



For Immediate Release  
May 24, 2017

## Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo Welcomes New Rhino

**MADISON, Wis.,** May 24, 2017 – Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo is now home to a new white rhinoceros, thanks to the community's generosity last November on "Giving Tuesday," a global day dedicated to giving back. "Harmon" the rhino arrived at the zoo this week and is getting settled in at the zoo's new and improved rhino exhibit.

"We are excited to welcome Harmon and continue our on-going contribution to rhino conservation efforts here at Henry Vilas Zoo," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "Henry Vilas Zoo has always been a community supported zoo, and we are so grateful to the community for helping us raise the funds to refurbish our rhino exhibit and help us bring a rhino back to the zoo."

In preparation for our new rhino, Henry Vilas Zoo made a number of improvements to the rhino exhibit. Outdoor space for the rhino to roam was increased 40%, the "mud wallow" was upgraded, and part of the yard once used for tapirs is now converted for rhino use. The air handling unit in the rhino building was also replaced.

"Conservation is a very important part of the zoo's mission, and we are proud to work so closely with AZA's White Rhinoceros SSP to provide a good home to Harmon," said Executive Zoo Director, Ronda Schwetz. "White rhinos are facing severe poaching issues in the wild, with only about 20,000 white rhinos currently in existence and we hope that guests will connect with Harmon and be inspired to help conserve his counterparts in the wild."

White rhinos are near threatened in the wild as the result of illegal poaching. Henry Vilas Zoo has a long history of rhino conservation, playing important roles in communicating the very serious poaching crisis that wild rhinos face, connecting guests with rhinos so they support rhino conservation efforts, and participating at the cutting edge of reproductive studies with world rhino experts. Young male rhinos are often solitary in the wild, and the Rhinoceros Species Survival Program (SSP) works very closely with Henry Vilas Zoo to recommend sending animals in need of a home at an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoo. One of the most important roles Henry Vilas Zoo has held for the white rhino population has been to provide a home to animals that are not in a breeding situation. By welcoming Harmon, a young male, to the zoo, the zoo is continuing its commitment to conservation.

Last November, the Friends of the Zoo raised more than \$21,000 with a \$10,000 matching gift from an anonymous donor on "Giving Tuesday" to support the arrival of a new rhino as well as the improvements to the zoo's existing rhino exhibit.

"We are pleased to welcome Harmon to the Henry Vilas Zoo after a successful Giving Tuesday fundraising campaign that helped to support his arrival," said Alison Prange, executive director of the Friends of Henry Vilas Zoo. "This is a powerful example of the zoo's leadership in conservation, and we are delighted to work with other AZA organizations to help save these majestic animals from extinction."