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Contact: Donato DiRenzo  
Communications Coordinator  
(585) 336-7202 or [ddirenzo@senecazoo.org](mailto:ddirenzo@senecazoo.org)

## **Seneca Park Zoo Announces Death of Masai Giraffe**

**Rochester, N.Y.** –Seneca Park Zoo (SPZ) today announced the death of Parker, the Zoo’s 6-year-old male Masai giraffe. SPZ animal care staff entered the Animals of the Savanna Building Sunday morning and found Parker unresponsive, caught in a support structure for the giraffe enclosure gate. Veterinary staff were summoned immediately.

“The possibility of this kind of event happening was unforeseen and unprecedented,” said Zoo Superintendent Steve Lacy. “The gate structure, installed in 2018, is a standard giraffe enclosure feature and is used in a number of accredited zoos around the country.”

There have been no reports of such incidents at other zoos with similar gate structures. The manufacturer has been notified of the potential hazard at similar gate installations at giraffe exhibits at other zoos. SPZ is taking steps to modify the enclosure gate structure to prevent any possibility of a reoccurrence.

Both the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) have been notified of the accident and SPZ is working with both agencies regarding the incident and on the modifications to the gate structure.

“Our hearts go out to the Seneca Park community and all the dedicated professionals at Seneca Park Zoo with the news of the death of their giraffe Parker,” said Dan Ashe, president and CEO of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. “They also have our confidence in their exceptional care of animals.”

Parker came to SPZ from the Santa Barbara Zoo in 2018. He was known for his curiosity and playfulness. Parker was paired with females Kipenzi and Iggy, and is father to Olmsted, born in April 2022.

“This is a tragedy for the Seneca Park Zoo community,” said Monroe County Executive Adam Bello. “From the staff who cared for and loved Parker, to the Zoo guests and members who had their visits brightened by Parker’s presence, we are all grieving this tremendous loss.”

“Parker will be sorely missed by all. He had been in excellent health prior to this and was a joy to both staff and visitors,” said Seneca Park Zoo Veterinarian Chris McKinney. “Our priority is the health and wellbeing of our animals and any major event can certainly affect them. So far, all three giraffes, Iggy, Kipenzie, and Olmsted, are doing well. We will continue to monitor them closely in the coming days.”

The Animals of the Savanna Building was designed using state-of-the-art equipment for managing giraffes. The Animals of the Savanna area of the Zoo was closed to the public on Sunday and will reopen this afternoon.

The Zoo asks the public to keep the animal care staff in your thoughts as they deal with this difficult loss. Grief counselors will be available to the staff this week. Members of the public wishing to commemorate Parker’s life may do so by sharing your favorite pictures and memories of Parker on the Zoo’s social media channels. The Zoo Society will also create a Facebook fundraiser with all contributions going to the Giraffe Conservation Foundation.

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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.