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Special Giraffe Calf Born at the Zoo

May 15, 2019-- *Jacksonville, FL* – The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens welcomed an exciting addition to the Reticulated giraffe herd on Wednesday morning. The Zoo's 42nd giraffe calf was born at 5:40 a.m. to mother, Naomi.

Many will remember that the patriarch of the Jacksonville Zoo's giraffe herd, Duke, passed away in December 2018 at 21-years-old from age-related degenerative disease. At the time of his death, keepers were hoping that one or two of the females in the herd were pregnant. The birth of this youngster is a touching tribute to the high-profile bull who was so well-known by the Jacksonville community. This special calf is his 18th offspring.

"The arrival of our beloved Duke's son is an especially moving way to honor his amazing legacy. We're all looking forward to watching this little guy grow and develop", according to Dan Maloney, Deputy Zoo Director.

Keepers monitoring the overnight cameras noticed birth activity around 4:30 a.m., so they rushed to the Zoo to supervise the significant birth and make sure everything progressed smoothly. Zoo staffed was watching when the calf first stood up at 6:20 a.m. and were excited to see healthy nursing behavior at 7:11 a.m. Naomi is a calm and experienced mother with this being her 7th calf.

Veterinary staff examined the calf and determined it is a boy who appears to be in good health. He weighs 187 lbs. and is nearly 6'4" tall.

Naomi and the calf will be allowed to bond behind-the-scenes for a day and will probably spend the next two days in the side holding yard near the barn as the herd gets acquainted with the little one. Zoo officials expect the pair to be on exhibit with the rest of the herd by the weekend.

[Dropbox link to photos and video.](#)

About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. **The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and a portion of every ticket sold goes to the over 45 conservation initiatives Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens supports around the world, and here in NE Florida.** JZG is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.