Our Mission

The mission of Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary is to provide permanent, high-quality sanctuary care for monkeys who have been abused, confiscated by authorities, used in research, kept as “pets” or who are simply no longer wanted. Our priority is to provide care to address the individual medical, psychological and behavioral needs of these captive primates. We are committed to protecting and providing them a safe, healthy and stimulating environment.

We embody the philosophy of ‘Sanctuary’ that is defined as a place where animals can come to live and be protected for the rest of their lives. It’s a safe haven, where they receive the very best care possible. Animals are not bought, sold, bred, traded, used for commercial purposes, or mistreated in any way. They are given every opportunity to behave naturally in a wonderfully loving environment.

Our Vision

At Jungle Friends we see ourselves as pivotal in the movement to end the abuse and mistreatment of primates everywhere. While it was never our goal to be the largest New World primate sanctuary in the country, the increasing need has required us to fill that role. Over the next three years, we plan to double our sanctuary capacity from 200 to 400 monkeys. However, we know that even at maximum capacity we cannot take in every monkey who needs a home. In order to address the growing need, we will build on our reputation for quality and compassion by serving as an educational model for other sanctuaries, organizations and individuals.
In Las Vegas, Kari Bagnall’s friend left her with a baby capuchin named Samantha. Kari learns early on that monkeys are not “pets”. Humans are poor playmates for monkeys — monkeys need the friendship of other monkeys. Kari purchases Samantha’s sister Charlotte, as her companion.

Kari’s next visit to the breeder ends in tears when she witnessed the breeder pry a tiny baby away from his mother. This event changes Kari’s life forever.

Kari leaves her career as an interior designer, sells everything and starts Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary with Samantha, Charlotte and other exotic animals. Kari also rescues Cuddly, their mother, their sister and brother, as well as other monkeys from the breeder.

Kari flies 13 monkeys, two parrots, one cat and a dog on a private plane to Gainesville, Florida to establish the sanctuary in a climate more suitable for monkeys.

Jungle Friends is the largest sanctuary for New World primates in North America, with a long waiting list. In 2014, Jungle Friends was granted a Special Exception by Alachua County to expand our property by an additional 27 acres. This 27-acre expansion will allow us to rescue more monkeys – more than doubling our capacity.

Samantha and Charlotte will be in their mid forties (the average life span of a capuchin) and Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary will still be here... with your help!
The Tragedy of Captive Monkeys

It’s not hard to understand why monkeys are so appealing as “pets,” given their playful nature and ability to form strong bonds with humans. But many people who believe that monkeys would make a good pet soon realize they have made a terrible mistake, natural primate behavior can become destructive or aggressive. Jungle Friends works with guardians to relocate their monkeys to a sanctuary home.

Most captive monkeys are kept isolated from others of their own species. They become lonely, depressed, and even aggressive. Captive monkeys develop a number of concerning behaviors as a result of their psychological pain – repetitive rocking, compulsively hair pulling, digit sucking, self grasping and self attacking.

These self-inflicted wounds may lead to infection and in serious cases require amputation. These issues are by no means rare. A direct-observation study in 2011 of 40 primates in varying conditions of captivity found abnormal, harmful behavior in every single monkey under observation.

Many people are unaware of the extent to which scientific research is conducted on primates. As you are reading this, more than 112,000 monkeys are living in laboratories in the U.S. However, many universities are getting out of the monkey business and closing their primate research programs. Two such examples are Wooster College and the University of Georgia, who in 2013 recognized that their primates deserved to retire with dignity — Jungle Friends was contacted for help.

Jungle Friends works with major universities and laboratories to offer homes to monkeys they are retiring. In 2014 we provided permanent homes to 42 monkeys retired from research. Many of the monkeys at Jungle Friends were used in research for decades. Now they get to enjoy the company of other monkeys and a more natural environment.

Zeke was released from research from Wooster College along with his brother several years ago. Zeke was reunited with his father, aunt, and family friend at Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary when they were released from the same lab.

Chris recently arrived from the University of Georgia along with six other males. These seven are now living outside after more than 20 years indoors.

"Ms. Bagnall and her staff provide an important service to the scientific and conservation community by providing an alternative to massive euthanasia of nonhuman primates as researchers retire or no longer have funding...Jungle Friends is perhaps the best sanctuary I have ever visited"

Charles T. Snowden, Hilldale Professor of Psychology Emeritus

These critically endangered cotton-top tamarins are the first of a large group retiring from an Ivy League university closing its primate research center.
In 2014 we provided permanent homes to seven brown capuchin monkeys from the University of George and three from Wooster College who joined two others already living at Jungle Friends. These are just two of many universities who have contacted us in search of sanctuary care for their research primates. Recently an Ivy League university agreed to retire 144 cotton-top tamarins, all of whom will be making Jungle Friends their permanent home.

**How Miracles Happen**

We’ve seen it all at Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary. Some monkeys arrive with serious disabilities, such as diabetes, amputated or paralyzed limbs, blindness, auto-immune disorders, metabolic bone disease, cancer, heart disease and many psychological disorders. For many of these monkeys, it is their first time seeing sunshine and climbing trees, and it is their first encounter with other monkeys. Monkeys are highly social animals, and a lifetime with only humans for company leaves them feeling anxious and depressed.

At Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary, everything changes for these monkeys. For the first time in their lives, monkeys live in spacious, natural habitats with swinging ropes, ladders, buckets and barrels. They can climb on trees, feel the grass under their feet and the wind on their faces. The monkeys have companions of their same or like species for cuddling, playing, and grooming. Each day, our care staff evaluate their dietary, therapeutic and social needs. Specially trained caregivers are on call 24/7 to comfort and care for them. Soon these once-frightened monkeys are relaxing and playing! The wounded heal and the sick become well.

“Jungle Friends provides appropriate housing, husbandry and nutritional care for all their animals at a level above most primate facilities. The animals are housed in large outdoor cages with connecting walkways and are exposed to natural sunlight and warm weather”.

Dr. Darryl J. Heard, Associate Professor and Service Chief Zoological Medicine at the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida
What Makes Jungle Friends Unique

Jungle Friends is one of the only sanctuaries in the United States with the training and expertise to care for special-needs monkeys. Whether the monkeys suffer from diabetes, paraplegia or are blind, it doesn’t matter – we take them all and offer individualized care! Often times we take in monkeys that other organizations are unable or unwilling to help. Our habitats enable us to make changes where appropriate to accommodate disabilities. We invest time and money in “lost causes,” and time and time again watch those who are deemed hopeless transform into vibrant, healthy, happy monkeys.

Jersey (above) is a former “pet” monkey whose self-mutilation due to loneliness and stress resulted in the amputation of his right leg and most of his left foot. With months of round-the-clock care, Jersey achieved a miraculous recovery at Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary. Jersey now walks and climbs using his tail in the place of his right leg. It is hard to tell Jersey is missing a leg!

The Miracles Aren’t Just for Monkeys!

“I have watched others who assist in the ongoing work at Jungle Friends grow personally as human beings. Not only have they acquired new work and performance skills, but they have also learned a sense of empowerment that comes from learning and applying one’s self in new ways while helping others.”

Claude Leasure, Active Volunteer
When a ruptured disc left Bongo suddenly paralyzed from the waist down, vets suggested that he would never recover and should be euthanized. We gave him a chance, and after a few months working with care staff in a specially designed rehabilitat – and being cared for by his companion, KC -- Bongo is not only walking, he is running and climbing!

In addition to our care of special-needs monkeys, Jungle Friends is distinguished by an innovative method of habitat management. Runways stretching between habitats make it possible for us to move monkeys to another habitat without the need to handle them. This reduces stress and maximizes safety for both primates and their human caretakers, and also allows us to move the monkeys to new habitats to relieve boredom. Our runway system has been so effective that our method has been used as a model for other sanctuaries and animal organizations.

Along with enabling monkeys to move between habitats, runways also allow us to socialize monkeys by gradually allowing them to be closer to each other, eventually removing the barriers and allowing them to live together.
The Jungle Friends Community

Jungle Friends isn’t just a community of monkeys, but of people as well. Staff members are so dedicated to the monkeys that many of them live on site, including the Sanctuary Manager and the Founder. We embody the deeply held values of ‘dynamic harmlessness’—which includes selfless service. We promote compassion by encouraging service to humanity, animals and nature.

Our volunteers, who are so critical to our mission, come from all over the world and stay for as little as a week or as long as a year. We have created a family of like-minded people who have been transformed by our relationships with monkeys and each other.

Jungle Friends runs on “Volunteer Power”! Volunteers come from all over the world, with a wide range of motivations, and all share a desire to work hard for the monkeys. We welcome and appreciate all of our valuable volunteers. Our regular volunteers range from groups who come out annually to individuals who volunteer nearly every day -- and everything in between.

Our “living habitats” provide a lush environment with trees, grass, and plants to encourage the monkeys’ natural foraging behaviors, and to provide very important privacy. The runways connect all of the habitats together so the monkeys can be moved to new habitats easily and can enjoy a new habitat as well as new neighbors, new sites, new sounds and new smells.
Jungle Friends is well-known in the sanctuary community for its ability to care for monkeys with special needs and help him or her thrive. Staff perform several rounds throughout the day to check on the health and well-being of all the monkeys. Particular care is afforded to the special-needs monkeys who are elderly, have disabilities, need daily insulin injections, or simply need extra attention on a day-to-day basis.

Puchi was found wandering along the Eisenhower Expressway in Chicago. It is believed that he had been in a fire, which could explain his significant hair loss. The lens in Puchi’s right eye was detached and his eye had to be removed. He is almost blind in the other eye, due to cataracts.

Udi was found in a basement without food or water. He suffered from severe metabolic bone disease — he could not stand or walk. Udi’s bone disease was caused by a poor diet and lack of sunlight. Udi is now thriving at Jungle Friends and lives with three other spider monkeys.

Chi Chi is one of many geriatric residents. Last year she required surgery to remove a tumor in her breast. Despite a bad prognosis, Chi Chi made a full recovery.

Joni is an adult monkey who looks like a baby due to a form of dwarfism that also affected her legs, forcing her to walk on her hands. She lives happily with ChiChi.

"Diets are carefully planned. Structures are properly constructed and tastefully designed with unusually effective innovations. Special care for sick, injured, diabetic and elderly primates is the rule...Kari is a master in managing the volunteers and workers at her facility. Her ability to produce a budget, manage funds and make the hard financial decisions has been amazing to me. She has ‘kept the course’ through some fairly adverse times. Kari has a vision and structures her life, her volunteer’s hours and her funds to accomplish short and long term goals very effectively”.

Skip Trubey,
Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
Community Outreach

Jungle Friends, while formed to rescue monkeys, has developed into a community educational resource. We offer PowerPoint presentations and our “Almost Wild” video to groups, clubs, conferences, festivals, schools, etc.

Jungle Friends’ outreach program teaches how to be better caretakers of our Earth and all its inhabitants. We are dedicated to dynamic harmlessness, animal welfare issues and advocacy for primate protection.

In our presentation we show the monkeys upon arrival or where they came from and how they flourish here at Jungle Friends. We bring awareness to the problem with the ever-exploiting trade in wild and exotic animals and make clear that wild animals are not ‘pets’, not domesticated, and should be free to live in the wild with their natural families. People learn to take more responsibility in their relationship with the world and all its inhabitants.

On Saturday, November 15, Jungle Friends founder and executive director, Kari Bagnall, presented to a roomful of attendees during a presentation at Smith College regarding the nine monkeys awaiting retirement from lab research.

Life in captivity can never match life in the wild, so we provide monkeys a safe, forever haven that is as natural as possible. Watch our “Almost Wild” video on our website.

Animal Warriors hosted a Monkey Party in Tampa, FL where Jungle Friends founder, Kari Bagnall, and crew presented to attendees.

"I want to thank Kari so much for coming to Smith College to present ‘Healing Against All Odds.’ Through video, photos and story telling, Kari shared with a rapt audience how love and care from humans and other primates can bring even the most severely emotionally and physically traumatized monkeys back from the brink.”

Ana Wolf, LICSW

“Animal Warriors is a volunteer group that helps sanctuaries and rescues across the country. We have been helping Jungle Friends build forever homes for rescued monkeys for many years. The work Jungle Friends does and the animals they rescue is truly amazing. We are honored to be part of the great work they do.”

Jennifer Ruszczyk
Animal Warriors
Advocacy

At Jungle Friends, we actively engage with our national and international animal welfare and advocacy partners to be a voice for all non-human primates. By utilizing online petitions, campaigning for legislation and sharing information regarding the plight of primates in captivity via our social media sites, we are able to speak for the voiceless.

In 2004, we began working with major universities and laboratories to retire their monkeys to sanctuary as an alternative to euthanasia. Since then we have successfully provided homes to 178 monkeys and counting. To spread the message of Research Retirement, Jungle Friends founder and director Kari Bagnall addressed attendees of the 2015 American Society of Primatologists (ASP) Conference. Her presentation “Research Retirement: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Sanctuary,” where she outlined ways in which research labs and primate sanctuaries can work collaboratively to retire monkeys. The presentation was well received and has since become a part of the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance’s (NAPSA) online webinar series.

"Interest in sanctuary retirement as an option for monkeys leaving research is exemplified by the dedication of a symposium on this topic at the annual meeting of the American Society of Primatologists held in June 2015, and the high attendance at these talks. The presentation given by Kari Bagnall, Director of Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary, opened a collaborative dialogue between researchers and sanctuaries that will have the long-lasting effect of facilitating sanctuary retirement for monkeys leaving research.”

Christine L. Buckmaster
Primatologist
Palo Alto, California

"Kari and others in the Sanctuary community have made it clear to all that research labs and universities can collaborate with private sanctuaries, for the good of all concerned—the monkeys, the sanctuary, and the research institution. I am proud that my institution helped “break the ice” in this area and thrilled that the capuchin monkeys from UGA have a happy home at Jungle Friends for their well-deserved retirement.”

Dorothy Fragaszy, Ph.D.
Professor & Chair,
Behavioral & Brain Sciences Program, Psychology Dept.
University of Georgia