IT’S A BOY! THE SANTA BARBARA ZOO ANNOUNCES
BABY BOY GIRAFFE NAME TWIGA

Name means ‘giraffe’ in Swahili

(March 28, 2020) Santa Barbara, CA -- On Friday, March 27, The Santa Barbara Zoo’s Masai giraffe Adia gave birth to her first calf, a male measuring 6 feet tall and weighing in at 125.5 pounds. The baby giraffe has been named Twiga (pronounced TWEE-gah), which means ‘giraffe’ in Swahili, by the Zoo’s generous Foster Feeder Premier Naming Sponsors, the Hyatt Family (a local Santa Barbara family). Mother and son are healthy and doing well, bonding behind the scenes in the giraffe barn.

“This birth is special in so many ways,” said Dr. Julie Barnes, the Zoo’s Vice President of Animal Care and Health. “It’s always a joy to see a new life begin, but we think it’s especially meaningful right now as a beacon of hope and good news during these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Masai giraffes are listed as endangered due to the significant decline of this species in the wild in recent decades. The population under human care here in the U.S. is relatively small, and the Species Survival Plan manages the population to ensure that genetic diversity is maintained so that the population thrives, and each giraffe born at the Zoo is very important to this population and conservation of this species.”

The Zoo’s giraffe keepers who know Adia best will determine when the calf is ready to leave the giraffe barn. Until that time, Adia and the newborn calf will spend time bonding, behind the scenes. The public is encouraged to tune into the Zoo’s social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) for photos, videos and updates.

This is the first baby for mother Adia, age 5, and eighth for the father, Michael. The calf had its first medical exam today, where its height, weight, and general health was assessed by veterinarian Dr. Julie Barnes, the Zoo’s Vice President of Animal Care and Health.

Michael is the most genetically important male Masai giraffe in North America, as he is only related to his offspring. He was brought to the Zoo from Canada in December 2011 and has since sired eight calves. Five of the calves have moved to other accredited zoos as part of a cooperative breeding program among accredited members of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

The Santa Barbara Zoo’s Masai giraffe herd now numbers five with the addition of the new calf: Michael, Adia, Audrey, and her calf Amirah. (Amirah was scheduled to depart for the Sacramento Zoo as part of
the AZA breeding program, but her departure was delayed for weather and coronavirus concerns). Giraffe calves sired by Michael include Dane, now at Fresno Chaffee Zoo, 2013; Sunshine, now at Cameron Park Zoo, Waco, Texas, 2013; Buttercup, now at Oregon Zoo, 2014; Asha, deceased at Toledo Zoo following an accident, 2015; Parker, now at Seneca Park Zoo, Rochester, NY, 2016; Chad, now at Franklin Park Zoo, Boston, 2016; and Amirah, at Santa Barbara Zoo, 2018. The giraffes at the Zoo are among more than 120 Masai giraffes that live at 28 North American zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

### Support the Herd

The public also can help the Zoo welcome this long-necked arrival by becoming a Foster Feeder sponsor of the giraffe herd. A donation of $50+ helps with the cost of feeding the growing giraffe family. New giraffe Foster Feeders receive a baby photo of the calf along with a certificate, baby giraffe plush, giraffe fact sheet, and recognition on the Zoo’s Foster Feeder board. For information or to become a Foster Feeder, [click here](#).

### About Masai Giraffes

Last year, the International Union for Conservation of Nature announced Masai giraffes are endangered. There are an estimated 37,000 Masai giraffes in Kenya and Tanzania, but a more thorough census is required. They are at risk due to poaching and habitat loss and degradation. Giraffes are the tallest land mammal, and the Masai is the largest subspecies, growing up to 17 feet tall and weighing 2,700 pounds.

### 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).