

THE
CHIMP LIFE
KEITHVILLE, LOUISIANA

30 YEARS OF THE **CHIMP LIFE** *The First Chimps*

This year, Chimp Haven celebrates 30 years since its founding and the countless milestones and special moments you've made possible for the chimps and their sanctuary home.

In April of 2005, following years of hard work and effort to find land, raise funds, and build habitats and chimpanzee living spaces, a milestone moment occurred at Chimp Haven: The very first chimpanzee arrivals, Rita and Teresa, made their way from a research facility in Texas to their new sanctuary retirement home.

The moment was especially meaningful because co-founders Amy Fultz, Linda Brent and Tom Butler had known Rita and Teresa during their time in research. Now, they were welcoming them to their forever home, one they had personally designed to provide them with freedom, choice, and many of the experiences they would have had in the wild.

"Their arrival was very exciting for the staff—there were a lot of us on site when they came in," remembers Amy. "I remember us cheering as the truck came into the sanctuary driving up with them."

As more chimps arrived that spring, the team spent weeks carefully introducing them and creating a large social group. After spending most of their lives in biomedical research, these chimps would be



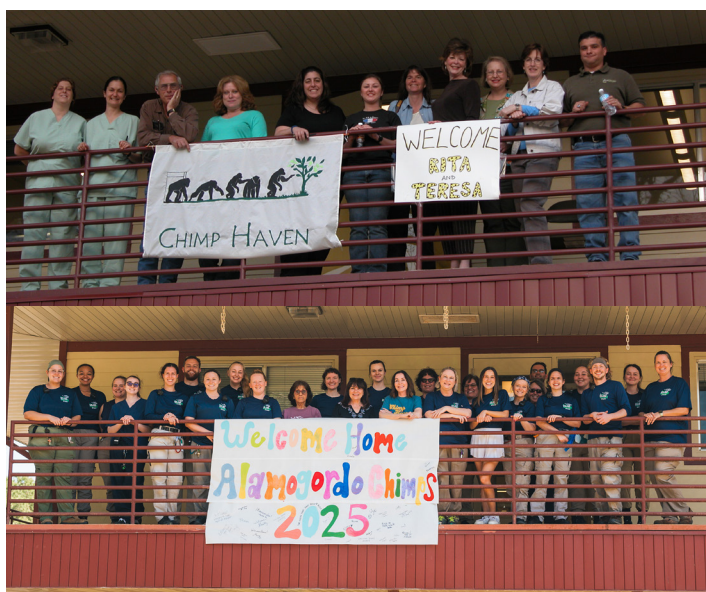
Rita and Teresa enjoy their multi-acre forested habitat as the first chimps to retire to sanctuary.

the first to enter the sanctuary's multi-acre forested habitats, and the first to test a dream that had been years in the making.

"We weren't really sure if they'd be afraid and not really go anywhere," remembers Linda. "This was a really big experiment. And we were just shocked: When we opened the doors, they just shot out of their bedrooms into the forested habitat and started running down the right side of the habitat wall.

"We realized, well, what would [wild] chimps do in a new place? They would check their boundaries, right? Where are we? Who else is in here? They wanted to see.





Top: Chimp Haven staff welcome Rita and Teresa to sanctuary in 2005; Bottom: 20 years later, staff welcomes home the Alamogordo chimps.



Rita and Teresa at Chimp Haven

"There was, in my mind, a point in time when everything was slow motion for a moment, and I can clearly remember Teresa making her way down and stopping and looking up at the sky. We thought maybe she was looking at the trees, but then we realized this was the first time she was able to look up and not see bars over her head since she was a baby in Africa."

After the chimps spent their day exploring, the next test had arrived: How would they fare in the forest at night?

"They did fabulous during the day, but I wasn't sure about at night," said Amy, "so

I camped out across the moat from the habitat to make sure they were okay. In the end, they all slept inside! They did wonderful, and the next day, we saw one of the new arrivals, Lolita, climb a tree for the first time."

For years, Linda, Amy, Tom, and their team had poured themselves into the dream of a retirement sanctuary for research chimps, not knowing if their vision would actually work. As the weeks went on, not only did the chimps climb trees, they also made nests in the forest, went on patrols, and snacked on browse from the trees and plants, all species-typical behaviors that chimpanzees exhibit in the wild.

For Linda and Amy, the fact that Rita and Teresa were among the first made it all the more special.

"Rita and Teresa had been together their entire lives," said Linda. "Rita was one of my favorite chimps because she was a very tough, crotchety old lady. She'd been through a lot – born in Africa, brought to the U.S. as a baby, used in space research then moved to biomedical research. She had lots of babies and was a great mother. And then she was luckily moved to Chimp Haven."

"I think part of the reason I liked her is that she wasn't easy to get to know. But I had known her for so long, and it was really special to me that she let me in just a little bit. And sometimes she would actually act kind of fun, mischievous; it was really cool to see that side of her. But I always respected her and what she'd been through and how tough she was. There was no way you were going to get anything over on Rita."

As the years passed, hundreds more chimps followed, many of whom learned to climb and patrol from Rita, Teresa, Lolita, and the other chimps in Chimp Haven's first social group. Today, the sanctuary is home to more than 30 chimp families.

And earlier this year, as new chimps arrived from a research facility in New Mexico, staff joined together on the very same balcony where they'd cheered for Rita and Theresa 20 years earlier, once again welcoming chimps home to their new beginning.

WELCOME HOME, ALAMOGORDO CHIMPS!

Thirty years after the sanctuary's founding, new chimps made their way home to Chimp Haven from New Mexico in early 2025. Meet a few of the sanctuary's newest arrivals.



Al is a gentle giant who joined Tabu's group with his buddy Kamaka earlier this year. These days, he enjoys hanging out with his new bestie Wotoni, people watching, and relaxing in his play yard.



Sherill is a sweet lady who loves spending time laying out in the grass with fellow golden girl, Pearl Bug.



Henry Danger enjoys spending time with his buddy, Shogun, and hitting the hay early – he usually starts winding down around 3 p.m.



Thadeus is a playful boy who loves his chimp friends and human friends alike. His half brother, Devon, also lives at Chimp Haven and shares his pink speckled face and playful personality.



Despite his serious look, Kamaka is a sweet, playful boy who loves a good round of stomp and chase. He and his buddy Al were introduced to Tabu's group earlier this year, and the girls love him.



Fred is a sweet older gentleman who loves carrots, hanging out with his buddy Funface on their play structure, and interacting with the girls next door.

CELEBRATE 30 YEARS WITH CHIMP HAVEN

Join in on the fun with limited-edition merch and special events to commemorate 30 years of providing sanctuary.

Special Edition Merch

The first funds raised for what would become Chimp Haven came from t-shirts and tote bags. Now, 30 years later, your purchase supports more than 300 chimps at the world's largest chimpanzee sanctuary. Snag these special edition items before they're gone!
chimphaven.org/store



CHIMPANZEE DISCOVERY DAY

Saturday, October 18
9 am - noon

Join us for our special 30th anniversary-themed morning with the chimps! Observe chimp families in their forested habitats, hear chats from staff, learn at interactive stations, and take a hayride tour (and say hello to Maxi!)
chimphaven.org/events



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