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## Zoo finishes elephant campaign, honors Dalmath

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Staff writer

Seneca Park Zoo and Monroe County officials today announced that the zoo's Experience Great Things fundraising campaign reached its \$250,000 goal and next year workers will build a splash pool for the zoo's elephants.

Also, at a morning news conference at the zoo, 2222 St. Paul St., Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks announced that the county would create an observation area near the new pool to honor the late campaign Co-chairman Gabe Dalmath, who according to county and zoo officials "loved the zoo."

Dalmath, who served as campaign chairman with his wife, Jean, died in September.

"Helping make the zoo an even more popular destination for families and a great home for the animals meant a lot to Gabe," she said in a printed statement. "This was one of the last public service projects he was involved with. I know he would have been so touched and honored to be remembered for his work on behalf of the elephant exhibit and the Seneca Park Zoo."

The goal of the campaign was to raise \$250,000 to create a splash pool for the zoo's African elephants, Lilac and Genny C. The Experience Great Things campaign replaced the zoo's original fundraising effort to support Genny C's to-be-born calf. After the calf died before delivery in February, zoo and county officials renamed the effort.

"The splash pool will certainly be a great enhancement for the elephants," said Zoo Director Larry Sorel. "The ability to play in the splash pool will add variety to the elephants' lives and encourage natural behaviors."

The pool also gives visitors another opportunity to watch Lilac and Genny C in their habitat. And elephants love splashing in water, he noted.

The 50,000-gallon concrete pool — designed to look like an African water hole — will be located at the south end of the new elephant yard, about 15 feet away from zoo visitors, Sorel said. It will feature a sloping entrance that resembles a watering hole in the elephants' native environment.

The pool will be filled with about 5 feet of water, although plans call for pool walls to stand about 8 feet tall to create a sufficient barrier between visitors and the animals — and their waterlogged trunks, he said.

Construction is expected to begin by the early summer and should be completed by the fall, Sorel said.

"Gabe would be very pleased we have reached our goal, and grateful to all those who helped," Brooks said in a printed statement. "We too are grateful, for Gabe's work on this campaign and for all he did to make our community a better place."

The \$4.4 million exhibit, which opened to the public in April 2006, is about five times larger than the elephants' former habitat and includes a 10,000-square-foot shelter that can house up to five elephants, and a 20,000-square-foot yard. A 1,000-square foot viewing atrium was unveiled in September 2006.

The splash pool will be the final piece of the exhibit.

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