

2222 St. Paul Street, Rochester, NY 14621

[senecaparkzoo.org](http://senecaparkzoo.org)

Contact: Mina Johnson, Communications Coordinator

(585) 336-7202 or [mjohnson@senecazoo.org](mailto:mjohnson@senecazoo.org)



## Mark and Maureen Davitt donate \$2.5 million to Zoo Society's Capital Campaign

*Gift supports current Animals of the Savanna expansion and next phase of the Zoo's transformation*

Rochester, NY – Seneca Park Zoo Society announced today that Mark and Maureen Davitt have committed \$2.5 million to the Zoo's *A Wilder Vision* capital campaign. The Davitts will be recognized for their gift in the naming of the new Animals of the Savanna building, part of the five-acre expansion opening September 13.

"Maureen and I have worked in the Rochester community since 1982 and we have raised our family in this community. Part of our personal passion is to help enrich this community for the benefit of all who live and visit here," commented **Mark Davitt**, CEO of ConServe. "We consider it a privilege to be able to help create a spectacular experience for all members of our community to see some of the most wondrous creatures in the world, right here in our own backyard."

In addition to indoor habitats for Masai giraffes, plains zebra, ostriches, and the Zoo's white rhino, the Animals of the Savanna building will be home to many other smaller species native to the African savanna, like naked mole rats.

"We are hopeful the connections and memories between children and parents viewing the inspiring power, the elegant grace, and the subtle behaviors of these amazing animals amplifies the realization that the greater Rochester area is one of the best places to live, work, and raise our families," Davitt adds.

The Zoo's multi-year transformation began in 2017 and is anticipated to be \$60 million. Monroe County has committed \$37.75 million through its Capital Improvement Program budget. The Zoo Society will raise the remaining \$23 million to ensure the complete transition of the Zoo. In addition to the Animals of the

Savanna expansion, the Master Plan improvements include a new restaurant, tropics complex, and guest services facilities over the coming years.

**Pamela Reed Sanchez**, President and CEO of the Zoo Society, said, “The importance of this gift to the *A Wilder Vision* campaign cannot be understated, as it represents ten percent of our total campaign goal. This investment helps ensure that the transformation of the Zoo continues past this year’s Animals of the Savanna opening, through the construction of a new restaurant and the complete rebuilding of the front third of the Zoo. We are incredibly grateful to Mark and Maureen.”

**Stephen Brown**, Capital Campaign Chairman, said the Davitt’s gift confirms that the community shares in the Zoo’s mission to connect guests with wildlife and wild places.

“The support for the expansion that takes Seneca Park Zoo to a national leader in conservation and education has been strong,” commented Brown. “This transformational gift from the Davitt family, however, is validation that the families in our community share in this vision. We hope that it inspires others to join in our mission.”

“On behalf of a grateful community, I thank Mark and Maureen Davitt for their incredibly generous gift to our ongoing Seneca Park Zoo expansion project,” commented Monroe County Executive **Cheryl Dinolfo**. “The Davitt’s contribution, combined with additional support from the Zoo Society Capital Campaign, will help to enhance the County’s investment in our Zoo and ensure it remains one our area’s top family attractions for years to come. I offer my gratitude to the Davitts and everyone who is helping Monroe County support stronger families through our job-creating Zoo project, which will officially bring us the new Animals of the Savanna exhibit later this week.”

The new Animals of the Savanna expansion is set to open to the public on Thursday, September 13, 2018. To learn more about the Zoo Society’s capital campaign, visit [senecaparkzoo.org/wilder](http://senecaparkzoo.org/wilder).

\*\*\*

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.