival Plan to help save one of the most endangered animals in the world.

The Rosamond Cup: On September 15th, Tompkins Community Bank and The Friends launched a brand-new charity golf tournament at Tuscarora Golf Club. This fun "Team Elephant vs. Team Penguin" matchup brought in new corporate support for the zoo.

Canines for Conservation Show: The Friends brought high-energy, educational dog performances to the zoo all summer long. Families loved watching these talented rescue dogs show off their amazing agility.

New Event Space : On June 25, 2025, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and CenterState CEO jointly hosted a fun-filled summer clambake at the new Amphitheater space, featuring a ribbon-cutting ceremony, great food, and exciting animal encounters. Previously home to the zoo's Asian elephant exhibit, the Amphitheater event space is located adjacent to the zoo's courtyard and accommodates a variety of social and professional gatherings, including weddings, dinners, clambakes, and more.





DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

FANTASTIC FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

These fundraising events, organized by the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo Development Team, help support the zoo's mission and operations through ticket sales.

SUSTAINING OUR MISSION WITH EVENTS ALL YEAR LONG

Zoo Run Run | 4/6/2025

Our annual 5K run! Participants join the race as a lone wolf, or build a team and run with the pack and help support the zoo's mission.

Attendance: 818

Revenue

Program: \$26,603.00

Sponsors: \$2,000.00

Other: \$26,686.49

Total Raised: \$55,289.49

Thank you sponsors: Akl & Associates, PLLC; Community Bank; Cumulus Media; Empower Federal Credit Union; Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways Troop 60500; McDonald & Kimball, P.C.; New York Life; Northern Credit Union; Salt City Coffee; Tops Friendly Markets

Volunteers: 34



Brew at the Zoo | 8/1/2025

An unforgettable night of summer fun! Guests could kick back and relax with friends while sipping from a variety of craft beers, wines, and canned specialty cocktails.

Attendance: 1963

Revenue

Program: \$107,920.50

Sponsors: \$24,750.00

Other: \$9,447.00

Total Raised: \$142,117.50

Thank you sponsors: AmeriCU Credit Union; Anheuser-Busch, inc.; Community Bank; Construction Associates LLC; Grossman St. Amour; Hancock Estabrook, LLP; Hayden Jewelers; Melo Roofing; Robert L. Kelly General Insurance Agency, LLC; Syracuse Haulers; Tops Friendly Markets; Usherwood Office Technology

Volunteers: 146



DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Fall Conservation Bash | 9/10/2025

An elegant autumn evening celebration featuring delicious, gourmet mix-and-merge stations and a bounty of savory hors d'oeuvres to benefit animal care at the zoo and conservation efforts in the wild.

Attendance: 221

Revenue

Program: \$14,690.86

Sponsors: \$13,000.00

Other: \$16,220.00

Total Raised: \$43,910.86

Thank you sponsors: Community Bank; Constellation; Geddes Federal Savings and Loan Association; The Gifford Foundation; Rockbridge Investment Management; Scicchitano Law, PLLC; Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists; Visual Technologies Corp.
Volunteers: 25



Holiday Nights | Dec. 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20

A festive and fun after-hours stroll amid sparkling displays of holiday lights that transform the zoo into a winter wonderland.

Attendance: 7144

Revenue

Program: \$51,632.00

Sponsors: \$13,000.00

Other: \$2,550.00

Total Raised: \$67,182.00

Thank you sponsors: Alta; Beacon Bank Foundation; Community Bank; Energy Savers Inc.; Excellus BlueCross Blue Shield; New York Life; Rockbridge Investment Management; Royal Promise Productions; Solutions Empire LLC; Visions Federal Credit Union; Wegmans Food Markets
Volunteers: 94

Fun Stat: 2212 guests on December 20



Rosamond Cup supported by Tompkins Community Bank | 9/15/25

A brand-new charity golf tournament at Tuscarora Golf Club. This fun "Team Elephant vs. Team Penguin" matchup brought in new corporate support for the zoo.

11 Foursomes (44 Golfers)

\$28,600 raised

Thank you sponsors: LSponsors

Presenting: Falk Precision Inc., Nave Law Firm, NBT Bank, OneGroup Retirement Advisors, Tompkins Trust, Banuet Sponsor, Coca-Cola. Beverage Sponsor: Paul de Lima Coffee. Hole Sponsors: NBT Bank, Nave Law Firm, Pinnacle Family of Companies, Falk Precision Inc., The Hayner Hoyt Corporation, McClurg, OneGroup Retirement Advisors, Home Team Pub, Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists, Bowers & Company CPAs, Acropolis Reality Group, CHA Insurance





DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE: COMMUNITY EVENTS

These events are free with zoo membership or included with general admission, designed to celebrate our diverse zoo community and highlight the amazing animals living at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

Zoo Boo | Oct. 18, 19, 25, 25

Join us for a "kooky-not-spooky" daytime Halloween celebration. The zoo transforms into a hauntingly fun destination for the whole family with trick-or-treat stations, creepy crawly animal encounters, keeper chats, games, activities, photo ops and costume parade.

Attendance: 13945

Revenue

Sponsors: \$4,750.00

Other: \$1,450.00

Total Raised: \$6,200.00

Thank you sponsors: Bankers Life; Community Bank; Cumulus Media; Energy Savers Inc.; Everdry Waterproofing; New York Life; Northern Credit Union

Volunteers: 411

Fun Stat: 3804 guests on October 18

Fall Fest | Oct. 4, 5

Celebrate all things fall at the zoo! This weekend-long festival brings together the Central New York area's fall favorites, featuring creature chats, local vendors, autumnal activities, games, and more!

Attendance: 4073

Revenue

Sponsors: \$100.00

Other: \$1,000.00

Total Raised: \$1,100.00

Thank you sponsors: New York Life

Volunteers: 38

DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Noon Year's Eve | 12/31/2025

Noon Year's Eve is a kid-friendly celebration that allows youngsters to experience all the fun of welcoming a new year while keeping bedtime in mind – including a dance party, noisemakers, ginger ale “toast,” countdown, and ball drop at noon.

Attendance: 880

Revenue

Sponsors: \$100.00

Other: \$50.00

Total Raised: \$150.00

Thank you sponsors: New York Life; Tops Friendly Markets

Volunteers: 14

Novelis Party for the Planet | 4/26/2025

The zoo's annual Earth Day celebration brings dozens of conservation groups and thousands of visitors to the zoo to spotlight nature conservation and saving species.

Attendance: 830

Revenue

Sponsors: \$6,350.00

Other: \$250.00

Total Raised: \$6,600.00

Thank you sponsors: EnergySmart CNY; Energy Savers Inc.;

New York Life; Novelis Corp

Volunteers: 21

LGBTQ+ Family Day of Visibility | 5/4/2025

Join us for a special day celebrating the rainbow of families in our community!

Attendance: 829

Revenue

Sponsors: \$5,100.00

Other: \$900.00

Total Raised: \$6,000.00

Thank you sponsors: Advocates, Inc.; AIDS Community Resources, Inc.; Beyond, Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways; Community Bank; Energy Savers Inc.; New York Life

Volunteers: 16

Penguin Palooza | 7/13/2025

Kids of all ages enjoy this ice cream party around the zoo's Penguin Coast exhibit, featuring an incredible array of fun activities, entertainment, free ice cream, kid-friendly foods, music, face painters, and of course, demonstrations with our colony of Humboldt penguins!

Attendance: 1929

Revenue

Sponsors: \$1,210.00

Other: \$3,520.00

Total Raised: \$4,730.00

Thank you sponsors: CNY Arts; New York Life; Tops Friendly Markets

Volunteers: 39

Asian Elephant Extravaganza | 8/17/2025

This annual event celebrates the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's Asian elephant herd and the cultural traditions of their native countries in South Asia.

Attendance: 2117

Revenue

Sponsors: \$3,300.00

Other: \$9,430.00

Total Raised: \$12,730.00

Thank you sponsors: CNY Arts; Kapoor & Coyle Law Firm; New York Life;

Untangled Mental Health Counseling & Creative Arts Therapy, LLC

Volunteers: 31

Total Sponsors: **77**
Total Raised: **\$210,147**



SPECIALTY EVENTS



Senior Citizens Appreciation Day | 5/14/2025

A special early-morning experience for senior citizens(62+)! Enjoy special keeper talks, access to senior-specific exhibitors, tour the zoo and walk the zoo's scenic Wildlife Trail.

Attendance: 442

Revenue

Sponsors: \$7,750.00

Other: \$400.00

Total Raised: \$8,150.00

Thank you sponsors: Aetna Medicare Solutions; Alzheimer's Association of CNY; Bousquet Holstein PLLC; Energy Savers Inc. Excellus BlueCross Blue Shield; Hearing Aid Consultants of CNY; Hill Insurance Service; Humana, Inc; Loretto Rest Residential Healthcare Facility, Inc. - The Nottingham; New York Life; Seneca Savings; Wellcare

Volunteers: 21



Dreamnight | 6/6/2025

Every year on the first Friday in June more than 100,000 participants and their families and friends celebrate Dreamnight on six continents and in 23 countries around the world.

Attendance: 1079

Revenue

Sponsors: \$10,300.00

Other: -

Total Raised: \$10,300.00

Thank you sponsors: Jim and Julie Boeheim Foundation; Kevin and Kathleen LaGrow; Marlene O'Donnell; Pathfinder Bank

Volunteers: 16



Earth Day | 4/23/2025

We're expanding our cleanup effort into the local community! By partnering with local schools, neighborhood organizations, and environmental experts, we're spearheading a movement to restore local habitats both on and off zoo grounds.

Attendance: 98

Revenue

Sponsors: \$1,000.00

Other: -

Total Raised: \$1,000.00

Thank you sponsors: Equitable Foundation

Volunteers: 98

GATE DRIVER: CANINE CHAMPIONS FOR CONSERVATION

A spectacular showcase of canine choreography and wildlife conservation is coming to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo! Canine Champions for Conservation is a dazzling display of rescue and shelter dogs performing feats of astounding agility, all while inspiring guests to protect our natural world. Paws-itively amazing entertainment with an important educational message.

Canine Champions for Conservation | July 17-Aug 11, Thursday-Monday

Two shows, Five days a week

Show times 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Attendance: 32555

Total Raised for charity: \$2,000

The amount raised was through a coin vortex. The rescues received \$500 each.

Four local rescue orgs benefited:

Seventh Heaven Dog Rescue

Paws Across Oswego County

Recycle a Bully Breed Rescue

Forever Friends Animal Rescue

Thank you Sponsors: Dasani

Volunteers: 37



EDUCATION

Events

- Autism Acceptance Day was a huge success! Over 250 registrations.
- LGBTQ+ Family Day of Visibility had 821 in attendance.
- Dreamnight event drew largest attendance since its beginning with 1075 guests!
- Teddy Bear Clinic hosted by Education, volunteers and ZooGuides 8/27.
- Education facilitated Snake Day on 7/16 featured biofact table, live animal demos and activities.
- The AZA Conservation Education Committee, Region 15, annual meeting was held at the zoo on 9/29. Visitors from other AZA institutions in our region were in attendance.
- Wild About STEAM Day with 20 exhibitors drew over 800 guests.

Awards

- 2025 MACNY/PEB Community Partner Award.
- 2025 Regional Business Recognition Certificate for the 80th celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.
- Named TACNY's STEAM Outreach Organization of the Year for 2025
- 2025 Changemaker Award from Beyond powered by NYPenn Pathways

Education: A Year of Regional Impact & Innovation

In 2025, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo education department continued to evolve its delivery model, prioritizing high-impact regional outreach and specialized career development. By transitioning away from offsite animal transport, the team successfully expanded its "Zoo to You" geographic footprint, serving schools and organizations well beyond previous boundaries.

2025 by the Numbers:

Total Impact: Reached 18,802 individuals (16,786 students and 3,635 adults).

Program Volume: Delivered 662 total programs, including 303 onsite field trips, 205 offsite programs, and 34 virtual sessions.

Summer Success: Summer Camp reached 85% capacity with 623 campers. 66% of families reported their child gained a measurable understanding of conservation, and 56% represented returning camp families.

Cultivating the Next Generation of Conservation Professionals

Career-focused programming emerged as a cornerstone of 2025, bridging the gap between local classrooms and professional zoo employment:



EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

Workforce Development: Education staff represented the Zoo at the CNY Regional Career Fair, engaging over 100 prospective professionals, and hosted the SUNY Career Development Organization annual conference.

Academic Partnerships: The team delivered specialized management lectures to Syracuse University Museum Professionals and Whitman School of Management students, and successfully concluded the Canastota Micro-Credential program.

Project-Based Learning: Wrapped the Henninger “Have you ever wondered?” video project, accompanied by a new PBL (Project Based Learning) resource package for educators.

Tech & Innovation: Served as industry judges for the CitiBOCES Innovators Showcase and hosted three Micron Chip Camps in collaboration with OCC, ERIE 21, and OCM BOCES.

Strategic Partnerships & Community Engagement

Scouting Excellence: A staff member was officially certified as a Merit Badge Counselor for the Boy Scouts of America, certifying 29 scouts in Environmental Science and 50 scouts in Sustainability.

Inclusion & Visibility: Established a new long-term contract with Beyond (powered by NYPenn Pathways) to support year-round programming, including during Party for the Planet and LGBTQ+ Family Day of Visibility.

Teacher Training: Hosted the CNY Passport Program for 27 educators from Oswego County, facilitating a “hands-on” night of curriculum brainstorming across multiple disciplines.

Grants & Institutional Growth

Tadpole Academy: Secured \$15,000 in funding to continue Pre-K outreach, including the new “Sprout” location.

ZooGuides: Secured a State Grant to fund wages for 15 ZooGuides, who provided vital guest engagement throughout the summer and into the Zoo Boo season.

Regional Leadership: The Education team joined AZA’s SAFE Coral program and assumed a leadership role in AZA Conservation Education Region 15, facilitating resource sharing and core competency evaluations across New York State.





DEDICATED VOLUNTEERISM

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Our Volunteers are a critical part of yearly operations at the Friends Of The Zoo. Our team of 338 active volunteers provided 8,289 hours of service in 2025, allowing us to make a major difference in both our local community and the lives of the animals in care of The Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Volunteers can participate in activities like event production, diet preparation, animal encounters and observations, gardening and horticulture, education, catering, and more. We also provide specialized training to volunteers looking to have a deeper involvement with Rosamond Gifford Zoo operations.

In 2025, volunteers played a key role in helping us execute the Canine Champions for Conservation Show over the summer. They assisted with guest seating, crowd monitoring, and escorting a special guest into each show to participate in the demonstration. Everyone left with wagging tails!

Thank you, Community! In 2025, we had many different groups from local community, corporate, student, and social groups participate in volunteer activities. We thank the contributions of our volunteer teams from LeChase Construction, MONY Protective Life Insurance, Barclay Damon, Equitable, APW Science Team, Intivity, BJs, M&T Bank, United Way, National Grid, Key Bank, One Group, Gallager Insurance, Christopher Community, Bowers CPA, Pyramid, Verizon, Micron, Lotte Biologics, Baxter, P-Tech, Bonadio, Dannible & McKee, Syracuse University, Suny ESF, and the many High School groups that helped out this year.

We couldn't have put on our biggest events without you! Some of our heaviest events by volunteer hours were Brew At The Zoo (656 hours), Zoo Boo (646 hours), Holiday Nights (293 hours), and Zoo Run (161 hours). Those are in addition to all of the other volunteer shifts here at the Zoo, including: AAZK Events (43 hours), Animal Encounter (151 hours), Bird Diet Prep (322 hours) and Diet Prep (1280 hours), Additional Animal Positions like Herps & Aquariums Volunteer and Penguin Volunteer (802 hours), Catering & Events (377 hours), Community Outreach (42 hours), Development Office Help (90 hours), Docents (389 hours), Education (596 hours), Gardening (449 hours), Guest Services (221 hours), Membership (58 hours), Tours (34 hours), Volunteer Meetings & Trainings (507 hours), and Youth Conservation Crew (224 hours).

Zoo volunteers worked over
8,289 hours hours in 2025.

Over **338**
volunteers donated their time in 2025

October saw over **1,249** volunteer hours worked



Top Volunteers: Alan Smith donated
341 hours of service in 2025!

Volunteer Jackie Pilon donated
251 hours of service 2025!

OUR GROWING MEMBERSHIP

ADMISSION AND MEMBERSHIP

In 2025, our member base proved to be the heartbeat of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. We ended the year with 9,630 active member households, representing a dedicated community that recognizes the value of world-class animal care and local conservation. Our membership program generated \$635,839 in dues, every dollar of which directly supports our mission.

Membership by the numbers:

We maintained an impressive 66% overall renewal rate, with 415 dedicated households choosing to upgrade their level of support this year.

We welcomed 2,070 **new** members into our database, which now consists of 23% new and 77% multi-year supporters.

Corporate & Organization Support: Our organizational partnership program grew to 24 members, including 11 new organizations that joined in 2025. Renewal rate amongst non-profit organizations (zoos & aquariums, museums, science centers, etc.) in 2025 was 57%

Member Spirit: Our "Member Tee" remains our most popular perk, with over 3,500 shirts redeemed and an additional 500 purchased by enthusiasts.

Strategic Engagement Campaigns

Our targeted campaigns continue to drive the zoo membership offering exclusive value to our supporters:

Spring Acquisition: Our annual spring drive (March–May) generated \$102,104 in revenue, with 1,325 memberships purchased. This campaign successfully introduced 423 new families to our zoo community.

The Gift of Conservation: Our holiday gift-season (November–December) remains a local favorite, generating \$95,805 in revenue. We saw 1,211 gift memberships purchased, ensuring a new year of discovery for thousands of Central New Yorkers.

Membership Trends & Popularity

The Family Level remains our cornerstone, representing over 30% of our total database.

Accessibility: A Zoo for Everyone

We believe that connection with the natural world should be accessible to every member of our community. In 2025, we expanded our services to remove barriers and ensure an inclusive experience for all guests.

Mobility & Independence

Through the continued and gracious support of The Jewish Federation of Central New York, our Electronic Convenience Vehicle (ECV) program completed its second successful year, offered to guests at no cost



Overall renewal rate: **66%**

We welcomed
2,070 NEW

members to our database

Our most popular membership level:

Family (more than 30%)

We averaged 40 rentals per month, with a total of 408 rentals throughout 2025, providing independence and comfort to hundreds of visitors.

Our commitment to disability services continues to grow through specialized support and local partnerships. In 2025, more than 400 memberships were supported with free caregiver access, ensuring that families in need have the assistance necessary for a successful visit.



NEW IN 2025

- RGZ Coloring Book
- Updated Buddy Box to custom shippable box with original artwork
- Twice daily pop-up shop with Zoo branded merchandise for our Dog Show including pet bandanas, pet bowls and dog toys made from recycled water bottles
- Shop Local : New - Oswego River Candle Company (Custom Zoo candles featuring our animals), Chocolate Pizza Company
- Stuff-a-Plush Wall featured in Gift Shop
- New CIA Clothing Line and more (Shot Glasses, Tumbler) all sharing colors green, blue and black for better product branding



BY THE NUMBERS The Gift Shop generated

\$991,892
in total sales in 2025.

Transactions
38,000+

Plush Revenue
\$471,373

Camel Feedings
\$9,555

\$1 Donations for
Conservation Efforts

\$16,493
(5.17% increase from 2024)

Animal Enrichment
\$2,700

Conservation in Action Line Sales

\$7,100

THE CURIOUS CUB GIFT SHOP

THE GIFT SHOP

Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo integrate sustainability into all gift shop operations to align with the Zoo's environmental objectives and Onondaga County carbon reduction goals. As the current gift shop operator, we prioritize responsible sourcing, waste reduction, and operational efficiency while providing high-quality, mission-aligned merchandise.

SUSTAINABLE VENDOR SELECTION

Vendor selection is guided by demonstrated commitments to environmental responsibility, ethical production, and reduced environmental impact.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

Zoology / The Petting Zoo - Plush products are manufactured using recycled plastic water bottles for fill and fabric, with eyes stitched from recycled thread and tags printed using soy-based ink. The manufacturer annually diverts approximately 15 million plastic bottles from landfills. Each Earth Keeperz plush keeps up to eight plastic bottles out of the waste stream.

Fahlo - Products are manufactured from recycled materials, including water bottles, and packaged using post-consumer recycled content. Fahlo partners with wildlife conservation organizations to ensure product sales directly support conservation efforts.

Spunky Pup - Dog toys are produced using recycled plastic water bottles, with each toy diverting six bottles from landfills. Products are recyclable after use.

Rhode Island Novelty - Operates a LEED- and ENERGY STAR-certified headquarters powered in part by over 8,800 solar panels. Shipping from their distribution center is Carbon Neutral certified through SCS Global Services, and many products incorporate recycled or biodegradable materials.

Conscious Step - Uses GOTS-certified organic cotton, recycled polyester, and Fairtrade Certified manufacturing facilities. Products are fully vegan and PETA-Approved Vegan, with additional support for renewable energy and carbon offset initiatives.

Insect Lore - Provides USA-grown educational products that promote environmental stewardship and STEM learning, fostering awareness of ecological systems and conservation.

Call for the Wild - Offers conservation-focused merchandise that directly funds wildlife rescue, research, and habitat protection.



PHILANTHROPY: NURTURING GENEROSITY AND LEGACY

Total Contributions and Grants **\$1,129,863**

It is through the generous support of our community that the Friends of the Zoo can continue striving to fulfill our conservation mission. The Philanthropy Department engages in transparent, authentic outreach initiatives to establish and maintain meaningful connections with our community, turning personal passion into global impact.

Community Lead Impact: Our community’s dedication to the zoo shines brightest when our supporters take fundraising into their own hands. In 2025, the Philanthropy Department was proud to support passionate community champions who independently hosted grassroots fundraisers on our behalf. These external initiatives not only generated vital funding for our operations but also brought the zoo’s mission into new neighborhoods and social spaces, proving that every individual has the power to inspire conservation action.

Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is proud to support the zoo's commitment to excellence in animal care, conservation, and education through its Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation. This critical funding, provided through our restricted funds, reflects our dedication to maintaining the highest standards in animal welfare and visitor experience, ensuring the continued success and impact of the zoo within our community. Here are some of the areas we supported last year:

Red Wolf	Amur Tiger	Amur Leopard
\$4,788	\$7,610	\$8,217
Aquarium Tank	Asian Elephant	Animal Health Center
\$20,000	\$94,968	\$130,073
Humbolt Penguin	Garden Project	Other Animal Support
\$3,079	\$21,418	\$13,315



above: *Barn Party Hosted By Lobdell Family*



Nurturing Our Community: The Friends of the Zoo offers a variety of ways to honor and celebrate loved ones during and after their life journey, ensuring their legacy lives on through our conservation mission. For those seeking a permanent physical marker of a memorial gift, guests can opt to dedicate an engraved plaque on a designated zoo bench or add a personalized leaf to our Tree of Life, the ten-foot-long, vibrant display that spans the seating area of the Honey Bee Café.

Because Elephants Never Forget: We extend our deepest gratitude to the forward-thinking supporters who have chosen to join the Elephant Society, our planned legacy giving program. By remembering the Friends of the Zoo in their estate planning and wills, these visionary donors provide the long-term financial stability necessary to secure the future of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo for generations to come.



THE WAY TO THEIR HEARTS

FOOD AND BEVERAGE/CONCESSIONS

A record-breaking revenue of **\$1,740,891!**

On-site HoneyBee Cafe: generated **\$708,157**



Our Food and Beverage Department reached new heights in 2025, earning a record-breaking revenue of \$1,733,391! Following a historic 2024, the department continued its upward trajectory by exceeding the previous year's record by over \$33,000. Whether at the Honey Bee Café, a private corporate event, or our seasonal snack spots, including the Hofmann Dog Haus and Trunk & Tusk Cantina, technology and sustainability remain the primary ingredients of our success.

To ensure a seamless guest experience and limit wait times, we continue to leverage convenient online ordering at the Honey Bee Café. Our commitment to the planet also remains a top priority; we have maintained our ban on single-use plastic straws, maximized aluminum container options over plastic, and exclusively utilize compostable paper products. Every purchase made at our concessions locations directly fuels our mission, providing the critical resources needed for world-class animal care and conservation.



CATERING AT THE ZOO

Catering at the Zoo (CATZ) achieved an exceptional year in 2025, generating \$1,032,734 in revenue and further solidifying its reputation as Central New York's premier event destination. From exquisite sit-down wedding receptions to casual corporate picnics and high-end gala hors d'oeuvres, our full-service catering team continues to deliver unparalleled dining experiences. This year's success is a testament to the talent of our culinary staff, who have earned the zoo a stellar reputation as the region's most sought-after venue.

The industry recognition for CATZ continues to grow; following our record-breaking performance, we were once again honored with The Knot's Best of Weddings Award for the second consecutive year. As a top-tier wedding and event venue, the zoo maintains its elite 5-star rating, reflecting our commitment to excellence in both service and atmosphere. Every event hosted through CATZ provides vital funding for the Friends of the Zoo, turning life's celebrations into a direct investment in global wildlife conservation.

Hosted **191** private events

624 attendees enjoyed our monthly
Gourmet Dinner Pairing events!



CATERING AT THE ZOO



STORYTELLING SUCCESS

The Marketing and Communications Department of the Friends of the Zoo continues to bridge the gap between our mission and our community, crafting compelling narratives that resonate across a digital-first landscape. By balancing data-driven strategy with heartfelt storytelling, the team ensures that the zoo's global conservation impact and local community value remain at the forefront of the Central New York conversation.

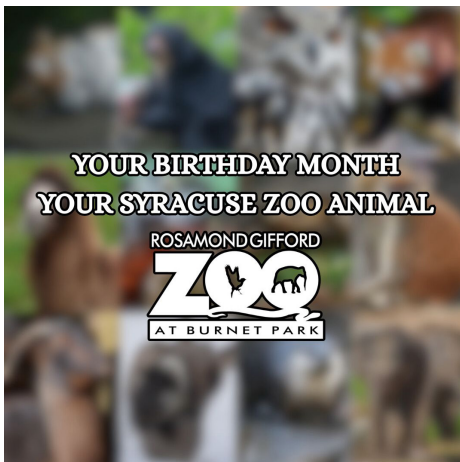
MyZoo Magazine reached nearly 10,000 households this year, delivering deep dives into our "Conservation in Action" initiatives. Following our 2024 first-place win from the Syracuse Press Club for Best Magazine, we maintained our gold standard of excellence, utilizing the magazine to profile the clinical trials of our elephant twins and the critical milestones.

Our on-campus digital experience continued to grow into maturity in 2025. The projection boards greeting guests upon entry have become a hallmark of the visitor journey, offering immersive video content that highlights our animal care team's expertise. This year, we further enhanced our interpretive technology with a new virtual experience at the North American River Otter habitat, featuring a digital display that allows guests to "see" and learn about extinct fish species, bridging the gap between past and present conservation.

Digital Dominance: After its launch, our e-newsletter, MyZooEXTRA, has become our most powerful engagement tool. In 2025, the monthly newsletter continued to significantly outperform industry averages (25% open / 2% click), maintaining the high engagement levels established during its inaugural year. This monthly digital lifeline ensures our most loyal supporters remain connected to real-time zoo news and exclusive behind-the-scenes content.

Content & Engagement: Our digital strategy shifted in 2025 toward high-impact, direct storytelling. By focusing on our core web presence and social platforms, we have increased our organic reach and search visibility. This "content-first" approach ensures that even as platforms evolve, the stories of our animals and the people who care for them remain accessible and engaging for our global audience.

Strategic Visibility: We have expanded our reach through high-profile physical placements at the region's largest landmarks. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo brand maintains a massive presence at Destiny USA, including a signature signage installation that identifies the zoo as a primary regional destination for the millions of visitors who frequent the mall each year.



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Data-Driven Growth: We further refined our META social media strategy, utilizing real-time analytics to optimize ad spend. This pivot toward data-centric marketing has allowed us to increase event attendance and membership acquisition with surgical precision, ensuring every marketing dollar is an investment in the zoo's future.

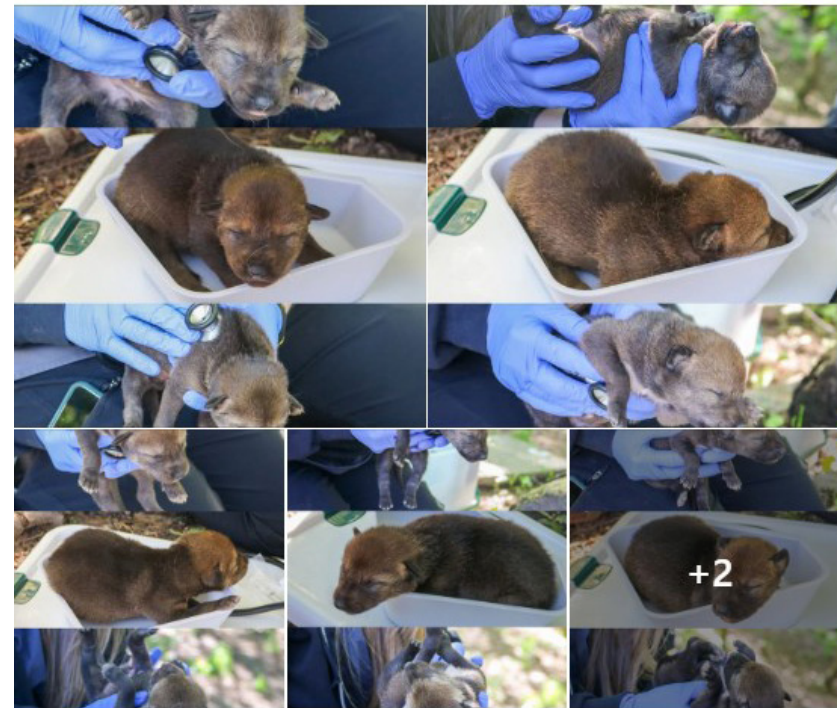
Total followers: **289,334** (2.7 % increase from 2024)
 Impressions: **34,215,688** (32.3% increase from 2024)

  Rosamond Gifford Zoo	153,159
  Rosamond Gifford Zoo	49,419
  Rosamond Gifford Zoo	2,753
  Rosamond Gifford Zoo	23,800
  Rosamond Gifford Zoo	45,954
  Friends of the Rosamon...	1,199
  Catering at the Zoo	2,385
  Catering at the Zoo	208

■ RED ALERT! ■ We have BIG news! The Rosamond Gifford Zoo welcomed a litter of SIX red wolf puppies on May 3, 2025 at the Matthews Auto Group Red Wolf Preserve! Born to mom Evie and dad Sage, this litter of four female and two male red wolf pups represents hope for their critically endangered species. Red wolves are the most endangered species of canine on the planet. Currently, the number of red wolves in the wild is fewer than 20 individuals, mostly due to illegal poaching and habitat destruction. As an institution accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is a proud participant in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) for the species, managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). We are happy to share that the new family is currently doing well, and we look forward to providing more updates soon!

Please join us in congratulating Sage, Evie, and the entire Rosamond Gifford Zoo team on this major contribution to the survival of red wolves.

#WeAreAZA #Syracusezoo #Syracuse #CNY #RedWolf #SavingSpecies #ConservationInAction #OnondagaCounty #OnondagaCountyParks



[See insights and ads](#)

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 Hancock Estabrook LLP, Los Angeles Zoo and 10K others

553 comments 1.2K shares

WELCOME TO THE TEAM, NEW FRIENDS!



Claire O'Boyle Downey, Catering Sales Manager

Claire O'Boyle-Downey was born and raised in Dublin Ireland and has a degree in Catering management from the Dublin college of Catering. She came to work in the United States at Coleman's authentic Irish pub on Tipp hill. Claire teaches catering management at OCC and was Director of catering at Syracuse University before joining the zoo in August 2025.



Rowan Kingsbury, Education Coordinator

Rowan Kingsbury was hired as an Education Coordinator at the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in July 2025. Rowan holds a B.A. in History from SUNY Potsdam, as well as two Master's Degrees from Syracuse University in History and Museum Studies.



Alyssa Troxel, Education Coordinator

Alyssa Troxel has a B.S. in Marine Sciences with a minor in Environmental Studies from Eckerd College. She was hired as an Education Coordinator for the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in June 2025.



INVESTMENTS

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Paving Asphalt & Construction Project at Old Elephant area- \$28,957

Equipment/Computers

Smartboards for education dept - \$10,595

new computers – upgrading for \$25,859 – move off old server into cloud based

Animal Infrastructure:

Thermal Camera & Imaging Monocular for Asian Elephant - \$9,047

Elephant Signage & Sculpture - \$20,000

New Elephant electrical gate– paid 50% down - \$38,977

New piling & post for Amur Leopard - \$6,317

Fish Tank - Transparent LED/Interpretive Signage - \$24,300

CONTRIBUTING TO CONSERVATION: DOING OUR PART

- **International Elephant Foundation - \$10,000**
- **Wild Camel Protection Foundation - \$5,000**
- **SAFE Asian Elephant - \$2,000**
- **Snow Leopard Trust - \$2,000**
- **Save The Golden Tamarin - \$2,000**
- **World Land Trust - \$2,083**





ANIMAL UPDATES





ILLEGALLY CREATED ARGALI CLONE FINDS NEW HOME AT ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO

As a zoo accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the arrivals of new animals and departures of current residents are routine parts of zoo operations, but this particular arrival was anything but routine. The new Marco Polo argali sheep, now named Tilek, is actually a clone. He was an unfortunate victim of an elaborate, illegal wildlife breeding and trafficking plot. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is grateful to be able to provide Tilek with a new home where he will be taken care of by our team of animal care specialists. In addition to sharing this unique story with our community, we want to share that visitors will be able to view Tilek in his spacious habitat on the Wildlife Trail.

Once the investigation concluded in October 2024, United States Fish and Wildlife Service reached out to AZA's Caprinae Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) for help arranging Tilek's move to a permanent home. The TAG selected the Rosamond Gifford Zoo due to its extensive experience with caring for hoofstock species including markhor, mouflon, and others.

Moving Tilek took careful planning and strategy. With the help of its non-profit partner, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, the zoo had a special transport crate built to move the argali safely.

Once Tilek arrived at the zoo, he still had a long road of recovery ahead of him. In addition to caring for his physical health, the hoofstock care specialists provided extensive psychological support to help the argali reach a more peaceful lifestyle that attends to his unique needs. It took an incredible showing of patience, teamwork, and attentive monitoring as the team slowly but surely helped Tilek progress.

Tilek will share a habitat space with three male Tadjik markhor as a bachelor herd. This blended-species bachelor herd arrangement is unusual, but it closely mimics the natural experience of herd solidarity and provides these four males with positive socialization as they coexist together at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

WELCOME HOME! ANIMAL ARRIVALS



On January 25, 2025, male red wolf Sage and a male Von der Deckens hornbill arrived from the North Carolina Zoo.

On April 13, 2025, male Humboldt penguin chick Domingo hatched. His parents are Peru (father) and Cuatro (mother).

On April 15, 2025, a female eastern hellbender arrived from the Sedgewick County Zoo.

On April 19, 2025, male Humboldt penguin chick Ramon hatched. His biological parents are Peru



(father) and Cuatro (mother), but he was fostered by experienced Humboldt penguin pair Luis (foster-father) and Calypso (foster-mother).

On May 2, 2025, one female and one male Black Welsh Mountain sheep were born to parents Bryson (father) and Blackberry (mother).

On May 3, 2025, six red wolf puppies (four females and two males) were born to parents Sage (father) and Evie (mother).



On May 20, 2025, male Amur tiger Metis arrived from the Smithsonian National Zoo.

On June 17, 2025, two female colobus monkeys Dahlia and Winifred arrived from Utah's Hogle Zoo.

On October 9, 2025, 4 male and 3 female Northern seahorses arrived from the North Carolina Aquarium.

IN MEMORIAM

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

On April 21, 2025, female gray wolf Sylvia was humanely euthanized at 13 years old. She had inoperable cancer.

On September 22, 2025, female Chinese muntjac Rosalyn passed away

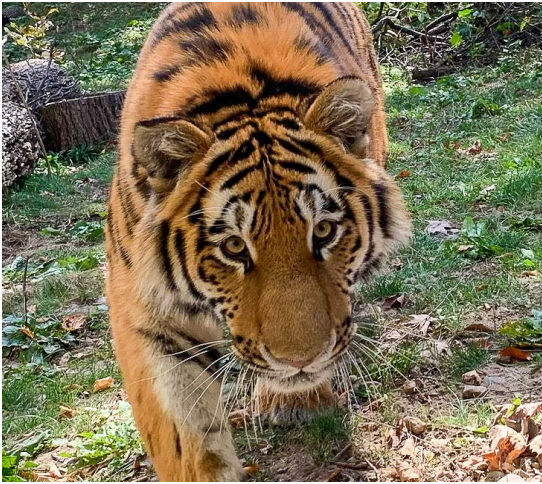
On July 3, 2025, female meerkat Ducky passed away.

On September 18, 2025, female Palawan peacock pheasant Gertrude passed away. She was over 23 years old, which is very long-lived for this species.

On September 29, 2025, female San Clemente Island goat Roulette passed away.



BON VOYAGE! ANIMAL DEPARTURES



On April 10, 2025, male Amur tiger Zuzaan departed for the Great Plains Zoo.

On April 24, 2025, a male Von der Decken's hornbill departed for the Kansas City Zoo.

On April 25, 2025, a female troupial departed for the Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo.



On April 30, 2025, a male Luzon bleeding heart dove departed for the Fort Worth Zoo.

On August 28, 2025, Male Chinese muntjac Campbell was sent to the Baltimore Zoo.

On July 21, 2025, Female Amur leopard Iona returned to the Toledo Zoo.



On September 30, 2025, Male Humboldt penguin Peru was sent to the Roger Williams Park Zoo.

On June 11, 2025, female Inca tern Ceviche was sent to the Caldwell Zoo.





STATEMENT OF OPERATING FINANCES

	2025		2024	
SUPPORT AND REVENUE	\$	%	\$	%
Membership	\$635,839	12%	\$667,709	15%
Retail operations	1,121,548	21%	1,232,030	27%
Program fees	408,659	8%	401,917	9%
Contributions and grants	1,410,278	26%	1,160,811	25%
Fundraising and events	214,009	4%	210,147	5%
Rental and catering income	824,615	15%	690,265	15%
Employee Retention Credit	656,534	12%		0%
Interest income	175,311	3%	219,659	5%
Paycheck Protection Program Loan Forgiveness		0%		0%
Total Support and Revenue	\$5,446,793	100%	\$4,582,538	100%
EXPENSES	\$	%	\$	%
PROGRAM SERVICES				
Zoo support	\$ 1,198,345	27%	\$1,576,935	34%
Gift shop	238,946	5%	217,827	5%
Educational programs	507,534	11%	465,973	10%
Facility rentals/catering	664,833	15%	610,145	13%
Total program services	\$2,609,658	58%	\$2,870,880	62%
SUPPORTING SERVICES				
Administration	\$1,063,270	19%	\$867,411	19%
Fundraising and Membership	836,468	19%	885,277	19%
Total supporting services	\$1,899,738	38%	\$1,752,688	38%
Total expenses	\$ 4,509,396	100%	\$4,623,568	100%
INCOME (LOSS) FROM OPERATIONS	\$937,397		\$(41,030)	
Net change in market value of investments	\$488,522		275,000	
Increase (Decrease) in net assets	\$1,425,919		233,970	
Net assets at beginning of year	7,477,808		7,243,838	
Net assets at end of year	\$8,903,727		\$7,477,808	

A full set of financial statements, including a report of independent auditors, is available for review during normal business hours at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

The commitment and generosity of the individuals, groups, corporations and foundations listed here help make the Rosamond Gifford Zoo a national leader in animal care, conservation and guest experience.

We thank you for your support.

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\$25,000-\$125,000

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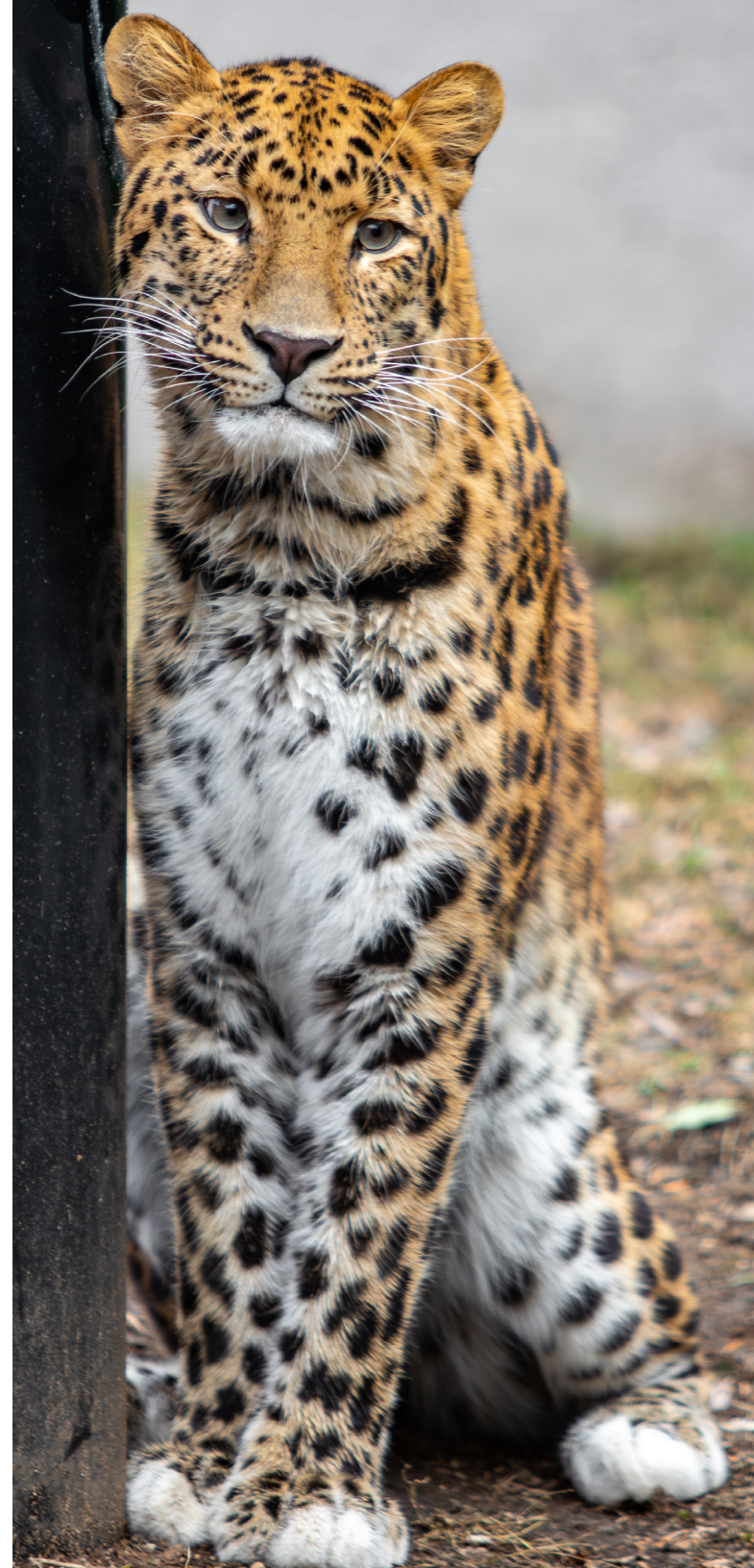
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A memorial gift is a meaningful way to honor the memory of someone who has touched your life or recognize a life-cycle event or accomplishment.

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Jeannie Barnaba

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Janet & Larry Wolf

In Memory of Ryan Wood
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In Memory of Phyllis Zames
Katherine Rubinstein



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Thank you to these charitable donators of 2025 for their generous donations to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

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*In recognition of those who
have left a legacy to
Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo
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Estate of Irene L. Hunter	Charitable Remainder Trust	

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Officers

Terry Hopkins, Chair
Megan Thomas, Vice Chair
Natalie Scavone, Secretary
Amanda Foster, Treasurer

Board Members

Dr. Zina Berry	Amanda Hull	Deborah Messina
Debra Cody	Daniel Jenkins	Kathy O'Connell
Susan Cole	Beth King	Melissa Oliver
Tim Crosby	Steven Lickstein	Austin Philleo
Savannah Gibbs	Susan Lobdell	Sabrina Webster
John Harris	Ryan Lynch	
Melissa Hicks	Jody Manning	

Andrew Brazill, **Interim Executive Director**

Senior Staff

Allison Angona, Membership Manager
Chuck Anthony, Director of Food and Beverage
Kim Arnold, Director of Education
Andrew Brazill, Director of Marketing and Communications
Joel Fire, Gift Shop Manager/Buyer
Sherry Jones, Director of Finance
Rachel Leonardo, Director of Human Resources
Gina Rapasadi, Director of Philanthropy
Heidi Strong, Director of Development



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Palmer

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Parks & Recreation

Dan Meates
Interim Zoo Executive Director