

THE  
  
**CHIMP LIFE**  
 KEITHVILLE, LOUISIANA

## Teaching an Old Chimp New Tricks

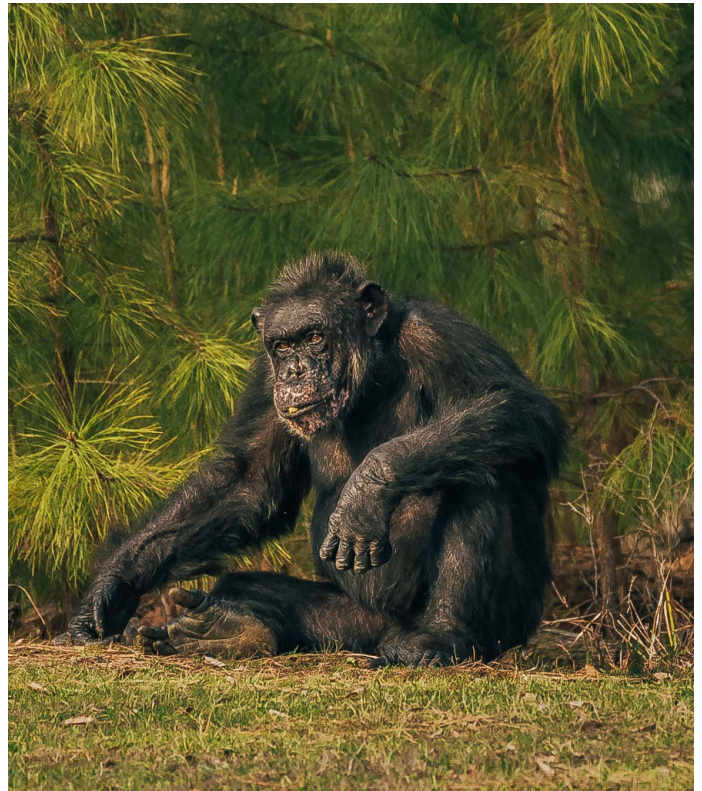
Animal Care Specialist Ellen shares the secrets to earning the trust of one of the sanctuary's sweetest old curmudgeons: peanuts, persistence, and a healthy dose of humor

When it comes to ideal candidates for training partners at Chimp Haven, 54-year-old Julius probably would not rank high on the list. As one of the sanctuary's "Golden Oldies," Julius is known as a bit of a curmudgeon, perfectly content to spend his days roaming his habitat or napping alongside his groupmates, and perfectly happy to limit his contact with caregivers to just the necessities.

That is until he met his thoughtful and persistent match in Animal Care Specialist Ellen Brady-McGaughey. For the past two years, Ellen has made it her mission to earn Julius's trust and improve his wellbeing through Chimp Haven's Positive Reinforcement Training program – and along the way, she's unlocked the secrets to a sweet and rewarding new friendship.

### **Know Your Partner...and Always Pack Peanuts**

"Julius is generally timid and reserved around people, and not at all interested in us humans," Ellen shared. "As an older gentleman, he can get easily spooked if you move around too fast near him or make unexpected movements. When we started training together, I brought lots of really good treats so that he would associate me with good things, and anytime I was in his area I would swing by and give him a peanut, which he enjoys very much. I also tried my best to speak his language by greeting him more like other chimps would greet him (panting at him and extending my arm towards him), instead of like humans greet each other (for example with a big, loud, Hello!"). With time, he became more comfortable with me and even seemed curious that



54-year-old Julius is one of the sanctuary's "Golden Oldies"

I could interact with him in that way."

### **Get Creative (and Patient)**

"I wanted to go at whatever pace Julius was comfortable with and make sure he enjoyed his training. We use a clicker to let the chimps know when they have successfully done what we've asked them in training, and at first Julius was startled by the sound of the clicker. So I got a clicker with volume control and turned it down low, and we slowly worked it up to where he is unbothered by a normal volume clicker. He was also unsure of my training tools – a white training bucket, a PVC target, and a plastic spoon to be used as a cue stick (to be able to touch him with to show him what I am asking for). He jumped when I first sat down with them, so I slowly showed him each thing and



rewarded him just for sitting and looking at them. Gradually I would move them closer and closer and reward him each time he allowed me to do so.”

### ***Pant-Hoots are the Best Medicine***

“I remember the first time Julius ever panted back at me. It was at night, I had come in to do last checks on the chimps, and when he saw me walk in, he panted at me. I could not believe it. I thought surely he was confused, getting senile in his old age. But then a few weeks later I returned from vacation and I greeted him by panting and reaching out my hand – and he panted back at me! It made my day. It was clear to me that our relationship was growing and he was becoming more comfortable with me.

“I started making time for play visits as well as training visits. I tried using a long-handled spoon to tickle him, which is one way we play with the chimps, but when he wasn’t comfortable with the spoon we made up our own game, which I’ve started calling “pretend tickles.” I pretend to grab at him, much like when chimps play with each other and will grab at each other’s hands or feet. I pretend like I’m grabbing his toes, or his hands, or like I’m going to poke him in the belly, and he thinks it’s the funniest thing. My hands are nowhere close to him but he acts like I am full on, actually tickling him, and I chimp laugh and he laughs with me and watches me pretend to tickle

him. Maybe he thinks it’s hilarious that I’m so willing to make a complete fool of myself for him! The first time I made him laugh I was so excited because not only was Julius relaxed with me, but we were playing and laughing together. I just wanted to stay in that moment forever and keep playing until we couldn’t play anymore.”

### ***Celebrate the Wins***

“Julius moves at his own pace, and we have completely designed his training and progress around his comfort. Sometimes success is just him not running away, and honestly that’s huge progress on its own. Every baby step he makes, in training and in our relationship building, is so exciting and sweet.”

### ***What’s next for Julius?***

“My biggest training goal for Julius is to train him to use the KardiaMobile, which allows us to capture EKG readings while the chimps are awake, and to improve his mobility as he ages by having him move around more during our sessions. I’m so proud knowing that his quality of life is improving with each barrier we break. More than anything, I just want to continue to have fun and play as often as we can, and enjoy whatever time we have together. Julius is an elderly chimp and I know our time is limited, but I am grateful to have been let, even just a little bit, into his life and to get to be his friend.”



Julius follows behind as Phyllis takes the lead on one of the group’s routine patrols around their habitat



Sometimes the ladies in his group join Julius and Ellen for their training sessions – usually hoping to get some rewards of their own!



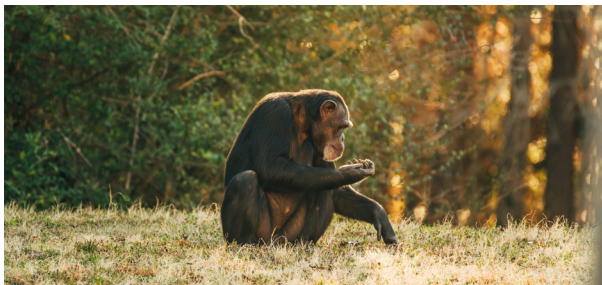
## A Cross-Country Homecoming for the Waystation Chimps

Chimp Haven is eagerly preparing to welcome 11 chimpanzees from Los Angeles to their new digs in Louisiana by the end of the year. The chimps are among the last of hundreds of animals to be rehomed from the Wildlife Waystation, a now-closed wildlife sanctuary, thanks to the efforts of the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) and partners. Learn more about how you can help bring home the Chimp Haven 11 – including what will be the sanctuary’s first set of twins! – at [chimpsinneed.org](http://chimpsinneed.org).

### Ecoflix

Stream uplifting, informative programming while helping save animals and the planet? What’s not to love? Ecoflix is the first not-for-profit streaming service dedicated to giving back to animal and nature conservation. Subscribe to Ecoflix and select Chimp Haven as your preferred NGO partner and a portion of your membership will help care for the chimps! As an Ecoflix subscriber, you’ll also get access to Sanctuary: Chimp Haven, a newly-produced, 30-minute feature about the sanctuary and the chimps who call it home. Learn more at [ecoflix.com](http://ecoflix.com).

## Spring has Sprung



If the sun is shining, you can bet the chimps are outside soaking it up. Enjoy a few of the views from the sanctuary as spring comes into full bloom.

**Top Left-** Inseparable besties Dea and Mackenzie are taking their gossip sessions outside this spring

**Middle Left-** Nope, Passion, and Dea meet up for a moat-side patrol

**Bottom Left-** Sindee forages for treats in her habitat

**Top Right-** Five-year-old Carlee keeps her group mates on their toes





## Upcoming Events

We're thrilled to welcome small groups back to the sanctuary this spring with Chimp Chats! In the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic, please be sure to check our website for the most up-to-date information on events. Space is limited; register today!

Learn more and register at [chimphaven.org/visit/chimp-chat](https://chimphaven.org/visit/chimp-chat).

Saturday, April 16, 10 a.m. – noon

Saturday, April 16, 2 – 4 p.m.

Saturday, May 14, 10 a.m. – noon

Saturday, May 14, 2 – 4 p.m.

### Rep the Squad

Get your gear today at <https://chimphaven.org/store/>. Every purchase helps support the chimps!



*Please remember to include Chimp Haven in your will or estate plans – and let us know when you do so we can thank you.*

**Arden**  
Living the Chimp Life  
since 2013