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**Lincoln Park Zoo Scientists Awarded National Institutes of Health  
Grant for Chimpanzee Research**

*Study utilizes largest and most detailed ape behavior dataset in the world; Research aims to shed light on mother-infant relationships in apes and humans*

Chicago, Ill – Lincoln Park Zoo post-doctoral researcher Carson Murray, Ph.D. has received a \$900,000 grant over five years from one of the world’s foremost medical research centers, the National Institutes of Health. She and her mentors, Elizabeth Lonsdorf, Ph.D. and Rachel Santymire, Ph.D. of Lincoln Park Zoo and Martha McClintock, Ph.D. of the University of Chicago will work to identify stressors of wild female chimpanzees and discover how stress relates to maternal behavior and ultimately to offspring stress, health and development.

Chimpanzees can provide researchers insight into humans because of a shared evolutionary history and similar social patterns. Additionally, both chimpanzee and human mothers provide the majority of infant care throughout a long period of infant development. In most mammals, including humans, the mother-offspring relationship is critical to how well offspring survive and reproduce later in life. The long-term goal of the zoo’s research is to better understand how maternal behavior influences infant health and development in humans.

Research is being conducted with wild chimpanzees in Gombe National Park, Tanzania where renowned primatologist Jane Goodall first began her research in 1960 and Murray lived and worked for two years during her dissertation studies. The zoo’s project combines new field data on stress levels with a wealth of long-term behavioral data collected since 1970 by researchers from the Jane Goodall Institute’s Gombe Stream Research Centre.

“For nearly 40 years researchers have been following mother chimpanzees and their offspring, recording their interactions. This is a truly amazing dataset of 15,000 hours on 39 different mothers. No other study site has a comparable amount of data on great ape

mother-infant interactions,” explained Dr. Lonsdorf, director of the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes at Lincoln Park Zoo. “We will use the behavioral data to determine maternal styles. Additionally, health data has been collected since 2004. These data will allow us to fully investigate the relationship between offspring stress and health.”

By combining long-term and new field data on stress hormones, zoo researchers will be able to address fundamental questions about chimpanzees and better understand maternal behavior and stress in humans. Researchers use non-invasive techniques, gathering hormone data from fecal samples, to obtain a clear view of the relationship of the mother and offspring without creating any disturbance.

“Despite how much insight chimpanzees can provide into humans, relatively little is known about what influences their maternal behavior and how that behavior translates to offspring health and development,” said Dr. Santymire from the zoo’s Davee Center for Epidemiology and Endocrinology. “This study will provide valuable results that will be relevant to many issues that affect human families today, such as infant abuse and neglect, and the impact of stress on future success in society, anxiety and depression.”

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#### **ABOUT LINCOLN PARK ZOO**

Lincoln Park Zoo, a historic Chicago 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](http://www.lpzoo.org).