

**ESSEX COUNTY EXECUTIVE DIVINCENZO INVITES THE PUBLIC TO SHARE
THEIR LOVE OF ANIMALS AND BECOME VOLUNTEER DOCENTS AT
ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO**

West Orange, NJ – Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. announced that Essex County Turtle Back Zoo is recruiting volunteers for the 2017 Docent Class. Docents are volunteer educators who give educational talks, act as tour guides, and are stationed throughout the Zoo to provide information to visitors about the Zoo and its animal collection. This is a highly selective volunteer position and training is required.

“Our Docents help every visitor have an enjoyable and memorable experience at our zoo. Whether walking through our zoo grounds or making presentations in schools or at community events, our Docents are volunteer ambassadors who share their love and knowledge about animals and their habitats, and encourage the public to have respect for the environment,” DiVincenzo said. “If you love animals, we encourage you to attend the training course and become a Turtle Back Zoo Docent,” he added.

New Docents must be at least 18 years old and complete a seven-day course instructed by experienced TBZ staff. Training will begin on Sunday, February 12th and continue on Sundays through the end of March. There is a non-refundable fee of \$25 which covers training materials and handouts. The application for the class can be accessed at <http://turtlebackzoo.com/docent-volunteers/>.

If interested, please contact the Zoo’s Volunteer Coordinator at tbzdocents@yahoo.com or call 973-731-5800, ext. 306 for more information.

Regular hours for Turtle Back Zoo are daily from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Regular admission during the day is \$10 for children and senior citizens, \$12 for adults and free for children under 2 years. For additional information, please call 973-731-5800 or visit www.essexcountynj.org.

Revitalizing Essex County Turtle Back Zoo

Currently under construction is the Ronald J. Mount Lion and Hyena Exhibit, which is scheduled to open in the spring of 2017. Since taking office in 2003, DiVincenzo has spearheaded over \$75 million in upgrades to Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, which have included developing the African Adventure with four Masai giraffes; a new Educational Building; the Carousel with 33 figures of endangered animals; the Sea Lion Sound Exhibit with sea lions, sharks and sting rays; the Big Cat Country Exhibit with jaguars and cougars; Tam-ring Gibbons Reserve with white cheeked gibbons apes, Reeves muntjac and white naped cranes; Australian Exhibit that features kangaroos, wallabies, emus and over 500 birds in the Aviary; Reptile and Education Center, open air dining pavilion and playground, Penguin Exhibit, Otter Exhibit, Wolf Exhibit, Alligator Exhibit, North American Animal Exhibit, Black Bear Exhibit, Animal Hospital, Essex Farm Petting Zoo and South American Animal Exhibit; renovating the Food Pavilion for year-round use and making upgrades to the entrance as well as fencing and infrastructure to meet AZA requirements.

Funding has been provided through Green Acres grants, existing capital improvement bonds, or donations from the Zoological Society, Essex County Parks Foundation, corporations or private foundations. Corporations that have provided support include Investors Bank, Prudential Financial, Inc., Wells Fargo, PNC Bank, PSE&G, Verizon, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, Coca Cola, Capital One Bank, TD Bank, Aramark, Covanta Energy, Matrix Development Group and OxyMagic carpet cleaning.