

*For Immediate Release*

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## Friends of the Zoo Supports New Projects, Adds Visitor Activities as Zoo's Summer Season Begins

Syracuse, N.Y. (June 29, 2016) – Friends of the Zoo, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's non-profit support organization, has invested in several new projects and activities to further enhance Central New York's favorite family destination just in time for summer.

"Friends of the Zoo is excited to offer these new features and activities at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. We thank our county partners for their collaboration and our zoo members for their support. We look forward to welcoming guests this summer as they try out our new nature play space and working sluice and take part in special activity days on Tuesdays and Fridays," says Janet Agostini, Friends of the Zoo President & CEO.



### Explorer's Play Space

As part of the zoo's strategic and master plan, a new nature play space located next to educational exhibit Explorer's Outpost compliments the fun school groups and families already have when visiting. Nature play spaces provide child-directed, unstructured play in a naturalized setting and encourage use of the senses, imagination and creativity. Nature play addresses the need for children to spend more time outdoors interacting with the natural world while encouraging stewardship of the environment. Elements of the play space were designed to utilize many materials already on hand at the zoo, including logs, stone, pavers and lumber.

The space includes the following elements:

- Dig zone/build area featuring sand, tree cookies (cross sections of tree trunk), loose logs and stones for creative construction
- Faux log tunnel fashioned to look like a fallen tree, fabricated out of a large plastic road drainage pipe
- Willow hut made of living plant material with roof, walls and child-sized seating
- Creative instrument marimba constructed from natural elements
- Chicken coop for animal interaction and engagement
- Water source with spigots for water play

Friends of the Zoo worked with Rusty Keeler, author of “Natural Playscapes” and designer of children’s environments for over 22 years. Keeler has helped lead the movement to reconnect kids to nature through play. Initial funding for the space was generously provided by M&T Bank as part of a capital campaign gift that supported construction of Explorer’s Outpost, with additional support from Friends of the Zoo.

### **EarthWorks!**

Children and their families can engage in another interactive outdoor activity at the zoo this summer when they visit EarthWorks!, the new working sluice located next to Primate Park. Purchase a bag of mineral ore and pan for fossils, gems and minerals to find out what the Earth contains. Find, identify and take home amazing fossils, gems and minerals after using the running water system to wash away the rough. Children of all ages can learn about Earth sciences like geology and paleontology. EarthWorks! is also great for collectors. The new activity will be staffed by The Curious Cub Gift Shop and offers three sizes of mineral ore for purchase.

### **FREE Tattoo Tuesdays and Face Paint Fridays**

The membership department will host Tattoo Tuesdays for children from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. beginning Tuesday, July 5 through August 23. Staff will apply temporary tattoos at a station in the courtyard; parents may choose to apply the tattoo if they wish. The education department and its ZooGuides teen ambassador program will offer Face Paint Fridays beginning Friday, July 15 through August 19 from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the courtyard. Both activities are free with admission; visitors may opt to make a donation to the zoo for either experience. In case of inclement weather, stations will be moved to the indoor zoo. Check social media for any schedule changes.

Founded in 1970, Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) support organization to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, which is operated by Onondaga County Parks. Friends of the Zoo supports the mission of the zoo by providing educational programming to zoo visitors and the surrounding community, marketing efforts, fundraising and development activities.

Friends of the Zoo operates The Curious Cub Gift Shop, Catering at the Zoo and Jungle Café. Over the years, the organization has helped build new exhibits, improve existing habitats and upgrade facilities. Membership to the zoo through the Friends organization affords members discounts on educational programs, events, and in the zoo gift shop; a quarterly publication, *MyZoo Magazine*; and free admission to the zoo year-round.

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Founded in 1914, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is among the top 10 percent of zoos in the country as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is dedicated to connecting people to the natural world by providing engaging guest experiences, exceptional animal care, and unparalleled conservation education.

The zoo actively collaborates with Friends of the Zoo to provide its guests “the best day ever,” ensuring experiences that excite, memories that endure, and knowledge that inspires worldwide conservation.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults (19-61), \$4 for youth (3-18) and \$5 for seniors (62+). Children two and under are free. For more information, call the zoo at (315) 435-8511 or visit [rosamondgiffordzoo.org](http://rosamondgiffordzoo.org).

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County Executive, Joanne M. Mahoney • Commissioner of Parks & Recreation, Bill Lansley  
Rosamond Gifford Zoo Director, Ted Fox • Friends of the Zoo President, Janet Agostini

