



J. Ryan McMahon, II
County Executive

Media Release

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Contact: Mark Nicotra (315) 435-3516 (County)
J Gramza (315) 435-8511 (Zoo)

County Executive Ryan McMahon Announces Name for Baby Elephant: Ajay

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – County Executive J. Ryan McMahon, II announced the winning name of the Asian baby elephant born at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo on January 15th. With more than 37% of the vote, the winning name was Ajay – pronounced “A-JYE” – which is a Sanskrit word meaning “Invincible.”

The winning name was submitted by Heather House of Hastings.

County Executive McMahon said, “Over 8,400 votes were cast, the support of the community is tremendous.” McMahon continued, “Ajay is a rambunctious, playful and happy baby who truly thinks he is “invincible” so Ajay is a truly fitting name”

The calf represents another great success for the zoo’s Asian Elephant program, which is one of only 30 facilities to care for Asian elephants and only 11 able to breed this critically endangered species.

County Executive McMahon said, “Our zoo is doing a fantastic job with endangered animals, and I am thankful to the elephant staff for all the dedication and care it took to bring this baby elephant into the world.”

Zoo Director Ted Fox said a name that means “Invincible” is fitting and it is the most precocious baby elephant the zoo’s elephant care team has ever seen.

Ajay began exploring his surroundings and leaving his mother’s side within hours of his birth, and using his trunk to pick up objects within weeks – something his older brother, Batu, took months to attempt.

Zoo Director Ted Fox said, “This little one is super curious and unafraid to try new things.” Fox continued, “He started walking away from his mother the day he was born and she has been chasing him ever since.”

The new baby is the offspring of female Asian elephant Mali, 22, and bull elephant Doc, 21. Their first calf, Ajay’s big brother Batu, will turn 4 on May 12, Mother’s Day.

Ajay is not yet on public view. He will be introduced into Asian Elephant Preserve once an expansion of the habitat is completed in late May.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is among 233 zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquarium (AZA), which requires the highest standards of animal care, wildlife conservation and guest education. AZA also oversees Species Survival Plans to maintain and increase the populations of endangered species. Ajay’s birth is part of the AZA’s SSP for Asian elephants.

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