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THANDI THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT MAKES HER *BIG* DEBUT

December 18, 2015 – Jacksonville, FL – On December 19, 2015, Thandi, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens' (JZG) newest African elephant, will make her public debut. The 34-year-old elephant arrived in Jacksonville on November 13 from The National Elephant Center in Fellsmere, FL. After a standard 30-day quarantine period, the animal caretakers at JZG gave her a clean bill of health and she is now ready to meet the other two elephants residing at the Zoo: Ali, a 25-year-old male and Sheena a 32-year-old female.

Thandi exhibits matriarchal traits and has developed into a leader when around other elephants. Though she is post-reproductive, she has been an excellent 'aunt' to elephant calves at other Zoos.

"With a new herd member, you have to let them show you when they are ready to be around the others. The elephants have approached each other in very positive ways, like using their trunks to touch each other's faces," says Corey Neatrou, Mammal Supervisor and Elephant Program Manager at JZG.

As the largest terrestrial animal, African elephants can stand 7-12 feet at the shoulder and weigh between 7,000 and 12,000 pounds. Thandi stands ten feet tall and weighs 8,400 pounds. Bull elephants can have tusks weighing over 135 pounds. Females, or cows, generally have smaller tusks.

Due to the worldwide demand for ivory, elephants are hunted throughout their range. To help combat their population decline, JZG supports the annual costs of an elite Wildlife Protection Unit (WPU) within Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park in southern Sumatra. The WPU patrols park boundaries, removes snares, arrests poachers and safeguards resident species including critically endangered Sumatran rhinos, tigers and elephants.

JZG invites guests to see Thandi in her new home on Saturday, December 19.

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 an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit JacksonvilleZoo.org.