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## **Seneca Park Zoo Announces Deaf Culture Awareness Day on September 22, 2024**

**September 16, 2024 | Rochester, N.Y.** – Seneca Park Zoo, together with RIT’s National Technical Institute for the Deaf and Rochester School for the Deaf, announce the third annual Deaf Culture Awareness Day at Seneca Park Zoo on September 22, 2024.

"Deaf Culture Awareness Day is not solely for our guests who are deaf and hard of hearing," said Pamela Reed Sanchez, President and CEO of the Seneca Park Zoo Society. "Our partners provide us with training and resources to ensure our staff and volunteers are welcoming every day of the year. It is an important component of our commitment to be a welcoming place for everyone in our community."

Rochester is home to one of the nation’s largest deaf populations per capita, and has become a national leader for inclusivity for the deaf or hard of hearing community.

"We are thrilled to once again partner with our friends at the Seneca Park Zoo and Rochester School for the Deaf on Deaf Awareness Day, Sunday, Sept. 22," said Gerry Buckley, NTID president and RIT vice president and dean. "This event demonstrates the vitality of Rochester’s Deaf community – one of the largest in the country – and also shows in very real ways Monroe County and the Zoo’s commitment to inclusion and access for all."

"We are deeply grateful for the ongoing partnership with the Zoo and their commitment to welcoming our families and the Deaf community to Seneca Park Zoo," said Tony McLetchie, Superintendent and CEO of Rochester School for the Deaf. "Our students are rightfully proud of their ASL name signs for animals that are displayed at the various exhibits. Representation matters and seeing their language celebrated and shared with the wider community every day is meaningful inclusion."

Deaf Culture Awareness Day is also Elephant Awareness Day at the Zoo. Special elephant programming will be offered all day long including animal experiences, a watermelon eating contest between a few lucky guests and our elephants, and a keeper chat with the Zoo's hoofstock team.

Zoo naturalists will be stationed by the elephant pool, sharing fascinating insights into the unique adaptations that make elephants so remarkable. Learn how their massive ears, trunk, and even their skin plays a crucial role in their survival. Docents will be on hand to discuss the vital Elephant Corridor and its significance in preserving elephant populations.

Zookeepers, Docents, and Naturalists will be paired with interpreters, allowing guests to fully engage with Zoo experts regarding animal species, facts, and wayfinding. ASL-interpreted storytelling featuring animal-related books will take place on the playground. The Zoo has worked with the Rochester School for the Deaf on custom animal identification signage featuring lenticular images of RSD students signing animal names.

For more information visit: [senecaparkzoo.org/event/dcad2024](https://senecaparkzoo.org/event/dcad2024). Deaf Culture Awareness Day at Seneca Park Zoo will be held rain or shine. Tickets can be purchased online here: [www.senecaparkzoo.org/tickets](https://www.senecaparkzoo.org/tickets) or at the admissions booth.

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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.