



Giving Day for Apes: Raising Funds, Building Capacity, Raising Awareness

By Jackie Bennett, Program Director – Africa and Asia

In what is now an annual tradition, Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) will present Giving Day for Apes on Tuesday, October 13th. This event, now in its seventh year, started small in 2014 when Arcus Foundation piloted a giving day event for ape sanctuaries in Africa, to build capacity and hone social media fundraising skills. The following year, Arcus tested the event again for ape sanctuaries in North America. In 2016, GFAS joined Arcus as a co-presenter.

Through that collaboration, Giving Day for Apes was able to grow in scale and for the first time became a multi-continent event: more than 30 sanctuaries and rescue centers from Africa, Asia, and North America came together on one 24-hour Giving Day to present their fundraising campaigns, receive donations, and win prize money. In 2019, with Arcus' ongoing support, GFAS became the sole presenter of Giving Day for Apes, overseeing the highest performing Giving Day to date with nearly \$650,000 raised and awarded.

Laying the Groundwork for a Successful Event

Giving Day for Apes is more than a one-day fundraiser. Preparations for the October event begin in early spring when GFAS works with fundraising platform provider Mightycause to design the year's Giving Day website, fill it with event information, and ready it for participant registration. Sanctuaries and rescue centers in Africa, Asia, or North America that care for chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, orangutans, or gibbons can apply to participate. Each is asked to certify that it meets a set of basic terms of participation, the core ethical principles of a "true sanctuary" upon which the GFAS standards are based. These include no commercial trade of animals, no invasive research, and no direct contact between apes and the visiting public. GFAS reviews each registration application and follows up with sanctuaries as needed before final approval.

Prizes: How They Shape Giving Day

Giving Day for Apes provides opportunities not only for donations but also significant monetary prizes. This year, more prizes than ever will be available, in the total amount of \$58,000, thanks to sponsors Arcus Foundation and American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS). AAVS President and GFAS Board member Sue Leary expresses what this sponsorship means: "Giving Day for Apes is such a positive annual event—we love it. The best part is that it benefits and energizes all the sanctuaries who do life-saving work for our closest animal cousins. AAVS participates to honor the animals and the sanctuaries and we commend GFAS and Arcus for sponsoring."

Designing the year's prize structure and schedule is one of the more challenging steps of Giving Day preparation, as this will set the pace of the event and must provide opportunities for 30+ organizations

across many time zones to compete to win additional funds. Prizes include top finishes on leaderboards, some of which are restricted by continent, as well as concentrated “Power Hours” in which sanctuaries compete by continent to raise the most funds or receive donations from the most unique donors during that hour (these can be exciting hours to watch, given the amount of online donor activity, with each “Power Hour” winner receiving a \$2,500 prize). Other prizes are randomly awarded at designated times throughout the 24-hour event.

This year, new categories of prizes have been created, which are certain to create a new level of excitement and friendly competition. These include a “kick-off” prize that will be won as soon as the 24-hour event opens, and an “end of the night” prize that will give \$1,000 to the organization that receives the very last donation before Giving Day ends.

Building Capacity for Fundraising Success

Seven years on, the focus of Giving Day for Apes is still capacity building. Participating organizations are offered webinar trainings, guides, and templates to help them design a fundraising campaign. Webinars, presented jointly by GFAS and Mightycause, discuss marketing and communications strategies and tactics, and ways to increase the impact of individual giving. Last year, a greater emphasis was placed on seeking and leveraging matching grants – offered by major donors or board members – and the event saw an increase in the number of grants used as well as the amount matched. This year’s webinars have reviewed strategies for email campaigns, donor stewardship and retention, and communications tactics for recruiting peer-to-peer fundraisers to increase fundraising capacity.

This Year, the Need Is Even Greater

Giving Day for Apes has continued to be a platform for ape sanctuaries and rescue centers to share their missions and raise needed funds to care for their animals. This year, more than ever, those funds are needed. Sanctuaries across the globe have struggled with the impact of COVID-19; they have closed their gates to visitors for the safety of humans and non-humans alike, and some have operated with a small staff of only the most essential workers. Travel bans and closed borders have put international volunteer and internship programs on hold, resulting in both loss of revenue and loss of additional human resources. Linda May, Captive Apes Program Director for Arcus Foundation, explains, “as we have seen from the impact of COVID, sanctuaries must be able to respond to dynamic environments and need capacity to cultivate diverse funding sources. Giving Day for Apes continues to be a platform to build capacity in digital engagement to reach new supporters in these challenging times.”

Early donations for Giving Day for Apes will begin on Monday, September 14th, and all funds raised from that date onward will count towards the participating organizations’ fundraising totals and leaderboard placements. If you would like to learn more, you may visit the Giving Day for Apes website at www.givingdayforapes.org. There you can see this year’s participating organizations, read about prizes, and find options to donate or set up a peer-to-peer fundraising page for a sanctuary or rescue center that you would like to support. And be sure to check the website throughout the day on October 13th, beginning at midnight EDT, when the excitement begins, leaderboard positions shift, and prize announcements are made.