



Kari Bagnall, founder and executive director of Jungle Friends, is hopeful that the primate sanctuary will find funding to expand beyond its current 12-acre site.

GAINESVILLE – What years ago was a vacant pasture, today resembles a lush jungle washed in shades of vibrant green, featuring an abundance of plant life and lively monkeys swinging every which way.

Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary, located at 13915 north State Road 121 between Gainesville and LaCrosse, lies just outside of the hustle of Gainesville’s college life. Kari Bagnall, founder and executive director of Jungle Friends., a non-profit organization, is hopeful that the sanctuary will be able to expand from the 12.5 treed acres set back from the highway.

“When I obtained the property that Jungle Friends is on now it was just pasture,” said Bagnall. “I planted trees and made sure that any habitat that was built to house the monkeys was one where they could be in a forest setting and I would do the same with the land adjacent, if we are able to buy it.”

The 20-acre property, which adjoins the Jungle Friends back gate, is being offered to the sanctuary by owner Earl Vining for \$250,000, lower than the \$295,000 market price.

Currently Jungle Friends has been using donated monies to expand on its own property,

building more habitats for its full primate community, leaving little money to go toward purchasing the property.

The realtor is looking to have the property sold by summer and Jungle Friends is hoping for donations or someone to buy them the property before it is sold to someone else, Bagnall said.

“We’re almost at capacity right now with approximately 120 monkeys, two lab monkeys coming in a couple of months, and another pet monkey coming next week,” Bagnall said. “I’m happy that there is starting to be a trend in getting monkeys out of laboratories and into sanctuaries, but I’m having to say no to monkeys every week because there just isn’t enough room to hold more and still maintain roomy habitats.”

The expanded property would allow Jungle Friends to build more habitats and take in about 300 more primates, Bagnall said.

“Having the property sold to this sanctuary would mean an even better life for the monkeys here and those who still need a home,” Jungle Friends employee Beverly Keene said.

“These animals are meant to be in the wild, and we try to provide the closest thing to that, a place where the monkeys can interact and move about in our habitats, Keene said.”

“On the outskirts of the property there are some natural wooded areas, which we would leave,” Bagnall said. “There is also a small creek on the property, which we would also leave because we want to keep the land as natural as possible to provide a good home for the monkeys.”

Bagnall said she would plant more trees on the new property, as she did on her current property, planting them in the habitats where the monkeys reside in order to create a jungle like environment.

“It is absolutely extraordinary how well the monkeys are taken care of,” said Joelle Kerdier, 61,

Jungle Friends volunteer. “The monkeys live in greenery as close to the jungle setting as possible, and the setting is one of the most important aspects, when taking care of wild animals.”

The sustainable efforts incorporated in the sanctuary include using sticks and logs and donated fire hose and rope to make ladders and swings on which the primates play.

In addition, each habitat is constructed with fencing materials so that the structures can be mended easily when trees grow taller or to provide a more spacious area for the monkeys to swing around in.

Bagnall said she would like to increase the sustainability efforts of the sanctuary to include gardens where fruits and vegetables can be grown in the fertile black soil to feed the primates.

Also, a move toward using solar power in the sanctuary, especially if it is expanded, is important to cut back on electricity in the environment and minimize the expenses of using electricity to power it, Bagnall said.

In addition, the bigger property would mean better care of the primates that reside in the sanctuary.

“One of the major things we’d like to do with the other property is to build a larger on-site veterinary facility for the primates which will provide full care,” Bagnall said. This would also allow for expansion of the facility’s internship program to a whole-health program, where interns would learn vet-tech procedures that would teach how to socialize monkeys coming into the sanctuary, as many new monkeys have never interacted with other monkeys.

Acquiring the new property would allow Jungle Friends to not only better the lives of the primates, but also better the environment in which those monkeys need to survive and thrive, said Taja Fulmore, 33, a new employee at Jungle Friends.

Now the efforts for the sanctuary are focused on getting donations that will contribute to the purchase of the neighboring property.

Bagnall said donations have been quite limited because people aren't aware of the problem of getting primates to sanctuaries.

"We first have to educate people that there is a problem, that there are a lot of monkeys in research, and pet monkeys that need homes, and having the extended land will provide more space for those monkeys in need of a home," Bagnall said.

For more information on how to help or make a donation, contact Bagnall at 386-462-7779 or by email at kari@junglefriends.org . Also, online donations can be made at <http://www.junglefriends.org>