FOUNDER’S MESSAGE

As we work each day to fulfill our mission of providing lifetime care for great apes in need of a permanent home, there are so many activities, demands, chores, people, and parts that make this organization successful. Our caregivers have the front-line duties of providing clean environments, daily feeding, frequent health checkups, and enriching activities for our primate residents. They monitor social “disagreements” as well as facilitate happy introductions of new apes. They are responsible for doing all this with safety foremost, and they continually communicate with our ape care manager, our nutrition coordinator, and our veterinarian.

Our capable maintenance team have the responsibility of keeping all plumbing, septic, electrical, and ventilation systems working, as well as handling the constant daily repairs and upkeep needed not only to the apes’ habitats, nighthouses, and aerial tunnel system… but also to the offices, veterinary clinic, nutrition center, and workshop.

All their work is supported by our office staff members who order supplies and materials, handle the insurance, accounting, and budgeting; recruit and coordinate our helpful volunteers; connect with the public in outreach, social media and educational activities; manage membership and events; … and most importantly, raise the funds to do the work we do to help and protect great apes.

And I as the founder, along with our dedicated board of directors, oversee and manage these activities to keep the Center running smoothly and provide the best care environment that we possibly can for the apes.

So with all this wonderful help… what do I worry about? Well, the health and well-being of the apes and the safety of our staff and volunteers are the highest priority. I also keep a watchful eye on the weather – i.e. hurricanes in the summer!! But a constant weight is whether there is sufficient funding to do the good work we do each day as well as to care for these apes in future decades – long after I retire.

We are all very thankful for the wonderful members and supporters who help us with yearly contributions, memberships, and special gifts that actually provide funding for our daily operations, so vital to the sanctuary. And, I am especially grateful to those of you who have thought of our orangutans and chimpanzees long into the future by including the Center in your estate planning and legacy giving. It means the world to these apes – and those still to come – to have future funding for their care established now.

We couldn’t do any of the things we do to help these apes without you!

I hope to see you at our spring Member Day on April 2nd!

Patti Ragan

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; to educate the public about captive great apes and the threats to conservation of great apes in the wild; and to advocate for the end of the use of great apes as entertainers, research subjects, and pets. The Center provides care with dignity in a safe, healthy, and enriching environment for great apes in need of lifetime care.
MEMBER DAY VISITORS

December’s Holiday Open House was a beautiful day with perfect weather. Over 700 CGA members and new friends joined us to stroll the sanctuary grounds and watch the apes open their holiday gifts. We love to see our supporters at the two open house Member Days each year held in the spring and in December, and we’re very happy that so many of our members joined us for the day in December. A special “thank you” to Teresa Aruza who once again provided us with lovely music.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the next event (our Spring Member Day) on Saturday, April 2, 2016. Invitations will be mailed to current members in early March… so please renew your membership now with the enclosed membership envelope!

OUR TEAM

Our board members, staff members, and volunteers are dedicated, hard-working enthusiasts who devote much time to caring for the apes, maintaining the sanctuary facilities, educating about and advocating for orangutans and chimpanzees, and raising the funds to do the work we do for them. But none of our work for great apes would be possible without the support of our wonderful members! Thank you from all of us!
NEW FRIENDSHIP FOR SPECIAL CHIMPS

When Clyde passed away in November, many people asked us how his devoted companion Toddy was coping. We’re glad to report that Toddy has done well, but due to a few age-related physical issues (arthritis and lack of balance), it’s risky to return her to the 4-story-tall domes with her original group of adolescents and young adults. However, some of those younger chimpanzees (especially Noelle) visit Toddy frequently for overnight visits and playdates in our special-needs habitat suited to Toddy’s limitations.

Also, Toddy has made a new friend. Knuckles, the 16-year-old chimpanzee with cerebral palsy, has physical challenges of his own and has shared the special needs nighthouse with Toddy and Clyde for a few years. But he had his own separate area. Now, Toddy and Knuckles are gradually learning to interact with each other in the same space. What a pair they are! Both slow-moving and slightly off-balance, they seem to be well-matched. Toddy and Knuckles are cautious and careful around each other, but are beginning to relax with Toddy appropriately “head-bobbing” in playful gestures to Knuckles.

APE-OLOGY

The Center for Great Apes has a special educational opportunity called Ape-ology. Ape-ology workshops allow participants to expand their knowledge about great apes and the Center’s residents with topical talks and unique opportunities to visit the sanctuary. Workshops begin with a classroom presentation followed by a visit “in the field” to certain areas of the sanctuary. During each monthly workshop, participants have the chance to learn about a different topic related to great apes. In previous workshops, attendees have visited our veterinary clinic, watched a husbandry and healthcare training session, learned about diet preparation in the nutrition center, observed feeding of the apes, celebrated individual ape birthdays, and visited one-on-one with the caregivers who know the Center’s great ape residents the best.

Ape-ology has grown in popularity over the past year, but the classes are limited to 30 people per session, so we recommend registering early. When each workshop is full, names will be added to a waiting list. Workshops are $25 for current members and $30 for non-members, and run 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM. For more information or to register for a workshop, please contact Education and Outreach Coordinator Lauren Gosik at 863-767-8903 ext. 222 or email Outreach@CenterforGreatApes.org.

Ape-ology workshop schedule for 2016:
March 12th: What Can Apes Teach You About Nutrition? (Nutrition)
April 2nd: Annual Member Event (No Ape-ology)
May 14th: How Do Apes Speak? (Communication/Behavior) New Workshop!
June 11th: The Plights of Our Closest Cousins (Conservation)
July 9th: A Day in the Life of a Great Ape Caregiver (Caregivers) New Workshop!
August 13th: Are You as Healthy as an Orangutan? (Healthcare)
September 10th: The Scoop on Palm Oil New Workshop!
October 8th: The Start of CGA (History)
November 12th: Current Status of Captive Great Apes New Workshop!
December 10th: Holiday Open House (No Ape-ology)
CAREGIVER CORNER: “Pebbles”

Orangutan Caregiver Carissa Alvarez talks about what it's like to work with 15-year-old Pebbles.

"Although Pebbles is the youngest female orangutan at the sanctuary, she is fearless! She can often be seen rolling down the chute system inside a plastic barrel… or running full speed into the night house and flying into a hammock. She is an excellent fisher and very innovative with her tool use. Once, she used a hollow rubber bungee cord (intended for swinging) as a straw to get water out of a bottle. Pebbles is also a “fashionista” in her own sense. She’ll drape her blankets like scarves around her neck, put t-shirts on (usually inside out and backwards), and even wrap browse leaves around her body and eat them at her leisure.

But one of my favorite things about working with Pebbles is how she meets me first thing each morning. With her beautiful orange hair still sticking straight up on top of her head, she always greets me with a playful squeak and is ready to investigate what color of nail polish I'm wearing. She’ll point to my pockets hoping this time she’ll be lucky enough to find a treasure I can share with her. I am honored to not only be able to work with Pebbles every day, but to call her my friend."

VOLUNTEER CLASSES

Do you want to get involved with the Center and help in tangible hands-on ways?

There are many things volunteers help us with at the sanctuary including: diet and enrichment preparation, habitat maintenance (cleaning!), ape laundry, office mailings, grounds maintenance, and gardening in our vegetable garden.

If you are interested in volunteering at CGA, please join our volunteer class sessions. The classes are held twice a year in January and July, and run for three consecutive weekends. Volunteer trainees will learn more about great apes, diet and nutrition, health protocols, and general information regarding the sanctuary. After completing the three classes, volunteer trainees will continue training one-on-one to learn even more about the sanctuary grounds, protocols, and great ape residents. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or learning more about the classes, contact our Volunteer Coordinator Joy Hernandez at 863-767-8903 ext. 230 or email Volunteer@CenterforGreatApes.org.

Our volunteers are vital in helping us provide a high level of services to our primate residents and programs for our members. We appreciate the hard work and dedication of each and every one of our volunteers at the Center for Great Apes!
IN MEMORIUM
Clyde 1966-2015

Our dear sweet Clyde epitomized the healing work of a sanctuary in his remarkable turn-around after arriving at the Center for Great Apes years ago in very poor condition. Even though this African-born chimpanzee was kept without sunlight for 45 years inside an Ohio garage, Clyde rebounded at the sanctuary with love, space, sunshine, healthy food, and special chimpanzee companionship with our beautiful elder Toddy. But his advanced age of nearly 50 as well as decades of poor nutrition finally caught up with him a few months ago. We all fell in love with Clyde, and our staff gave him compassionate and respectful care right to the end.

We also remember those devoted members and friends who passed recently. We are grateful to them not only for their dedicated support over the years, but also to those who included the Center for Great Apes in their estate planning as well as to the families who thoughtfully suggested donations to the Center in memory of their loved ones.

Linda Amerson  John Flowers  Richard Hensley
Nancy Smith  Gerald Sugarman  Carol Weerts

BUILDING AGAIN

We’re once again under construction as we expand into our adjoining orange grove property to build a new chimpanzee nighthouse. With more chimpanzees being released from research labs and entertainment, we’re working to be ready to accept some of those who will need a sanctuary home in the near future. In December, we received a generous offer to help with this project from an anonymous donor who said if we could match her $50,000 with donations from our members by January 31st, she would send an extra $10,000. So, we did it! We’re truly grateful for this amazing gift and so happy that our supporters and friends stepped up to help CGA meet this matching goal and receive the $10K bonus! So, let the tractors roll and the buzz-saws buzz!

CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

The ENDANGERED Art & Photography Contest will open on February 8th. This is an online juried art contest which runs each year for paintings, drawings, sculpture, wearable art, and photography all on the theme of “endangered”. Artwork may be entered from February to October 2016. Winners receive cash prizes and a place in the exhibition during Art Basel Week in Miami. Entries are featured on the Art4Apes’ Facebook page, website, and other social media. All proceeds benefit the Center for Great Apes.

Some of the most beautiful art has been in the past three years’ events, and you can see the entries on the ENDANGERED: Art4Apes website (www.art4apes.com) and also on the ENDANGERED:Art4Apes Facebook page.

This painting of our orangutan Pongo by artist Audrey Mason was a favorite in the 2015 show!
Save the Date!
Annual Spring Member Event
April 2, 2016
12:30 - 3:30 PM
Current members will receive their invitations in the mail soon, so please make sure your membership is up to date and join us for a visit!

Drawing by Phil Herman

Check out our Social Media sites!

Facebook: Follow us on Facebook
Twitter: Follow us on Twitter
Instagram: Follow us on Instagram
YouTube: Watch us on Youtube

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