Flora greeted Chimp Haven’s staff holding a tiny infant on the morning of February 14, 2012. She had given birth early in the morning and the baby girl, now named Valentina Rose, was already clinging tightly to her mother’s chest and nursing. Flora gave birth 20 years ago while living in a laboratory; so she is an experienced mother. She cuddles Valentina Rose and often holds her up to gaze into her eyes.

Twenty-nine year old Flora arrived at Chimp Haven in the fall of 2010. She is a large female with unique brownish coloration. Along with her friends Gina and Ginger, Flora was integrated into Jimoh’s group which includes the youngster Tracy. Our veterinary staff completed pregnancy tests on the other females in the group and found that Ginger is also pregnant and due in July. Ginger is 42-years-old, but has had several infants in the past.

Many people have congratulated us on the birth of the infant and asked why we try to prevent further pregnancies. As a sanctuary, our goal is to provide care for as many chimpanzees as we can. There are still almost 1000 chimpanzees living in research laboratories today, and each infant who is born at the sanctuary will use space and resources that then cannot be used to help another chimpanzee in need. Thus, we take our responsibility to prevent births very seriously. The males are vasectomized prior to their arrival here, but, amazingly, nature has figured out how to reverse the procedure.

Our veterinarian, Dr. Raven Jackson, is now performing a newly developed vasectomy procedure. In the meantime, we will all enjoy watching Valentina Rose grow and thrive and look forward to the birth of Ginger’s infant.
Chimp Haven Mourns the Loss of Mason

Written by Amy Fultz - Chimp Haven Behavior and Education Program Manager

Mason was born on September 18, 1984 in a research facility to Gwennie, another chimpanzee who had retired at Chimp Haven. Gwennie didn’t know how to care for infants, so Mason was raised in a nursery with human caregivers. Mason was one of the first chimpanzees to arrive at Chimp Haven in 2005.

I am not sure exactly when Mason became my favorite chimpanzee. I am sure it happened as we got to know each other over time. Mason was handsome, to be sure, but he also had a wonderful personality that won the hearts of many over the years. He also had a great sense of humor, made the happiest play faces and had one of the silliest chimpanzee smiles.

Mason's food barking for trail mix was very infectious and enthusiastic. Mason was often described as a “kid brother” who is often pesky, but always loved. He also cared for others and was a loving uncle to Tracy, the youngest chimpanzee at Chimp Haven at the time. Mason looked so proud when Teresa would let him carry little Tracy on his back. He often played with her and he often slept curled around Tracy protectively.

Mason was being treated for cardiovascular disease as are so many great apes in captivity. The news came that it was time to say goodbye to our dear Mason. I counted Mason among my friends. I, as well as so many staff members, Chimp Haven supporters, and friends will miss Mason deeply. I hope he is enjoying sitting in the sun in a forest somewhere, reunited with his former group-mates that left this world before him.

Rest in peace Mason, you will forever be in our hearts.

Mason

SUSTAINABILITY at Chimp Haven

Written by Adrienne Mrsny - Animal Care Specialist

Caring for over 130 chimpanzees can put a strain on the resources of any facility! The sustainability team focuses its efforts on researching and implementing environmentally friendly methods that make the facility more self-sustaining regarding the sanctuary’s resources and energy consumption.

Meeting monthly, the sustainability team sets goals and objectives, helping to outline a strategy the entire organization can implement in order to lower resource usage and find ways to reduce our carbon footprint.

Team projects range from improving our onsite recycling, printing less paper, walking across the facility rather than driving, and turning off lights when not in use, to combining purchases from suppliers in order to reduced deliveries. Long-term goals include discovering ways to incorporate water collection and implement alternative energy methods into the colony’s management system.

The most visible example of these efforts is our garden. Even the chimpanzees were able to participate in this particular project by providing fecal matter for our home-grown compost. With their help, the sustainability team planted and maintained two gardens to feed our chimpanzees last summer. From May to August, our late-season garden yielded an abundance of squash, peas, beans, turnips and peppers. The harvest saved the Haven $2,000 alone in food costs, and by growing food onsite we are able to add novel items to the chimpanzees’ diets. This year’s gardens will include an early and late season harvest. Our early garden, planted at the end of February, will produce broccoli, cabbage (both green and red), romaine lettuce and onions.

The benefits of our gardens have expanded far beyond enriching our chimpanzees’ diets. Working together in such an integral way as well as getting to see firsthand the “fruits of our labor” has helped to improved camaraderie and communication between departments. Simply working outside in the sunshine and hearing the chimpanzees hoot for joy in the distance provided a bit of tranquility in our daily routines.

If you would like to assist with Chimp Haven’s sustainability initiatives, please contact Jennifer Whitaker 318-925-9575. Donations of seeds, trees and other plants are appreciated!

Do you live in Southern California or have friends who do? Make plans to attend the gala Earth Day party and screening of DisneyNature’s spectacular new movie, CHIMPANZEE, in Ojai, California on Sunday April 22nd, starting at 4:00 p.m. Tickets are $50/person, and the proceeds benefit Chimp Haven. The Ojai Film Society is co-sponsoring the event. Go to their website - www.oiaifilmsociety.org - to get more information and to purchase tickets.

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Chow Down!

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On April 21, 2012 Chimp Haven is hosting an Earth Day Festival in conjunction with our Chimpanzee Discovery Day. The purpose of this event is to educate the public about environmental initiatives in the Shreveport area. The festival will include exhibits, art, live music, food, demonstrations, lectures, and kids’ activities. Chimp Haven has invited Shreveport’s environmental businesses, organizations, restaurants, artisans, and farmers to participate in this Earth Day Festival. This will be a great opportunity to bring together local businesses and organizations who share a similar mission – to protect and restore our planet.

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Many people have congratulated us on the birth of the infant and asked why we try to prevent further pregnancies. As a sanctuary, our goal is to provide care for as many chimpanzees as we can. There are still almost 1000 chimpanzees living in research laboratories today, and each infant who is born at the sanctuary will use space and resources that then cannot be used to help another chimpanzee in need. Thus, we take our responsibility to prevent births very seriously. The males are vasectomized prior to their arrival here, but, amazingly, nature has figured out how to reverse the procedure. Our veterinarian, Dr. Raven Jackson, is now performing a newly developed vasectomy procedure. In the meantime, we will all enjoy watching Valentina Rose grow and thrive and look forward to the birth of Ginger’s infant.

Flora and Valentina Rose

A Valentine’s Day Surprise!

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