

*Building a better future for
chimpanzees in the United States*

CHIMPcare

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Lincoln Park
Zoo

**PROJECT CHIMPCARE HELPS TWO PET CHIMPANZEES
GET A NEW LEASE ON LIFE AT FLORIDA SANCTUARY**

Chicago (Nov. 30, 2010) – Two chimpanzees who spent many years living in small indoor cages in a private home in New York State are settling into new digs and getting a new lease on life at a 120-acre sanctuary in Florida, thanks to efforts coordinated in part by [Project ChimpCARE](#) headquartered at Chicago’s [Lincoln Park Zoo](#).

Relocating the two chimpanzees, Casey and Murray, to the [Center for Great Apes](#) in Wauchula, Florida was no small task – it took more than five years to find funding to build new housing facilities at the sanctuary to accommodate them.



Casey, pictured above

“The sad fact is that there are too many chimpanzees living in private homes, and not enough funding for legitimate sanctuaries to provide them the long-term care they need once owners realize they can no longer meet their needs as adults,” said Steve Ross, Ph.D, founder of Project ChimpCARE.

“For so many years we felt helpless and frustrated, knowing that we couldn’t give Casey and Murray what they needed,” explained Roberta Herman, the former owner of the two chimpanzees. “They had no freedom and neither did we. We simply couldn’t give them the life they deserved.”

Owning a pet chimpanzee is legal in most states despite the fact that they are an endangered species in the wild and grow to become aggressive and potentially dangerous adults. However, new legislation in many states such as Illinois is making this practice illegal for public health and safety reasons.



“Some people are still attracted to the idea of owning a baby chimpanzee,” said Ross. “But these animals are only small and cute for a few short years, and then owners find themselves in a desperate situation trying to find safe and secure housing for them once they become strong and unmanageable adults. These are wild animals and that becomes very clear when the chimpanzees grow up.”

Murray, pictured left

The non-partisan group, Project ChimpCARE, was founded two years ago in an effort to locate every chimpanzee living in the United States and assess their living conditions and care. Ross chairs the Chimpanzee Species Survival Plan, a program of the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums \(AZA\)](#) which demands stringent criteria of care for chimpanzees living in accredited zoos.

The Hermans are not alone in their desire to move their pet chimpanzees into better, more secure living conditions with more space and other chimpanzees with which to socialize. They are also not alone in the frustrating reality that there are not enough sanctuaries to house all the pet chimpanzees scattered throughout the country.

Along with assessing over 95 chimpanzees at 22 unaccredited zoos, private homes, entertainment compounds and breeding facilities, Project ChimpCARE has helped facilitate the relocation of 18 chimpanzees to AZA-accredited zoos and legitimate

sanctuaries where they are provided more space, stable medical care and the appropriate social groups which these complex individuals need.

“We have been incredibly fortunate to find appropriate facilities to house these chimpanzees,” said Ross. “But there are plenty more chimpanzees that may need relocation. There is difficulty finding the resources necessary to build facilities that provide them with a safe and enriching life. Most private citizens, despite good intentions, simply do not have the expertise or resources to provide these environments.”

Project ChimpCARE’s goal is to improve the wellbeing of chimpanzees across the United States by opening up the lines of communication and information sharing between disparate groups.

“We want to educate the public about the pressing issues of chimpanzee care while advocating support for a system of sustainable lifetime care,” said Ross. “The future for many chimpanzees in the United States is uncertain. Legislation is changing. Finances are unstable. Project ChimpCARE seeks to collaborate with anyone invested in caring for chimpanzees and to build a better future.”



Casey in her new outdoor habitat at the Center for Great Apes

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About Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo

Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo, a historic landmark founded in 1868, is dedicated to connecting people with nature by providing a free, family-oriented wildlife experience. A leader in conservation science both globally and locally, the zoo exemplifies the highest quality animal care and educational outreach. The not-for-profit zoo, managed by The Lincoln Park Zoological Society,

is a member-supported organization and one of the nation's only free, privately managed zoos. For more information, call 312 -742-2000 or visit www.lpzoo.org.

About the Center for Great Apes

Founded in 1993, the Center for Great Apes is a world-class sanctuary for orangutans and chimpanzees that have been retired from the entertainment industry, from biomedical research, or who are no longer wanted as pets. Situated on 120 acres of wooded land and orange groves in Wauchula, Florida, the Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which provides dignity in a safe, healthy, and enriching environment for more than 45 great apes in need of lifetime care. The Center is not open to the public as a zoo and receives no government funding. For more information or to donate, visit www.centerforgreatapes.org or call (863) 767-8903.