



PHOTO CREDIT: ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO AT BURNETT PARK

Catering at the Zoo, the banquet facility at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnett Park, added a new exterior patio. The facility's renovation work also included improvements to the indoor banquet room, including new carpeting, paint, and chairs.

## Rosamond Gifford Zoo spruces up banquet facility, adds outdoor patio

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SYRACUSE — Crews are finishing work on Catering at the Zoo, the banquet facility at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnett Park.

The \$300,000 project included construction of a new, 2,400-square-foot outdoor patio and interior improvements on the 3,000-square-foot banquet room, says Janet Agostini, president and CEO of Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is the organization responsible for business operations, education programs, and fundraising on behalf of the zoo, according to its website.

Agostini spoke with CNYBJ on June 16.

The Zoo built the structure in the 1990s, and the organization felt it needed some renovation work, says Agostini.

She referred to the facility as "kind of worn and dated looking."

"We have clients with differing needs and so we wanted to make sure that we could meet their goals," she added.

When the Zoo hosts an event, Agostini says it reinvests any profits back into the Zoo, noting the organization refers to it as "catering with a cause."

Appel Osborne Landscape Architecture of Syracuse handled the design work for the patio space. It also used a series of subcontractors for the construction work.

Various other contractors handled the interior renovation work, including The Effect Group of Syracuse, which installed new

carpeting. The improvements also included new chairs, new paint, and work on the interior pillars.

"The interior renovation wasn't as extensive as the outside construction," Agostini notes.

The interior renovation started in November and continued through the winter months. Crews started the patio construction in November but stopped during the winter snowfalls before resuming work in March.

"We're expecting to have it completed by the end of [June]," she says.

The concluding work includes final planting and additional lighting.

Catering at the Zoo continued operations and hosted events, even as the renovation work continued, she says.

"For example, when we did the carpeting, we needed to have a week or 10 days where we didn't have any events scheduled, so we planned for that," she says.

A year-round facility, Catering at the Zoo is scheduled to host as many as 27 weddings in 2016, in addition to community events that the venue hosts.

Catering at the Zoo hosted 13 weddings and 171 catered events in 2015, the Zoo said in a June 2 email to CNYBJ.

The facility plans to host about 115 events from mid-June through the end of the calendar year. Altogether, Catering at the Zoo will have hosted at least 191 for the entire year.

Some of its corporate clients will host workshops or brainstorming sessions "because they just find the atmosphere so creative," says Agostini. ■

## Coming off a 2nd Place finish in the Best Companies to Work for in New York State, Syracuse based food distributor G&C Foods talks about Leadership, Culture and Expansion.



Incorporated in 1976 Syracuse based G&C Food Distributors is a food service re-distributor of fresh, frozen and dry foods.

Their headquarters on Walters Road in Van Buren is the home to almost 300 employees. The company has experienced rapid growth over the past decade primarily due to a stronger focus on their employees' satisfaction and development. In 2006 the company began to implement practices designed to help create a better culture throughout the entire organization. Through trial and error and a lot of persistence the company has aggressively grown and has a band of loyal and passionate employees helping to steer the way.

"We know our growth and success is because of our employees, plain and simple," states Richard Chapman, President of G&C Foods. "Without our employees and their willingness to take risks, make empowered decisions, and think creatively, G&C Foods would not have been able to withstand the immense increase in our business."

Rich Chapman (pictured right) became president of G&C Foods in January of 2016 but has decades of experience in food distribution and manufacturing. It was G&C Food's attention to their employees and their focus on their culture that attracted Chapman to the company in 2009.



"Over my tenure at G&C I've watched employees and myself develop, departments grow into teams and our operations become increasingly more efficient and strategic. It's been an absolute pleasure being a part of the growth of this company. I've had a lot of experience in this industry over the last three decades but there is no company that does it like G&C. And to make it even more satisfying, we are a fun place to work."

The company's 57 acre campus includes a gym, air hockey table, badminton courts, horseshoe pits, nap rooms and a PlayStation 4. "We set very high expectations for our employees, and they always produce results. We want to show them how much we appreciate their efforts. We provide a competitive compensation and benefits program as well as an atmosphere that is fun and enjoyable," comments Sara Johnson, Director of Organizational Development.

"We are an employer of choice, not just in our industry but in Central New York and we take a lot of pride in knowing that we are contributing to the success of this community," states Chapman.

G&C's facility is over 270,000 square feet and houses over 4000 products from shelf stable grocery items to fresh and frozen protein. G&C distributes to independent distributors and retailers in 27 states. Their footprint includes the coast from Maine to Florida and as far West as Wisconsin. Their niche is their ability to deliver product "next day" which can pose challenges for their transportation and logistics teams. But the reward to their customers makes the challenges worth it. "We are not afraid of hard work; it is what keeps us focused on our customer's business needs."

And the company is not afraid to take some risks either. In early fall of 2016, G&C Foods will add a new frozen fruit and vegetable manufacturing line to their repertoire. "This is a new territory for us but one that we know will bring new jobs, new adventures and new challenges. We are hoping to be able to provide a new service to our current customers as well as gather new business throughout the industry with this manufacturing line."

For more information about G&C Foods check out their story at [www.gcfods.com](http://www.gcfods.com)

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