It takes a village.....

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Our Mission
The Center for Great Apes’ mission is to provide a permanent sanctuary for orangutans and chimpanzees who have been rescued or retired from the entertainment industry, from research, or from the exotic pet trade. The Center provides care with dignity in a safe, healthy, and enriching environment for great apes in need of lifetime care.
Message from the Founder

The Center for Great Apes was established 22 years ago for the simple purpose of providing a permanent home for a few orangutans and chimpanzees kept at a Miami tourist attraction. Today—it has grown far beyond our dreams. We’ve accepted over 50 great apes for permanent lifetime care who have come to the Center from circuses, the Hollywood entertainment business, university research labs, closed-down roadside attractions, and private homes (kept in backyards, garages, and basements).

With your help and support, we’ve witnessed amazing changes in the lives and health of so many of our residents... especially those who were kept alone for years, even decades, never having seen another one of their own species until they arrived at our sanctuary.

Clyde, now 49, arrived here four years ago after spending 45 years alone in a tiny cage inside a garage. He was in such poor health when he arrived that it seemed he might not live much longer. But today, Clyde lives very happily and playfully with another elder, Toddy -- the first chimp he’s been with since he was stolen from his mother in Africa nearly 50 years ago! These two dear old souls are devoted to each other and sit quietly together, sometimes even playing a slow game of “chase”.

And Katie, who arrived two years ago after spending 18 years alone in a tiny closet-sized indoor cage also had many social, nutritional, and health issues. She ate canned foods and sweets most of her life and didn’t know how to interact with other chimpanzees. Now, Katie is eating a healthy diet of fruits and vegetables and lives in a group with 4 other former pet chimpanzees. She adores her chimp friend Murray, and Casey is her best friend! This is huge for a chimpanzee who never learned to socialize with other chimps.

We continue to be asked to take in other great apes needing lifetime care, but we cannot accept those who we don’t have room for. So, as we’ve done so many times in the past, we have made plans again to expand our facilities in order to provide compassionate care for other orangutans and chimpanzees in need of a home.

Our plan includes a new orangutan nighthouse with attached outdoor habitats; a new chimpanzee nighthouse with a large, open-top outdoor grassy area; expansion of our veterinary clinic to meet the needs of our aging and growing residents; an education center to be able to better serve students and visitors who want to learn more about the issues that face great apes; and a larger nutrition and diet prep building (just completed this year!).

As we work to raise the funds to meet these needs, there will be naming opportunities for the buildings and facilities planned for expansion. And along with the new areas, we are also “growing” our endowment fund for long term sustainability. We’re excited about the coming years and the wonderful opportunities to connect with our supporters and help great apes!

Thank you for all you do to support the Center’s mission and work!

Patti Ragan
Smith Nutrition Center

Honoring Maurice, Ethel, and Greta Smith

The first phase of our new expansion was finished at the end of 2014 just in time for our members to visit it at our annual Holiday Open House in December. This beautiful new diet prep kitchen and food storage area allows our nutrition team to store produce in a safe spacious cooler and provides plenty of work space for our diet prep volunteers. (And we always can use help with 44 individual daily diets!)

Thank you to our generous and thoughtful friend and donor, Greta Smith, for underwriting this facility where we can adequately provide nutritious meals for all the apes at CGA. What’s more, as we expand, we have plenty of space to feed more great apes.

Sprucing Up the Facilities

Because we live in a tropical climate, facility upkeep is a constant activity for our maintenance team. Painting the outdoor habitats, nighthouses, and aerial trailway chutes...as well as handling leaky roof repairs, electrical & plumbing issues, and keeping the heavily wooded habitat and grounds neat and safe keeps our team of four maintenance workers busy.

So, when our friends and members Dr. & Mrs. Howard Sheridan offered to buy materials and donate contractor labor for several months to handle some special projects, we were thrilled to have this opportunity! So many projects have been accomplished this year. Two of the laundry rooms by the ape nighthouses were doubled in size to accommodate shelving and more equipment needed by the caregiver staff. Our two main bridges over the creek were rotting and falling apart, so they were completely replaced, and a third new bridge was added near the orangutan area. The historic 50-year-old guest cottage was gutted and all walls, flooring and tile were replaced, the intern house was updated with tile flooring and new bathroom fixtures, and several leaky roofs in our offices and classroom were repaired. We are so grateful for this wonderful help which didn’t cost CGA a penny, allowing us to use more of our donated funds directly for the apes. And the Center is looking lovely!
Staff Notes

Our staff members are amazing in their devotion and commitment to helping our great ape residents. Their work is physical in hot & humid weather, and it’s exhausting. But they do a wonderful job taking care of the orangutans and chimpanzees as well as the facilities at the Center.

One special staff member, Thom “Hippy” Kainz, has been the CGA maintenance supervisor for ten years. In 2005, he answered our ad in a local paper for Feed Room help preparing diets for the apes. But when we found out that he already had 40 years of experience as a welder & machinist, as well as electrical and plumbing experience, he was moved right away to manage the maintenance team! Hippy is retiring his full-time position here this summer to travel the country with his wife on their motorcycles. We’re not saying “goodbye” as we expect to see him back here for special part-time projects! But we are saying “Thank you Hippy” for a job well-done over the past decade.

We couldn’t have made the progress we’ve made for 22 years without the help of our dedicated and hard-working volunteers! From the first days of starting the Center in Miami, we had a team of very dedicated volunteers who helped us every step of the way. And, some of those first volunteers twenty years ago still work as volunteers today to help CGA and our apes.

Special recognition and thanks to these “volunteer veterans” who have been working for and contributing to the Center for Great Apes for the past 20 years: Sally & Charlie Carlion, Laura & Eric Shroyer, Marilyn Magill, Pat Kelly, Karen Maciag, Lynn Messner, Eddie Lorenzo, Laura Jack, Jeff Guerra, Kerry Keeler, Kevin Carmichael, and Bill Steckley.

And much gratitude to these volunteers who have helped us for the past 10 to 18 years: Debbie Machamer, Linda Cory, Patrick Harris, Sarah Smith, JoAnn Haut, Melanie Bond, John Gill, Ricca DuCharme, Jenn Sharpe, Lucie Easley, Natasha Bravo, and Mary Ann Radscheid.

Many dozens more volunteers are part of our team. They help us on a weekly to monthly basis doing everything from leading educational tours, helping in the nutrition center, doing ape laundry, helping the caregivers clean habitats, gardening and grounds work, building enrichment materials, maintaining our library, and many other duties.

Volunteer classes are held twice a year in February and September. If you have some time to give and would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities, please email our Volunteer Coordinator, Joy Hernandez at joy@centerforgreatapes.org

We couldn’t do this without our wonderful volunteers!

Our volunteers at the Holiday Open House
Stryker is very special to us because he is the only great ape at the sanctuary who was actually raised by his own chimp family. He was named after our friend Jon Stryker, Founder of the Arcus Foundation, who helped to support the care of the Hollywood apes after they arrived at the Center for Great Apes.

**Baby Stryker** was just six weeks old when he arrived from California in 2005. When the Hollywood trainer made the courageous decision to stop working great apes in entertainment, and sent all of his 16 chimpanzees and 6 orangutans to the Center for Great Apes for permanent retirement, he didn’t know that Jessie was about to deliver a baby boy a few weeks before the trip across country. But Stryker arrived delaying the sending of the chimpanzees a few weeks until it was safe for him to travel with his mother.

When we first saw him, his ears were as big as his head! He looked like he could fly with them, but he was a special treasure for our staff and the chimpanzees. His mother Jessie took good care of him (although her first two babies were pulled from her so she had no experience raising an infant), and her mother Oopsie and sister Boma helped her raise the baby. Oopsie and Boma had no experience either since all their infants were taken from them too. However Stryker was doted on by his mother, aunt, and grandmother, and as he grew, he had lots of adult male supervision (and play) from Sam, Bubbles, and Ripley.

Jessie often over-groomed baby Stryker, and for years he was practically bald. Now, at age 10, as he begins his adolescence, he weighs more than his mother and spends more time away from her. His hair has returned... and he’s finally grown into his ears! He’s become quite a handsome fellow. As is true of many young chimpanzees his age, he’s a bit of a brat, teasing the girls and sometimes aggravating the adult males as he tests the limits of his strength, power, and the others’ tolerance of his shenanigans.

Stryker now moves among three chimpanzee groups at the sanctuary in a fission/fusion social arrangement. When his family’s patience is running short, he will spend time in the teenage group of six chimpanzees headed by the twins Jonah & Jacob. He has fun with the younger, livelier group, but they also soon tire of his teasing and trouble-making. He then moves on for a playdate with Murray in a third group and is learning to interact with others there. Each group has about a two-week tolerance level of his antics, but they are always happy see him again. Stryker seems to love having so many chimpanzee friends as he continues to learn about chimpanzee manners and proper behavior from all of them. We think giving him varied social experiences now will help him become a dominant male and successful leader of a group.
Artists’ Gifts

Over the years we’ve been fortunate to have some very talented artists and fine photographers who were inspired by our orangutans and chimpanzees. Wonderful works of art (sculptures, paintings, drawings, and photographs) have been donated to the sanctuary to help with our fundraising efforts. One particular artist, Sue Buck, has embarked on a multi-year project to draw large pastels (3’ x 4’) of each one of our sanctuary residents. To date, Sue has completed beautiful pastel drawings of 23 of our apes, including the two covers on this report. Sue Buck is retiring as an art professor at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, and her lovely drawing of Denyse is now part of the art department’s permanent collection.
Member Events:
Your Opportunity to Visit the Orangutans and Chimpanzees

Twice a year, in the spring and again in December, we open our doors to our members for an opportunity to visit so they can meet the Center’s amazing orangutans and chimpanzees to see who they are supporting, and why it’s so important. Stroll the sanctuary grounds, listen to a caregiver talk, find special treasures in our silent auction, and shop at the ape art table.

Invitations are mailed out to current members four weeks before the events, so don’t forget to renew your membership!

Endangered: Art4Apes

This wonderful art competition benefiting the Center for Great Apes was started two years ago by art lovers and environmentalists who believe that art in all forms can reach people and win hearts and minds for the cause of preserving life and the environment. The annual event, Endangered: Art4Apes, is a juried art competition held each year from February to October with cash prizes in each category. In addition to showcasing some very beautiful art, this event has raised awareness of endangered animals, plants, and ecosystems. To view some of the wonderful art submitted in the past years, check out the Facebook page Endangered: Art4Apes. For more information on entries and the competition, go to www.art4apes.com.

Great Ape Guardian Donor Walls

A beautiful way to have permanent recognition as part of the Center is with a tile on our guardian donor walls. Glazed tiles with donor names and photos of our great apes are permanently arranged on display along the walking paths. These tiles make a lovely gift in honor of someone, or as a special tribute in memory of loved ones. The 4” x 4” tiles begin at the $1,000 gift level and go up to 12” x 12” sizes. We are so appreciative of all the support and help to run the Center, and this is one way for us to show it.

We are excited to announce that we have reached our goal of 100% participation from our staff in donating to the capital campaign. Funds raised in this campaign will be used for expanding the Center’s facilities. A huge thank you to our staff members who are all so dedicated to the respectful care of our residents.

Save the Dates!
2015 Holiday Open House
Saturday, December 12, 2015

Spring Member Day
Saturday, April 2, 2016.

“Louie and the Coconut” by James Fox
Ape Ambassadors

A fun outreach program at the Center for Great Apes was started by one of our fans and supporters. Nine-year-old Scout Dingman founded Ape Ambassadors in 2014 for young people in order to provide kids with an opportunity to make a difference. Scout first began raising funds for the Center for Great Apes on her 6th birthday asking her friends to donate to the sanctuary instead of giving her birthday presents. With the support of her friends, school, and family, Ape Ambassadors has moved from an idea to a crew of kids around the country who want to make a positive impact! In addition to holding fundraisers at their schools, the members continue to explore new ways to raise funds and awareness for the Center for Great Apes.

For more information, please visit www.apeambassadors.com

What is Ape-ology?

Ape-ology is a new and popular outreach program at the Center. This two-hour bi-monthly workshop focuses on specific areas around protecting and caring for orangutans and chimpanzees. Held in our classroom at the Center, it’s limited to 30 participants because of space. Recent Ape-ology presentations have focused on natural behaviors of each species, diets of the apes both in the wild and at the sanctuary, and great ape conservation issues. Topics in the coming year will be about: health care of the apes at the Center; in-depth histories of some of the CGA residents; communication among the apes; specific husbandry training for health care; and enrichment activities provided for the apes.

Each Ape-ology session consists of an educational presentation and a special opportunity to observe the apes and talk with their caregivers. The workshops are becoming more popular each time we do them with many participants returning for the next one! In 2016, they will be held once a month. For more information on Ape-ology or to sign up for a class, please visit www.centerforgreatapes.org/how-you-can-help/education-and-outreach/ or email outreach@centerforgreatapes.org.
Leaving a Legacy through Endowment

Rich Strehl, Director of Development

At the Center for Great Apes, we strive to offer multiple ways for our supporters to contribute to our mission. We continue to research popular donation avenues utilized nationwide and globally by other reputable nonprofit organizations in order to find the best fit for our donors’ interests.

Donors may contribute to our general operating fund, our expansion fund, or our endowment fund. Donations can be made today or as a legacy gift through a will or trust. We also have opportunities for planned giving gifts where our supporters can help the apes in the future through annuities, life insurance, and real estate.

One giving opportunity that remains attractive to many donors is the ability to leave a gift that will continue to benefit the organization long after their lifetime. The Center for Great Apes has an endowment account for this very purpose. Donors who want to leave a perpetual gift can give a financial gift to the Center’s endowment account. All donations made to this account are intended to remain there indefinitely, and CGA will only withdraw a portion of the interest earned from this account each year.

We recognize the important balance between the need for financial support today compared to the importance of securing a future for great apes. Donors can leave a perpetual gift to our endowment account while choosing how the funds are to be used. Donations given in this manner are considered “restricted gifts”. For example, a gift can be left with the restriction of using the funds only for animal care. The specific desires of the donor can be outlined when opening an account.

The Center for Great Apes’ endowment account is at the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay. The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay is home to over $180,000,000 and 141 non-profit organizations like the Center have accounts there. The community foundation meets all of the national standards for United States Community Foundations.

To learn more about giving to the Center for Great Apes in a way specific to your wishes, please contact our development office at (863) 767-8903 x 222 or email legacy@centerforgreatapes.org.
Denyse 1969-2015

Denyse, our lovely “grande dam” chimpanzee passed away March 31st from kidney disease that had progressed to kidney failure. At 46 years, Denyse was one of our great ape elders, coming from a private pet owner where she spent more than 30 years in a tiny backyard cage, never knowing that she was a chimpanzee. When she first arrived at the sanctuary, Denyse had many health problems from decades of junk food, cigarettes, and beer. It took many, many months to get her on a healthy diet (and off of beer). Denyse had years of better health here. She was quite attached to her human caregivers and had many friends at the Center. While sanctuary work helping great apes like Denyse can be so rewarding and heartwarming, it is also heartbreaking when we lose them. The essence and memory of Denyse’s intelligence, humor, and happy disposition will always be part of the Center. It’s hard to forget someone who gave you so much to remember.

What we have once enjoyed we can never lose, All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.
Helen Keller

Sadly, we also had to say goodbye in 2014 to some of our devoted members and friends. We are grateful to those who included the Center in their estate planning providing for the future care of the apes. We are also grateful to their families for thoughtfully asking for donations to the Center for Great Apes in lieu of flowers and in memory of their loved ones.

Alex McConnell Dr. William Calvert
Cynthia Kirby Merrie Metzger
Kenneth Garrison Edward Schnepf
Marcia Douthwaite

In Loving Memory