



# NEWS RELEASE

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## SANTA BARBARA ZOO SEEKS DONATIONS WHILE CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- ***Community is invited to “Drive By, Wave Hi!” Donation Parade on Saturday, April 25***
- ***Animal care remains top priority despite greatest revenue loss in organization’s history***

April 21, 2020 (Santa Barbara, CA) – Despite having to close its doors on March 17 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the [Santa Barbara Zoo](http://SantaBarbaraZoo.org)’s commitment to animal care remains the top priority. However, the organization faces the greatest financial crisis it has ever experienced in its 57-year history. In an effort to raise much-needed funds, and also engage the community, the Zoo will host a “Drive By, Wave Hi!” donation parade on Saturday, April 25 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Dress up in animal costumes, decorate your car, drive around the Zoo's parking lot, and drop a donation of any amount as you drive by. Even though the public can't visit the animals quite yet, they can still support the Zoo – without even leaving the car! Please note: the Zoo is not open to the public at this time. For the health of the staff and animals, all participants will be asked to stay in their cars at all times and will not be admitted inside of the Zoo. Face coverings are strongly encouraged any time your car window is open.

With more than 500 animals on 30 acres of land, and robust programs in the areas of conservation and science education, the Zoo is a pillar among cultural institutions in the Santa Barbara community. The Zoo typically has more than 15,000 member households and an average of more than 480,000 guest visits each year (more than any other local cultural institution). The Zoo is also the number one (paid) tourist attraction in Santa Barbara County, responsible for bringing in significant day-tourism revenues in support of the local economy.

The Zoo’s closure due to the coronavirus pandemic has created an abrupt and devastating interruption to their normal admissions driven revenues. The unrealized revenues that the Zoo is experiencing from the absence of attendance, no food and beverage or retail sales, no on-site education program fees, and no attraction or private and public event revenue, is greater than any revenue loss the Zoo has experienced in its 57-year history.

Additionally, the Zoo leadership made the difficult decision to lay off more than 100 part-time and full-time staff members in an effort to reduce the demand on limited resources. This decision was not made lightly and layoffs did not apply to the essential staff caring for the animals and other key staff members essential to continuing operations during the closure.

“These difficult decisions were all made in an effort to maintain the Zoo’s top priorities,” shared Rich Block, Santa Barbara Zoo President/CEO. “We remain dedicated to the health and welfare of the animals who reside at the Zoo, the safety of our employees working on-site, and the continued efforts to save local endangered and threatened wildlife.”

The Zoo had projected 2020 attendance through May to be 175,531 with revenues of \$5,587,301. So far this year, the Zoo attendance is 73,692 (through March) with revenues of \$1,763,794 (through February). With the Zoo closed, there is no chance to recover the difference through regular operation revenues, even if the Zoo were to reopen in June. The Zoo is currently relying on cash reserves and support from the community to continue to operate. With 97% of the annual budget relying on earned revenues from operations, this creates significant challenges for the Zoo.

“The Santa Barbara Zoo has served as a community anchor for over 50 years, and we want to continue serving the hundreds of thousands of families whose lives we touch every year,” shared Block. “With your support, we know we can get through this together.”

It costs approximately \$630,000 per month (on a contingency budget) to keep the current essential operations running at the Zoo. Many guests may not realize the cost alone to feed the animals is significant. For example, each week the penguin colony costs \$250 to feed, the five California condors cost \$150 to feed, and each giraffe costs \$70 to feed, the three otters cost \$120, the flamingo flock costs \$200 to feed, all turtles and tortoises cost \$150 to feed, and it costs \$1,200 each week for feeder insects alone, which are used to feed all types of animals. In all, the total weekly animal food bill is \$6,000.

The Zoo needs the community’s support now more than ever. The community is encouraged to show its support by making a donation to the **Santa Barbara Zoo Emergency Operations Fund** during this critical time of need. To make a donation online please [click here](#) or send a check (payable to “Santa Barbara Zoo”) to the attention of Elaine K. Mah Best at 500 Niños Drive, Santa Barbara, CA 93103. A heartfelt thanks go out to those supporters who have already made a contribution.

### **About the Santa Barbara Zoo**

Known as one of the world’s most beautiful zoos, the Santa Barbara Zoo is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to more than 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#) (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA endangered species programs for Masai giraffe, California condor, island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. As a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements. Visit [www.sbzoo.org](http://www.sbzoo.org).

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