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, from the exotic pet trade, or from other situations where great apes need rescue and lifetime care. The Center provides care with dignity in a safe, healthy, and enriching environment for all sanctuary residents.
FOUNDER'S ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE

It started with love for one little orangutan. My intention to volunteer to take care of him for only a couple of months has turned into more than three decades of devotion and care. Pongo, who was only four weeks old when his owner asked me to care for him for a "short time", is now a very handsome 33-year-old, mature male.

After volunteering to take care of other infant orangutans and chimpanzees at a tourist attraction in Miami...my future became clear. I wanted to provide sanctuary care for orangutans and chimpanzees who could not be accepted by accredited zoos or sent into the wild. So in 1993, the Center for Orangutan and Chimpanzee Conservation, Inc. (now known as the Center for Great Apes) was established.

Thirty years have gone by in a flash, and the Center has accepted more than 85 great apes while building a world-class sanctuary along the way. CGA is now one of the oldest accredited sanctuaries for chimpanzees and is the only accredited sanctuary in the Americas for orangutans. The Center for Great Apes has earned the coveted top Four-Star rating with Charity Navigator for over a decade.

Our accomplishments and progress have been because of our supporters. The devotion and support of our members, donors, volunteers, staff, and board members have moved the Center’s growth and success to a point that far exceeded my dream of a lifelong sanctuary for just “a few” chimpanzees and orangutans.

Today, many of our early youngsters are mature adults. Many of the adults who arrived are now elderly, enjoying the remaining years of their lives. And, always in our hearts are those whom we dearly miss... Grub, Toddy, Sammy, Jonah, Knuckles, and each one of our other precious residents who have passed.

However, more will still need sanctuary care, so we continue to do our work. And we ask for your continued support to help the Center for Great Apes provide for the future care of those who are here now as well as other great apes who will need a home.

A most heartfelt thank you for helping us help great apes,

Patti Ragan
Founding Director
SANCTUARY EXPANSION UPDATE

It seems like we’ve been under construction for the past 26 years... and we have! Having just finished a major new chimpanzee area in 2021 to accommodate the new group of chimps from a Missouri breeder as well as a group from the Wildlife Waystation in Los Angeles, we did not sit and rest.

Another new chimp nighthouse and outdoor area was started immediately in late 2021. However, this newest project has taken more than twice the time that was expected due to material shortages, contractor delays, greatly increased costs, staff shortages, and just getting through the pandemic. What was expected to take eight months has actually taken nearly two years!

However, with the generous support of Laurie McGrath and The McGrath Family Foundation, the new nighthouse for chimpanzees is finally completed. With the gift of three geodesic PrimaDomes donated by Jungle Island in Miami (refurbished here and connected together to make a larger habitat), the outside areas are completed with interior climbing structures being installed now. Nearly three hundred feet of aerial trailways have been added to connect this new area to the rest of the sanctuary’s twelve chimpanzee habitats.

This summer, with generous donations from Dr. Howard and Brenda Sheridan and J.D. Thornton Nurseries, several large Live Oak trees were planted around the new area to provide some much-needed shade for the habitats.

Our chimps have watched the ongoing construction of this recent project and seem as excited as we are to move chimpanzees to the new area.

Still to be done....

New nighthouse space for orangutans has also been added, and older indoor and outdoor habitats are under renovation with updates to accommodate all our 27 orangutans and others who might arrive. With generous donations from The McGrath Family Foundation, the Leslie A. Alexander Foundation, Pamela Walker, Jerry & Mary Freisinger, Robert McKean, and the Easley Foundation, work is underway and expected to be completed by the end of this year.
CHIMPANZEE INTRODUCTIONS

COMPANIONSHIP FOR JEETER

Jeeter spent his first 30 years as an entertainer and family pet in Palm Springs, California. However, as he grew, he became more difficult to handle, so Jeeter was moved to the Wildlife Waystation in Los Angeles just a year before the facility was permanently closed down. The staff at the Waystation tried to introduce Jeeter to other chimpanzees, but he did not have much experience with chimpanzees, and the introductions did not go well. So, Jeeter lived alone at the Waystation until he arrived at the Center for Great Apes in November 2021, along with a group of seven former research chimpanzees.

When Jeeter first arrived at the Center, he immediately bonded with his caregivers but was intimidated by the chimps around him. After allowing Jeeter to take his own time to feel secure in his new home, his caregivers began the process of introducing Jeeter to other chimpanzees at the sanctuary.

Maggie, a former entertainment chimp, was his first new friend. Initially, Jeeter was awkward in his greeting and seemed confused about how to behave. He didn’t understand Maggie’s overtures, but Maggie has lived with other chimpanzees and was experienced in getting Jeeter to trust her. The first time they were finally together, she gave him a big hug and began grooming him, eventually getting him to play chase with her and tickle. It was the first time we had heard Jeeter laugh, and it was heartwarming to see him finally enjoying the company of another chimpanzee. His next introduction was to Maggie’s younger sister, Bella and her friend Ellie. Jeeter and Bella were even more playful, becoming close friends.

Jeeter is learning more about chimpanzee communication and socialization every day, and our goal is to provide him with other new friends and an enriched and happy social life.

(Accepting so many former exotic pets who were raised by humans and lived most of their lives with humans before coming to the sanctuary, we have learned to let these special individuals go at their own speed and take the time they need to become social companions, giving them a more enriched life)

BUBBLES IS 40

The Center for Great Apes’ most famous resident is undeniably chimpanzee Bubbles.

This year, Bubbles turned 40 years old, and celebrated his milestone birthday with a bubble-themed party with his best friends Ripley, OOPSie, Boma, and Jessie. Also present were representatives from the Michael Jackson fan club “We Are the World” who collected many gifts and treats from their members worldwide and delivered them for all our resident great apes.
A VERY SPECIAL VISITOR

Our staff was thrilled to have a surprise visit from Dr. Jane Goodall while she was on a speaking tour in Florida earlier this year.

She was a light of inspiration to our current staff, who weathered another hurricane (Ian) six months earlier and had also suffered the recent loss of our beloved chimpanzee, Mickey. Jane’s message was, “The more you love, the more you grieve... but there are all those others who also matter so, so much.”

We were happy to share our ongoing expansion and introduce Dr. Goodall to all the new chimpanzees who have arrived over the last few years, as well as some old friends of hers like Bubbles. Dr. Goodall also had a reunion visit with Sabina, Ewok, and Josh whom she met in the late 1980s when they were infants in a New York biomedical research lab. Those three chimpanzees, now in their mid-30s, had arrived at the Center for Great Apes from the closed Wildlife Waystation in Los Angeles.

Jane Goodall is an Honorary Director of the Center for Great Apes and a true inspiration worldwide. We are very grateful for her support and friendship and were honored to spend some time with her.

MEMBER DAYS

Spring Member Day was held on April 1st - no joke! The weather was beautiful, albeit rather warm, but that didn't stop over 500 members and their guests from joining us in raising funds for our nearly 70 residents.

Member Days are an important part of our work at the sanctuary. They allow our members to see what their membership dollars support and to raise much-needed funds for the Center to provide the apes with daily care.

If you missed out on attending our Spring Member Day, save the date for our Holiday Open House Fundraiser on December 9, 2023!

If you have questions about your membership status, need to renew, or want to become a member, don’t hesitate to contact our Donor Relations Team at donations@centerforgreatapes.org or call (863) 767-8903.
As the Center for Great Apes has grown in property size, facilities, number of apes, and number of staff members, a new position of Chief Operating Officer has been added to help manage the sanctuary's business and human resources. We are happy to welcome Lisa Oliver to this position of COO. Lisa is a not-for-profit professional with 19 years of experience. During her career, she has led daily operations, overseen facilities management, and created environmental educational programs. She comes to us as the former Chief Operating Officer at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, where she worked for over a decade. We are fortunate to have Lisa’s experience and enthusiasm to help us carry the sanctuary into the future.

A “shout out” to CGA Development Director Diane Beatty who after studying at the Edith Bush Institute for Philanthropy at Rollins College recently earned the highly respected and prestigious credential of Certified Fundraising Executive (CRFE). Diane started working at the Center 16 years ago, and now manages the various fundraising programs that provide care for our sanctuary residents. Congratulations to Diane on this hard-earned achievement.

Meet a CGA power couple! Joy Hernandez has worked at the Center for Great Apes for over a decade and is the sanctuary’s volunteer coordinator. Her husband, Heener (Dez) Hernandez, left his job as an Orlando contractor in construction more than five years ago to join his wife at the Center. Dez now manages Center facilities, including new construction, repairs and maintenance, and grounds. Both have important roles in the daily activities, and we are grateful to have them on our team!
OUR CHIMPANZEEs

Angel 5/5/1997
Bella 9/2/1997
Bentley 9/14/2009
Billy 8/1/1995
Bo 1980
Boma 12/14/1986
Brooks 11/30/1994

Bubbles 1983
Butch 1972
Candy 9/30/1993
Chipper 1974
Chloe 12/2/2008
Crystal 11/16/2002
Daisy 1981

Ellie 4/17/1997
Ewok 6/1/1987
Hannah 7/27/2000
Jacob 2/15/1996
Jeeter 4/12/1988
Jessie 6/6/1988
Joe 1972

Josh 4/1/1987
Kenya 7/1/1993
Kenzy 1/31/2005
Kerry 11/23/2005
Kodua 8/7/2002
Maggie 1/12/1994
Marco 1960

Maude 10/1/1995
Mikayla 6/2/2008
Mowgli 7/22/1999
Murray 9/7/1992
Mystery 6/1/1996
Natsu 12/29/1998
Noelle 12/19/1994

Oopsie 1974
Ripley 6/12/1990
Sabina 5/1/1987
Sha Sha 11/5/1999
Stryker 1/19/2005
Tammy 3/27/1987
UPDATE ON SANDRA

Sandra, the orangutan from Argentina who in 2015 received nonhuman personhood status in a Buenos Aires court by Judge Elena Liberatori, arrived at the Center for Great Apes in 2019. Living over a decade alone in Buenos Aires, Sandra finally met a companion shortly after she arrived at the sanctuary and has spent the past three years in the company of Jethro, a former entertainment orangutan from California. Sandra is now 37, and Jethro is 35. They are well-matched and enjoy strolling through the aerial trailways together or just sitting in their habitats grooming and snacking near each other. They each enjoy time alone. (Sandra likes to work on projects with her toys, and Jethro likes to rest.) But overnight, even though they have two indoor rooms and the entire outdoor habitat where they can make a nest to sleep, Sandra usually wants to make her nest in a hammock near Jethro in the same room.

Sandra has found happiness in her new home and a loving companion as well.
OUR SURPRISE BABY RULES HER WORLD

Cahaya, the tiny infant orangutan born as the result of a birth control failure in 2020, has not only been a blessing for our staff and her many fans but more importantly, a joy for her 40-year-old mother Sunshine, her teenage father Archie, and his older sister Keagan. Over 20 years ago, Sunshine had three other offspring but was not allowed to raise any of them. However, with Cahaya, Sunshine has proved to be an amazing mother and seems to love every minute of it. Sunshine takes frequent naps as an elder and sometimes Cahaya exhausts her. But “Aunt Keagan” takes over watching and playing with the baby while Sunshine rests. Cahaya treats Archie as her private playground, climbing on his head, pulling his hair, and taking any food she wants from him. Thankfully, Archie is patient with Cahaya and seems happy to be around her. At 3 ½ years old now, Cahaya is still very petite, but active every minute and ridiculously cute!

VISITOR FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

We were delighted to welcome movie and television actor Owen Teague (of the Netflix series Bloodline) who spent several days at the Center for Great Apes observing our chimpanzees for the upcoming movie Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes. Owen has a leading role in the movie, and after spending time watching all the CGA chimpanzees, he found a special bond with 14-year-old Bentley as his inspiration for his role in the movie as a young chimpanzee. The Disney movie Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes continues the epic science fiction story of a very evolved future great ape civilization and does not use any live apes in the film. All the chimpanzees, orangutans, and gorillas are CGI (computer graphic imaging) based on the actors’ movements. After filming in Australia, Owen returned to the sanctuary to spend another day with Bentley and share some fun stories about filming the movie.

Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes is the first in a new POTA trilogy and is set to be released in the Summer of 2024.

As a side note, recordings of the Center for Great Apes’ orangutan males are being collected now for use in the movie. So far, BamBam, Linus, and Christopher’s “long calls” have been sent to the film’s audio crew.
A LOYAL LEGION OF VOLUNTEERS

Looking back over 30 years hundreds of caring individuals (including our first volunteers in Miami some of whom are still with us today), have come to volunteer their time to help us take care of the apes. They have participated in the work here by cleaning habitats, preparing diets, making enrichment materials, building habitat structures, helping with grounds work and gardening, processing ape laundry, giving outreach talks to the public, helping with office work and special mailings, assisting with fundraising events and a myriad of other duties.

Our CGA volunteers have been (and still are) the most dedicated people, driving many miles and devoting many hours to help us fulfill our mission. We would not have made the progress we’ve made without our wonderful volunteers, and we are very grateful for each and every one!

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Starting in 1999, Debbie Machamer and Linda Cory were two of the volunteers who started helping us after we moved to Wauchula, and they still help us today 24 years later! Debbie and Linda were gorilla keepers at Disney’s Animal Kingdom in Orlando and had experience with chimpanzees before their job at Disney. Working with gorillas and other primates during their workweek and then orangutans and chimpanzees on their weekends kept them very busy, and they brought great ape expertise to their volunteer work here. Additionally, over the years, they recommended other Disney zookeepers to volunteer at the Center for Great Apes, and all those wonderful volunteers earned special “Disney VoluntEARS” donations for the Center. We are especially grateful for Linda and Debbie’s decades of service and support of our mission and their devotion to our great apes!

Note: if you would like to join our work as a volunteer, two volunteer safety training sessions are held twice a year in January and July for volunteers. You can find more information about the CGA Volunteer Program on our website at https://centerforgreatapes.org/volunteer/
REMEMBERING CHIMPANZEEES CONNOR & MICKEY

Our work to help great apes is rewarding but also challenging, with the most difficult part being the loss of any of our beloved residents. Over the past year, we have said goodbye to two very dear and special chimpanzees. But they remain in our hearts and are always part of the sanctuary.

CONNOR  
1995-2022

Connor, a truly wonderful 27-year-old chimpanzee was with us less than two years after he moved to the Center for Great Apes with five other chimpanzees (Tammy, Candy, Chloe, Mikayla, and Kerry) from a former breeding facility in Missouri. He lived at the sanctuary with his sister Candy and an older female, Tammy.

After showing signs of illness, a series of veterinary diagnostic tests determined the cause of his illness as cancer and heart disease. Our staff stayed with Connor around the clock, day and night making him as comfortable and cared for as possible until he passed away a few weeks later.

Connor was a precious chimpanzee full of love and kindness. He actively played with all his toys (especially his “jolly ball” and his “slinky”) and loved running in his grassy habitat inviting anyone nearby to games of “chase”. Tammy and Candy were very devoted to Connor. When he began to show signs of distress and illness, both females sat very close to him grooming and comforting him. Lying in her nest of blankets next to her brother, Candy kept her face close to Connor’s face while Tammy patted him on his head.

Mickey lived with many chimpanzees at the Center including Roger (his first friend), Mowgli, Angel, Natsu, Murray, Hannah, Crystal, Kodua, and his closest and dearest friend, Daisy. During his last few months of health issues which led to liver failure, Daisy rarely left his side. After each veterinary checkup, she would intensely groom Mickey checking over every inch to clean and comfort him. We even saw her sitting out in the grass with Mickey one day after a health check, picking little flowers and giving them to Mickey.

We were fortunate to have Mickey with us for 17 years when he arrived from a private pet owner in 2006 along with the orangutans Linus and Kiki.

Mickey lived the first 20 years of his life in a New Jersey garage, and had not seen many people other than the family members who owned him. When he first arrived at the sanctuary, he was afraid of any new people, but with time and patience, Mickey gained confidence in dealing with new people and became comfortable with the sanctuary environment, happy to see visitors.

Mickey was a sweet and friendly chimp, and while we were heartbroken to lose this dear male, we are grateful for the nearly two decades he was part of our sanctuary.
Dr. Jocelyn Bezner was an angel in the sanctuary community and traveled far to help chimpanzees in sanctuaries all over North America and Africa. She was the primary veterinarian at Save the Chimps for the sanctuary’s first 17 years where she cared for over 325 chimpanzees. Additionally, she was a veterinary consultant and traveling doctor for at least nine chimp sanctuaries globally including the Center for Great Apes where in 2013 she helped with an emergency surgery to save the life of our orangutan BamBam. “Dr. B” also assisted our veterinarian in transporting chimpanzees to our sanctuary from Missouri and from California. She was particularly devoted to our special needs chimpanzee Knuckles. Dr. Bezner contributed a great deal to the mission of caring for sanctuary chimpanzees. We miss her very much but are thankful for her help and expertise.

Patrick Barthet, a Miami attorney and long-time business associate of CGA founder Patti Ragan, was the person she went to in 1993 for help and advice on how to establish a great ape sanctuary. Once the legal work was completed and the Center for Great Apes was founded, Patrick was asked to continue helping the apes by serving on the Center’s Board of Directors. Patrick was a director on the board for many years even after the sanctuary moved to Wauchula.

After retiring from the CGA Board, Patrick became Director Emeritus and continued to be a generous donor to CGA throughout his life. With his early leadership and his outstanding business ethics, Patrick helped to create a respected and first-rate great ape sanctuary. We are grateful for the guidance and impact that Patrick Barthet had on the Center for Great Apes, and we will miss him.

We are fondly remembering some of our devoted members and friends lost over the past year. We are grateful to those who included the Center for Great Apes in their estate planning and also to their families for suggesting donations in memory of their loved ones.

Patrick Barthet  Bill Heath
Dr. Jocelyn Bezner  Patricia Hinrichs
Mark Cohen  Gloria McNorton
Elizabeth Dunn  Debra Randall
Adam Elkhadem  Bill Steckley
Curtace Gamlen  Julie Stolwitz
DONOR PROGRAMS

This year, our educational workshops returned. 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 to certain areas of the sanctuary. Participants learn about a different topic related to great apes during each workshop. Workshops topics have covered great ape nutrition, (specifically what our orangutan and chimpanzee residents eat), and a day in the life of a caregiver where attendees learn just what it takes to be a caregiver.

Ape-ology workshops will continue this Fall and Winter featuring topics on behavior and communication, CGA history, enrichment, healthcare training, and more. Keep an eye out for dates.

Ape-ology classes are limited to 20 people per session, so register early. Workshops are $60 and run from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM on select Saturdays.

More unique donor programs will return: Afternoon with the Apes, Art with the Apes, educational outreach presentations, and new opportunities. For more information or to register for a workshop, please get in touch with Donor Programs Coordinator Lauren at donorprograms@centerforgreatapes.org.

ANNIVERSARY TIDBIT:

After forming the Center for Great Apes’ nonprofit organization in 1993, our very first “official member” was our dear friend Dr. Carole Noon’s sister Lee who visited us in Miami and gave us our first membership donation. Several years later, Carole established her own wonderful sanctuary. Save the Chimps.

SAVE THE DATE!
Giving Day for Apes
Tuesday, October 3, 2023

Giving Day for Apes is one of the most important times to show your commitment to helping great apes. It’s a global day to raise awareness and individual support, and we’re proud to be one of the participating sanctuaries! Giving Day for Apes has become one of the largest fundraisers for the Center, and we need your continued help.

Early giving begins on September 11, 2023.
Scan the QR Code or Visit www.mightycause.com/organization/Centerforgreatapes/to donate or learn more.
2022 FINANCIALS
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

OPERATING INCOME
- Individual Donations $1,446,141
- Foundation Grants 667,549
- Corporate Gifts 136,517
- Special Events 191,893
- Non-contribution Income 71,098
  Total $2,442,100

OPERATING EXPENSES
- Program Services $2,028,753 85%
- Administrative Support 214,698 9%
- Fundraising Expenses 136,099 6%
  Total Operating Expenses $2,379,550
  Net Income for Reserves $133,648

FREEWILL
Imagine a future where every captive orangutan and chimpanzee has a safe and nurturing sanctuary home regardless of their past, where these majestic primates continue to inspire and educate future generations. With your help, that future can continue to be a reality.

Thanks to our partnership with FreeWill, you can easily create your free will in just 20 minutes. Imagine the legacy you could build by planning a gift to the Center for Great Apes, preserving the future of these magnificent orangutans and chimpanzees for years to come.

Scan the QR Code below or visit frwill.link/centerforgreatapes today.