At Chimp Haven, we believe it is our responsibility to create an environment for the chimpanzees that brings excitement, challenges, and joy - much like what chimpanzees in the wild experience every day. As a result, we have taken some extraordinary steps to enrich the lives of the chimpanzees at Chimp Haven. Turn the page to learn more!
At Chimp Haven, we define environmental enrichment as activities that increase the chimpanzees’ species-typical behavior, or behaviors common in the wild. We do this by encouraging appropriate social interactions, movement, foraging for food, creative use of materials, and nest building.

In their native habitat, chimpanzees live in large, changing social groups and encounter new things every day. Wild chimpanzees must use their cognitive abilities to locate fruiting trees and find a comfortable place for themselves in the social hierarchy. While we integrate every chimpanzee into a social group and provide large and interesting spaces, enrichment allows us to provide further novel activities and devices to make their living environment more complex. Like humans, if they are going to remain healthy, chimpanzees need variety and the opportunity to make choices and exercise their will.

Amy Fultz, Chimp Haven’s Behavior Program Manager, and Erin Loeser, Enrichment Technician, implement Chimp Haven’s extensive environmental enrichment program with the help of the care staff. Every activity is deliberately planned to result in specific outcomes, and it includes the provision of varied and novel food items, objects or toys, climbing and resting structures, sensory stimulation and social housing. We also spend time with the chimpanzees gaining their cooperation through the use of positive reinforcement techniques.

This newsletter takes you behind the scenes at Chimp Haven so you can learn more about its environmental enrichment program and the importance of it to the chimpanzees’ welfare.
Chimp Haven’s enrichment technician, Erin Loeser, makes sure that the chimpanzees have at least one special experience every day to keep their minds stimulated. In exchange, she has the opportunity to see the cognitive capabilities and natural curiosity of chimpanzees in action.

Since chimpanzees in the wild typically spend 60% of their waking hours foraging for food, Erin incorporates edibles into many of the enrichment devices. Among the treats she delivers are chimpanzee tamales (Jello-flavored oatmeal with raisins and nuts wrapped in paper), apescicles (frozen fruit and juice), bean burritos, snow cones, and sugar-free Pop Rocks - candy crystals that explode on the tongue.

Erin often gives the chimpanzees food with an occupational challenge, like coconuts. Rita hits hers against the ground, hoping to crack it open. With no success, she heaves it at a cement wall, inadvertently breaking it open. Karin demonstrates that there is no need to split open a coconut when there are holes drilled in the top. She grabs a stick and pokes it in the holes of the coconut to extract the meat.

Occupational devices let the chimpanzees “work” for their reward. They are given tools, like bamboo sticks, to figure out how to extract the treats from the boxes. Recycled plastic soda bottles filled with sticky or dense food items frustrate some of the chimpanzees, but not Les. He adds water from a spigot to his bottle to loosen the treats and float them to the top. Other chimpanzees spit mouthfuls of water into their bottles to achieve the same results.

Enriching the senses of smell, touch, and hearing is also important. Among the items Erin uses are fragrant herbs and flowers, bubbles, and even music. When a musician volunteers to play his guitar and sing, some of the chimpanzees listen to the performance while bobbing their heads to the music. A live drumming performance causes the male chimpanzees to display (hooting and pounding on their enclosure) while the females sit quietly and listen.

Occasionally, Erin will invite visitors. Among them have been dogs, a sheep, a horse, and a variety of costumed characters. When “living” visitors are not available, animatronic ape toys and puppets are adequate stand-ins.

Erin is constantly in search of new ideas to stimulate the minds and bodies of the chimpanzees. What could be more gratifying than approaching them each day with a new surprise and seeing and hearing their excited response. Asked to describe her job, she says, “There’s nothing in the world quite like it. Nothing.”
All employees at Chimp Haven assist in the behavioral enrichment program. At least once a month, the non-animal staff decides the “enrichment of the day” and helps deliver it to the chimpanzees. They also contribute enrichment items from home, such as telephone books, empty soda bottles, children’s story books and plush toys. Those working in maintenance build and maintain the chimpanzees’ playground equipment. They also tend a large, organic garden and fruit trees that yield special edibles for the chimpanzees.

But those on the front line are Chimp Haven’s care givers. They spend the most time with the chimpanzees and strive to keep their lives interesting. They cut tree limbs from the surrounding forest and bring them to the chimpanzees who may eat the leaves, use the branches to build a nest, or snap off a stick to poke into an ant hole. Care staff hides food in the habitats so that the chimpanzees need to look for it. They pass out soft blankets to the chimpanzee to snuggle in and give them plush toys to carry. Many of the chimpanzees put the toys on their backs as they would a baby chimpanzee in the wild. The care givers also spend hours teaching the chimpanzees to cooperate with simple requests through positive reinforcement training.

Behavioral enrichment comes at a cost to the care givers. Every week, they run a minimum of 10 loads of blankets and stuffed animals through the washing machine. Any plastic toys or other behavioral devices (like mirrors, hard rubber dog toys, and milk crates) are regularly scrubbed and sanitized. Larger items get sprayed with a power washer.

The care givers’ reward for all their hard work is a front-row seat to unique entertainment. On a given day, you might see Violet carrying the remnants of a Sponge Bob doll on her back and protecting it from Mikey who tries to steal it. Inside the bedrooms, Sheila may be seen spitting at a television and swaying with her hair on end as she enjoys videos of other chimpanzees, especially when they fight. Tarzan and Candy love watching the movie “Shrek.” Chaka, who exhibits autistic-like behaviors, listens to calming music. Gay and Ivy, who have bubble-filled pools, enjoy using soapy rags to clean the walls and floors of their bedrooms — just like the care givers do. In another area, the chimpanzees pull on ropes that ring cow bells, making a reverberating, clanging sound. Sounds like mayhem? It is what makes the Chimp Haven staff want to come to work every day.
YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO CHIMPANZEE ENRICHMENT

Chimp Haven is constantly in need of enrichment items. If you have access to any of those listed below, we would be grateful for your contribution. Send them to Lee Anna Naranjo, 13600 Chimpanzee Place, Keithville, LA 71047.

Fleece blankets
Paper towel and toilet paper tubes
Clean, dry water and soda bottles
Large plastic or wooden spoons
Children’s board books
Beach toys (shovels & buckets)
Empty piñata’s
Dog toys (Kongs, Nylabones, TireBitem)
Plush animals (with no beads or bean stuffing)
Sugar-free powdered Kool-Aid
Baby food
Dried fruit in sealed bags
Sugar-free cereal
Trail mix in sealed bags
Ensure

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Make your donation go further and help the environment by giving us permission to charge your credit or debit card account once a month. (The minimum monthly credit or debit card gift is $10.)

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- $200
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- Please charge my monthly pledge to my credit card on the 15th of each month.
  - Visa
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Card Number: _________________________________ Exp. Date: _______________
Signature: _____________________________________________________________

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I authorize my bank to pay Chimp Haven in the amount of

$ _______________ / month with the terms and conditions below.*

*My authorization to charge my account at my bank will be the same as if I personally signed a check to Chimp Haven. This authorization shall remain in effect until I notify my bank or Chimp Haven in writing that I wish to end this agreement and my bank or Chimp Haven has had a reasonable amount of time to act on it, or until my bank or Chimp Haven has sent me 10 days written notice that they will end this agreement. A record of each change will be included in my regular bank statement and will serve as my receipt. In addition, Chimp Haven will provide a year-end statement. In the event of an error, I have the right to instruct my bank to reverse any charge. I understand that his must be done by written notice within 15 days of the date of the bank statement or within 45 days after the charge was made.

- I wish to pay by check each month. My first check is enclosed.

You will receive a coupon book with envelopes in the mail.

Name: ___________________________ Address: ___________________________
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It’s Show Time

A popular enrichment activity for some of the chimpanzees at Chimp Haven is painting. In August, Chimp Haven, through the sponsorship of the Louisiana Cultural Economy Foundation, mounted an art show, “INSTINCT: The Art Of Chimpanzees,” at the Barnwell Garden and Arts Center in Shreveport, Louisiana. From there, the show goes to New Orleans on October 3rd. Other venues are being scheduled. If you know of a gallery that might be interested in showing the work of Chimp Haven’s artists, contact Karen Allen, (318) 402-9008.