



## Senior Giraffe Murphy Receives Specialized Care Plan

By Matt Provence

Schnecksville -- Murphy, a 20-year-old Masai giraffe at the Lehigh Valley Zoo, is directly benefiting the zoo's affiliation with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. This accreditation means the LV Zoo meets the highest standard of animal care. This encompasses everything from welfare, healthcare, husbandry, and training; and often means the animals exceed the life expectancies of their wild counterparts.

Care for the animals at all ages is of great importance, which means the senior citizens at the LV Zoo -- like Murphy -- receive tailored health plans to monitor any age-related health matters. Examples of Murphy's health care plan involve a significant amount of cooperative husbandry training. He is trained to do voluntary blood draws, hoof work, and even hoof x-rays. This helps the on-site veterinary team coordinate his care with his zookeepers. Recently, Murphy started showing signs of stiffness in one of his legs. His keepers and the veterinarians were able to quickly come up with a care plan to ensure Murphy was moving around comfortably. Part of this plan is giving Murphy time to rest in his "bedroom" off-exhibit. He is also having bloodwork more frequently to identify other health-related matters that need to be addressed. The zoo will continue to update staff and guests with ongoing changes in Murphy's care, along with its other senior citizens.

Murphy arrived at the LV Zoo in 2017 from Kansas City Zoo. He is beloved by many LV Zoo fans and is well known for his sweet, yet persistent, personality. Prior to giraffe feedings, he can often be found surveying the crowd (perhaps to see how many new friends and treats he will receive) and he is usually the first to the feeding deck.

The gentle giant is always happy to take any lettuce offered and, if lucky, you may even see an ear wiggle while he chomps on his food. Murphy is also an excellent student when it comes to training and a great teacher to his five-year-old pal, Tatu, who is learning to become an adult giraffe.

As part of the Species Survival Plan (SSP), Murphy and Tatu are important contributors to their species and help educate guests about conservation for Masai giraffes. Since the introduction of giraffe here, the LV Zoo has proudly contributed more than \$30,000 to their conservation in the wild by supporting the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF). GCF, giraffeconservation.org, is the only organization in the world that focuses solely on the conservation and management of this iconic animal in the wild throughout Africa. GCF works closely with many partners in Africa and internationally to ensure high priority for giraffe on national and regional conservation agendas by identifying and providing long-term conservation solutions for all giraffe populations in the wild. The LV Zoo is proud to provide a home for Murphy and Tatu and stand tall for giraffes as we support the future of the species.

The LV Zoo has returned to its normal in-season hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., seven days per week. Advance ticket purchases are required and available at [www.lvzoo.org](http://www.lvzoo.org). In addition to other safety protocols, masks are required by guests inside of the zoo except at designated food and beverage areas. To kick off its Earth Day celebration, the Zoo will host its first special event of the season, Party for the Planet, on Saturday, April 17, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. The event features live music, food trucks, wineries, adult beverages, animal mingles and more. Tickets to the event are on sale now here.

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