



**NEWS RELEASE
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SPINAL SURGERY AND DETERMINATION SAVE LIONESS

SARASOTA, Fla., May 27, 2008 – Olla has had some hard knocks in her life, including those that shattered her canine teeth, a legacy from one of her owners. Then, in March, the 400-pound lioness lost the use of her back legs. In many sanctuaries, this usually results in euthanasia.

Luckily for Olla, the non-profit Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary, which rescued her five years ago, is near Dr. Anne Chauvet, a veterinary neurosurgeon--still a relatively rare specialty. Chauvet operated on a herniated disc that was compressing Olla's spinal cord and causing the paralysis. To aid in her recovery, Legacy Pools and its affiliate, Arthur Pools International of Los Angeles, donated a custom pool to help Olla regain the full use of her legs.

"Performing surgery on such a large animal is challenging," Chauvet said. "Six people carried her to the procedure rooms for a myelogram dye study of her spinal cord and the subsequent surgery. I know of only a handful of other instances where such surgeries have even been attempted on big cats." The entire procedure took about six hours, she said. The surgery and aftercare was donated, and Chauvet also searched for someone willing to provide a pool for Olla's rehabilitation.

"We knew that time was of the essence because it was important that Olla not become depressed and lose her will to live. We want to be sure she can heal and live a full life," said Pamela Evertz of Arthur Pools International, a worldwide manufacturer and distributor of portable and above ground pools.

Kay Rosaire, founder of the Big Cat Habitat, is optimistic about Olla's recovery. "She is standing and walking and trying to play," Rosaire said. "We believe the exercise in the pool will be the fastest way to rebuild muscle strength in Olla's back legs, and we will have to convince her that lions really do like water. We're deeply grateful to Dr. Chauvet, Arthur Pools and Legacy Pools for helping Olla."

Rosaire estimates Olla is 15 years old, but does not know her entire history. Big Cat Habitat, which is licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Florida Fish and Wildlife, was asked by the two agencies to take in seven lions, including Olla. The lions had spent two years in small cages in a wooded area and would have been euthanized if they had not found a safe, permanent home. Most had their canine teeth broken like Olla's, she said.

More information about Legacy Pools and Arthur Pools International is available at www.LegacyPoolsUSA.com and www.ArthursPools.com. Additional information about Big Cat Habitat, a 501(c)3 non-profit haven for big cats, bears and other animals in need, is available at www.BigCatHabitat.org.

Dr. Anne Chauvet, one of about 150 veterinary neurologists and neurosurgeons in the United States, is the founder of Veterinary Neuro Services in Sarasota, Fla. For more information, see www.PetNeuro.com.

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