



## **Seneca Park Zoo's Masai Giraffe Kipenzi Euthanized After Battling Cancer**

**Tuesday, July 30, 2024** – Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and the Seneca Park Zoo announced that yesterday Animal Health staff made the difficult but necessary end-of-life decision for Kipenzi, one of Seneca Park Zoo's female Masai giraffes, who has been living with squamous cell carcinoma for more than a year. The Zoo first announced Kipenzi's diagnosis in August of 2023, after a biopsy and x-rays showed the tumor to be invasive through the jawbone and inoperable.

Kipenzi was born at the Toledo Zoo in April of 2017, and moved to Seneca Park Zoo in August of 2018 in preparation for the opening of the Zoo's Animals of the Savanna expansion. Animal Care and Animal Health staff first noticed a small enlargement on her jaw in late spring 2023. Close monitoring of the growth led to bringing a team of giraffe veterinarians from across the country to Seneca Park Zoo last August to assist with anesthetizing Kipenzi for the biopsy.

"From the time of diagnosis, Kipenzi was treated with an antitumor topical treatment. X-rays were regularly taken and she received medications to maintain her comfort and ensure she was not in any pain," said Zoo Veterinarian Chris McKinney. "We knew from diagnosis that her time with us was limited. It is a testament to the training Kipenzi received from Animal Care and Animal Health

staff that she allowed us to provide her with this care, even at times allowing us to see her teeth."

Animals with the same prognosis as Kipenzi typically survive 10 -12 months, but she defied the odds. After 16 months with cancer, Kipenzi was still actively participating in training, giraffe feeds, and blood draws until just a few days ago.

"Over the last few days, Kipenzi stopped eating, and her weight dropped by more than 75 pounds in a very short time," said McKinney. "From the way she was holding her jaw, it was clear she was in great discomfort, and the time had come to humanely euthanize her."

Kipenzi's body was transported to Cornell University for necropsy. "A necropsy is always necessary," said Zoo Superintendent Steve Lacy. "Kipenzi's condition was rare, and learning everything we can about her cancer may inform treatment of hoofstock animals that develop cancer in the future. We partner with Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine because Cornell offers unparalleled world-class experts and facilities."

County Executive Adam Bello stated, "I am thankful for our committed and skillful giraffe caretakers who have been closely monitoring Kipenzi for signs of decline since her diagnosis. We knew this day was coming, but it doesn't make it easier on those who cared for her and ensured her life had great meaning. In her brief time here, through meeting her, more than 1.5 million guests learned about the challenges faced by giraffes in their natural range."

"The other giraffes in the tower are doing well," said Lacy. "They will likely have a brief period of adjustment, but Iggy, Olmsted, J.D., and Pippy will be out in the habitat and back at giraffe feedings in no time."

Seneca Park Zoo staff, including Kipenzi's dedicated Animal Care staff, are thankful for the support and kindness our guests and members have shown to

Kipenzi and the staff since the diagnosis. Community members who want to share their memories, photos, or support are invited to comment on the Zoo's social media channels (@senecaparkzoo), and those comments will be shared with staff.

\*\*

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.

Contact: Beth LaPierre  
Director of Communications and Engagement  
(585) 355-7436 or [blapierre@senecazoo.org](mailto:blapierre@senecazoo.org)