

**Editorial: Death of Dar will bring changes**  
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The news over the weekend came as a shock. Dar, one of the chimpanzees in residence at the Chimpanzee and Human Communication Institute on the Central Washington University campus died at age 36.

Dar had not been sick. A post-mortem exam determined he died of a sudden cardiac failure. Mary Lee Jensvold, director of the institute, said that is the most common cause of death in captive male chimpanzees.

Much like the deaths of Washoe and Moja, this was a death in the family for the other chimpanzees in residence, Loulis and Tatu, the institute staff and volunteers, the campus community and the community at large.

Dar was one of the family of chimpanzees who learned to use American Sign Language.

The story of the chimpanzees starting with the work of Allen and Beatrix Gardner and continuing with Roger and Deborah Fouts and on to today, has captured worldwide interest. The death of Washoe, the first chimpanzee to acquire a human language, was mourned worldwide, with the story being picked up around the globe.

It is not an overstatement to say that the chimpanzees at the institute are Ellensburg's most famous residents. The institute puts Ellensburg and Central on the map for people who would otherwise have no reason to know about the school or community.

It is natural for the center to blend into the landscape for people who live in this community, but it is a draw for people across the world.

Dar's death carries wide-ranging implications. Institute officials have long been planning to bring new chimpanzees into the facility. Three was considered the minimum number. A decrease to two just adds emphasis to the situation.

But it is neither simple, nor inexpensive, to welcome new chimpanzees. In a previous interview, Jensvold said the chimpanzees would be brought in slowly and the facility would need to be modified for two living groups.

The institute has always tapped sources other than state funding, but the downturn in the economy has hit all sources of funding, whether public or private endowments.

It is important for the university and the community for the institute to continue its work.

With an unexpected death there is a period of shock before mourning sets in. People are mourning Dar's death. There will be a memorial on Dec. 9, which should help bring some closure.

The institute will move forward. There will be excitement in bringing new chimpanzees into the facility. The legacy of Dar and the other chimpanzees who have been part of the institute family will be felt for generations.