

For Immediate Release

New orangutan, harbor seal to make zoo home in 2016

MADISON, Wis., Nov. 30, 2015 – County Executive Joe Parisi, Zoo Director Ronda Schwetz and Friends of the Zoo Director Alison Prange today revealed the details about the two animals that will make Henry Vilas Zoo their new home in 2016. The new zoo residents will be an adult female Bornean orangutan and a young male harbor seal. The announcement comes the day before Giving Tuesday 2015, during which the community can support bringing these animals to their new home at the zoo.

“Both of these animals represent the zoo’s ongoing contribution to conservation efforts and play a unique part in the experience of zoo guests,” said County Executive Joe Parisi. “Henry Vilas Zoo always has been a community-supported zoo and we hope that the community actively supports the zoo tomorrow during this year’s Giving Tuesday.”

Giving Tuesday is a global day dedicated to giving back. It follows the Black Friday and Cyber Monday shopping days. The Friends of the Henry Vilas Zoo will take part in Giving Tuesday again this year to raise funds to help bring these new animals to the zoo. This year, there is special incentive for the community to participate in Giving Tuesday. Dedicated donors to the Friends of the Zoo Pat and Shirley Kubly have challenged the community to help bring these new animals to the zoo by offering a \$10,000 matching gift, which will double contributions up to that amount.

The new female orangutan continues the zoo’s commitment to educating about conservation challenges facing this species. As a successful mother, she also provides the zoo’s current orangutan pair support to help raise future infant orangutans. Orangutans are found only on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. They are the only great ape found in Asia and are endangered, facing crises that may cause their extinction in our lifetime. Bornean orangutans like Kawan, Datu and our future female joining them in 2016 help maintain a healthy population in Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoos. .

“Conservation is a very important part of the zoo’s mission and these animals represent our most recent involvement in those efforts,” said Zoo Director Ronda Schwetz. “Giving Tuesday provides the community with a chance to lend its support to the zoo’s on going work and our growing role in global animal conservation.”

The harbor seal is a young male. He will join Betty, who at 46 is the oldest harbor seal in a zoo or aquarium in the country, and her daughters, Lucy and Sparky. Earlier this year, the seals took up residence in their new home in Arctic Passage. Pacific harbor seals in the wild are found north of the equator in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. They can dive to 1,450 feet and stay submerged for 25 minutes. The average harbor seal weighs about 180 pounds and is six feet long.

Last year, the Friends of the Zoo raised more than \$12,000 on Giving Tuesday, which allowed the zoo to bring in a pair of red pandas, two Somali wild asses and the grizzly bear sisters who now call Arctic Passage home. The Friends' 2015 Giving Tuesday goal is to raise \$10,000 to support the arrival of the two new animals at the zoo.

“Giving Tuesday is an important part of the Friends’ efforts to support our zoo,” said Alison Prange, executive director of Friends of the Henry Vilas Zoo. “This year, the community can support bringing two animals to the zoo, while their donations will be matched dollar for dollar through a generous matching gift. We hope the community will help us welcome these new animals to their new homes at Henry Vilas Zoo.”

To learn more about Giving Tuesday or to help the zoo bring the new orangutan and seal to the zoo, visit vilaszoo.org.