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Seneca Park Zoo Announces Dr. Patricia Wright Inaugural Conservation Warrior Award Winner

Rochester, N.Y. - Seneca Park Zoo has announced that Dr. Patricia Wright has been selected to receive its inaugural Conservation Warrior Award. The Conservation Warrior Award was established to honor individuals whose innovation and commitment to conservation have led to lasting, meaningful impact on species survival. This award is also aimed at elevating awareness of the heroic work being undertaken around the world in partnership with the Seneca Park Zoo.

Dr. Patricia Wright is a renowned anthropologist and primatologist who, after discovering a new species of lemur in 1986, has devoted her life's work to the conservation of the extraordinary biodiversity endemic to Madagascar. In 1991, she co-founded Ranomafana National Park, protecting 41,500 hectares of rainforest. She is Founder and Director of Centre ValBio field station, a state-of-the-art research facility employing more than 80 Malagasy staff and focused on the integration of local people in saving the forest, and thus, the lemurs of the forest. Her work was highlighted in "Island of Lemurs: Madagascar," a motion picture narrated by Morgan Freeman. She is author of five books and more than 200 publications, and recipient of three Medals of Honor from the Malagasy government.

"Through governmental coups, worldwide pandemics, droughts, and major typhoons, Dr. Wright's dedication to the biodiversity and the people of Madagascar has never wavered. She is a true Conservation Warrior," said Zoo Superintendent Steve Lacy.

"Dr. Wright's early years were spent in Rochester, NY, and it is fitting that the inaugural Conservation Warrior award be bestowed upon arguably the most influential conservationist to come out of the Finger Lakes region," said Pamela Reed Sanchez, President and CEO of the Seneca Park Zoo Society, which is coordinating the award and its associated events.

Seneca Park Zoo has been supporting conservation efforts in Madagascar and the work of Dr. Wright for nearly thirty years, and the Zoo's efforts are recognized on the foundation pillars of Centre Valbio Research Station at the head of Ranomafana National Park. For many years, fundraising efforts were spearheaded by the Zoo's docents, while former Zoo veterinarian Dr. Jeff Wyatt made numerous visits to assist in research related to mouse lemurs and bamboo lemurs. More recently, the Zoo Society has made several trips to Ranomafana to study biodiversity, conduct remote sensing and lidar scanning of the forest, and assist in reforestation efforts.

In addition to the title "Conservation Warrior," the award includes a \$20,000 grant for the recipient to continue their conservation work, and a beautiful glass sculptural piece designed and created by the Corning Museum of Glass.

"The Corning Museum of Glass is honored to partner with Seneca Park Zoo to recognize the lasting impact of the Conservation Warrior," said Eric Meek, Senior Manager for Hot Glass Programs at Corning Museum of Glass. "Our glassmakers drew inspiration from their extraordinary work to create an object that embodies the strength, dedication, and passion they bring to preserving the wild parts of our world."

Dr. Wright will be in Rochester in early December to receive the award in a private ceremony on December 7th. Members of the public are invited to meet Dr. Wright the morning of December 8th at a facilitated Q&A session co-sponsored by RIT and being held at the RIT Tait Preserve in Penfield. There is no cost to attend, but attendance is limited and preregistration via the Zoo's website is required.

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.