Chimp Haven Families

Written by Jennifer Whifaker, Assistant Director

With cooler weather and autumn on the horizon, the chimpanzees are spending a lot more time outside. It excites me to see chimpanzees rolling in the grass, climbing trees and playfully interacting with each other in the habitats and play yards. During a recent walk around the sanctuary, I spotted Valentina Rose sharing a precious moment with several members of her social group. Valentina, an independent infant, was sitting by herself chewing on leaves and branches. Jimoh, the oldest male in the group, slowly walked up to her and laid down. Valentina immediately took advantage of her new playmate and began climbing all over him. Lovingly, Jimoh wrapped his arms around her in an embrace. Six-year-old Tracy, Valentina Rose’s half sister, spotted this interaction and decided to join in on the fun. She “solicited play” with Valentina Rose by tagging her and jumping back (as if to say, “Catch me if you can!”). Valentina wobbled as quickly as she could towards Tracy, trying to catch her. But Tracy jumped back just as she was about to reach her. They played this game of tag for quite some time until Flora, Valentina’s mother, decided play time was over and scooped up her infant for a nap.

Like humans, family is important in the lives of chimpanzees. At seven months old, Valentina is forming familial relationships with her social group. Even at only two months old, the newest member of Valentina’s social group, Natalie, is also building relationships with those closest around her. Relationships are being strengthened as the chimpanzees, young and old, spend more time together at Chimp Haven — the place they call home.
Chimpanzee Friendship

Chimpanzees often develop strong bonds with one another that can last a lifetime, sometimes extending well over 50 years. Both male and female chimpanzees form relationships that resemble friendships in people. From spending time together to offering assistance if a friend is sick, chimpanzees take their friendships very seriously. Recently, while the caregivers were transitioning a group of chimpanzees from the courtyard to the play yard, Steve, who was feeling a bit under the weather, was moving slowly. Group mate, Penny, observed Steve’s sluggish movements and went back into the courtyard to wait for him. When Steve finally arrived at the entrance of the chute, Penny placed her hand on his shoulder to guide him into the play yard. It appeared that she understood that her friend needed help and she was there to offer it to him.

Chimpanzees have many ways of expressing their feelings for one another. You can always find two buddies grooming each other, sharing food or even sleeping next to one another. These are all signs that their relationships are growing deeper each day. This is important to ensure the safety, longevity and cohesiveness for their large social groups.

The Holiday Season is quickly approaching. Need gift ideas? Chimp Haven suggests:

SPONSOR A CHIMPANZEE with Chimp Haven’s Best Friends program. We can send a Best Friend certificate, stuffed animal and note cards directly to your gift recipient. Visit https://donationpay.org/chimphaven/bestfriends.php for more details.

VISIT CHIMP HAVEN’S ONLINE STORE. We offer hats, T-shirts, travel mugs, tote bags and more! You can browse these items at http://www.chimphaven.org/support/store/


A note card will be mailed to your gift recipient.
CHIMP HAVEN’S
Relationship with Our Supporters

If you observe healthy relationships in a chimpanzee social group, you will see that every one of the chimpanzees derives benefits, because they care about each other. At Chimp Haven, we believe our relationships with donors should be like those modeled by the chimpanzees. Our donors show compassion toward the chimpanzees in many ways. Financial support from corporations, foundations, animal welfare organizations, and individuals assures that we sustain a high level of chimpanzee care. But our donors do more than send money.

Knowing that thousands of people are supporting our efforts inspires us to do our best every day. We do not want to let down the chimpanzees or our supporters. We understand we are only part of a bigger community whose outpouring of compassion has given the chimpanzees a wonderful home. If you have suggestions on how we can improve, we encourage you to contact us at publicrelations@chimphaven.org. That is how healthy relationships thrive.

Daily, they send boxes filled with peanut butter, socks, toys—anything our animal care team requests for the chimpanzees. Volunteers come often and complete whatever tasks are asked of them. A team of doctors volunteers to help with chimpanzee medical issues. Artists donate work to auction for the chimpanzees. Donors invite friends to parties to share the Chimp Haven story. Boy Scouts choose Chimp Haven for Eagle Scout projects. The list is endless.

Harper keeps his donated baby, a sock monkey, close.

Thank You

Chimp Haven

Best Buy Corporate Volunteer Group
Chimp Haven is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, and all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

RELATIONSHIPS Between Chimpanzees

At Chimp Haven we create opportunities that encourage interactions between the chimpanzees in vast habitats and large social groups, much as they would happen in the wild. However, we also recognize that many of the chimpanzees who enjoy spending time with their friends in the forest are just as interested in interacting with humans, especially caregivers.

As a result, caregivers work diligently to maintain those special relationships with the chimpanzees. The humans regularly find fun, unique and safe ways to play with the chimpanzees. Les and Marcus are two of the many chimpanzees who enjoy playing chase during the day. Caregivers run alongside the chimpanzee enclosure from one end to the other with Les and Marcus galloping along. During playtime, sometimes caregivers will play tug-of-war with Spider, Jessika and Ivy by inserting one end of a thick rope in their enclosure and tugging at it. Jessika enjoys this game so much that sometimes she becomes pouty when it is over.

Training is also a favorite activity that promotes human-chimpanzee relationships. Caregivers spend one-on-one time with chimpanzees, rewarding them for doing specific behaviors like opening their mouths. Training activities like this assist the veterinary staff in making medical assessments, but they are also fun interactions that promote positive relationships with the chimpanzees.

Strong bonds are formed when caregivers take the time to do seemingly simple activities with the chimpanzees, like blowing bubbles, playing the toy piano, or talking to the chimpanzees while completing their daily tasks. The most important realization for the chimpanzees through building these relationships is knowing they are important and deserve attention.