



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE LIVING DESERT IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF A
FEMALE GIRAFFE CALF NAMED SHELLIE MUUJIZA**

PALM DESERT/INDIAN WELLS – (September 8, 2017) – On Sunday, August 27, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens welcomed a female giraffe calf to the herd - born to mother, Dadisi, and father, Hesabu. The female calf weighs in at 143 pounds and stands 5 feet 11 inches tall. The calf, officially named Shellie Muujiza, through a generous gift of \$50,000 by long-time supporter Harold Matzner, made her public debut in the giraffe habitat today. Shellie Muujiza was named in honor of Harold's life partner, Shellie Reade, and true to the giraffe's heritage, Muujiza mean 'miracle' in Swahili.

"We are excited to share the joyous news of our new addition, Shellie. Mother and calf are doing very well and guests have the thrilling opportunity to see them both beginning today," said Allen Monroe, President/CEO of The Living Desert. "While we continue to mourn the loss of Pona, our male giraffe who suddenly passed away in August, we find comfort in the new life that this giraffe calf brings to The Living Desert."

This is the seventh calf for mom, Dadisi, and ninth calf for father, Hesabu. Dadisi is 16 years old and has lived at The Living Desert since 2002; this is her second female calf. Hesabu is 16 years old and has lived at The Living Desert since 2002. The Living Desert is home to a herd of eight giraffe, five males and three females.

"I am proud to support The Living Desert and their important giraffe conservation efforts," said Matzner, who also named baby Harold, the giraffe born at The Living Desert on April 28, 2017. "It's a true pleasure to name two giraffe in their magnificent herd."

"Dadisi and her calf have bonded and are doing very well. The well-baby exam showed that all her vitals are within the normal range and she is progressing as expected," said RoxAnna Breitigan, Director of Animal Programs at The Living Desert. "We are grateful for Mr. Matzner's continued generosity and support of our giraffe herd. We look forward to seeing baby Harold and baby Shellie together on the savannah habitat."

Giraffe gestation is about 15 months. The calf will now nurse for nine to 12 months, and begin eating foliage at about four months. The first year of her life, she will double her size. Giraffe have their own individual spot-like markings and no two giraffe have the same pattern, similar to humans' unique fingerprints.

Currently listed by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as vulnerable, giraffe populations have declined up to 40% over the last 30 years. There are fewer than 98,000 giraffe in the wild. Native to southern and eastern Africa, major threats to giraffe population is habitat loss and fragmentation, civil unrest, and ecological changes.

Visitors can get up-close and personal with these majestic animals by participating in the giraffe feedings from 9:00 a.m. to noon daily. The cost is \$5 per person or \$4 for members. For more information, visit www.LivingDesert.org or call 760-346-5694

About The Living Desert:

The Living Desert is an AZA-accredited zoo and gardens that is dedicated to desert conservation through preservation, education and appreciation. It is a family-friendly place to explore nature and create meaningful

experiences for guests that are remembered for a lifetime. *For more information:* (760) 346-5694 or visit www.LivingDesert.org. The Living Desert is located at: 47900 Portola Avenue, Palm Desert, CA 92260.

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