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The Mission Continues

by Robert Casserly, Executive Director
Sanctuary One at Double Oak Farm

A group of veterans from the Veterans Administration Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics in White City comes out to the Sanctuary one day a month. They are an amazing group of men and women who often tell us that visiting the farm is the highlight of their month.

We look forward to their visit, too. The vets, staff, and volunteers work together on animal care, gardening, construction projects, or whatever else needs to get done. It's fun, meaningful, and makes us all feel good.

Everyone at the Sanctuary has a job to do, including the herd of 65 rescued farm animals and house pets. For example, the friendliest animals at the Sanctuary help provide animal-assisted therapy. It's hard for a veteran to feel grumpy, stressed, or lonely while giving an 800-pound pig a back-scratch as she snorts and grunts for joy, or feeding hay to a pack of friendly goats, or petting a formerly abused dog who melts into your arms.

Kevin Ferguson, a former U.S. Navy ensign, put it this way: "There is a direct link between broken people and broken animals. We receive a lot of care from others and it's important that we give back. Working with the Sanctuary animals fills a void and gives us a sense of purpose."

Gardening is another popular activity for the veterans who volunteer at the Sanctuary. In healthcare parlance it's called "horticultural-assisted therapy." That's really just a fancy way of saying getting one's hands dirty while working alongside people who care about you is healthy. Doesn't really matter whether it's mucking out the barn,

planting apple trees, or building a rock wall in the garden. Veterans' programs are more important than ever, because 44,000 service men and women are coming home from the war in Iraq, and one million service men and women are expected to leave the military in the next five years. Many veterans struggle to find the same purpose at home as they found in the mission, camaraderie, and structure of the military. Through community service, veterans find renewed strength and purpose while building stronger communities.

The Sanctuary's monthly veteran's day is our way of honoring these men and women who have served their country. We also hope to inspire other nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies to consider reaching out to help veterans. Working together, we can make southern Oregon a model for what's possible when a community thinks of veterans as a valuable and underutilized resource for building a better tomorrow.

The Sanctuary receives no government funding of any kind for our veteran's program. We rely on voluntary donations to provide this service. If you would like to support our efforts with a tax-deductible gift, please visit our website, SanctuaryOne.org, to donate with a credit card. Checks may be sent to Sanctuary One, 13195 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville OR 97530. For more information or assistance, please call 541.899.8627.

Group Tours Now Available! Schools, churches, retirement homes, community-service clubs, and other groups are welcome to schedule a tour of the Sanctuary. Service-learning work projects are available, too. Please visit SanctuaryOne.org for details.



Veterans pose for a photo at Sanctuary One.

Focus on:

It's time to get out your walking shoes! Saturday, May 19th marks the 10th Annual Food & Friends Fun Walk fundraising event, which is held in Ashland. Participants will walk about 2.5 miles from the Ashland Senior Center (located at 1699 Homes Avenue) to the North Mountain Nature Park and back. Once back at the site, refreshments will be available while we hold our raffle drawing. All proceeds directly support our efforts to provide Meals on Wheels and congregate meals for seniors in local communities like Jacksonville.

The need for your support is greater now than ever before. Our clients donate what they can towards the cost of the meals they receive, but as you know, money is tight for everyone, especially those living on limited, fixed incomes. Program income is down 10% for the first seven months of this fiscal year and the outlook for the future is looking uncertain as we face possible reductions in State funding.

If you would like to help, there are a number of ways you can get involved. As an individual you may be interested in participating in the Fun Walk itself. You can collect donations from friends, family or coworkers and join us in Ashland on May 19th. Putting together a team and challenging each other is a fun way to help seniors in your community. If you cannot attend, you might

consider making a tax-deductible donation to someone else who is.



Are you the owner or manager of a business? We are seeking donations in the form of both business sponsorships and goods or services which can be used as raffle prizes. Past donations have included gift certificates for something as simple as free sandwiches or a haircut, a massage or manicure, or actual items like a gazing globe for the garden, coffee or a box of chocolates.

Remember, all donations to Food & Friends are tax-deductible, and everything we raise goes straight into providing service to our local seniors, including those in Jacksonville. However you can help, even if it's just helping spread the word, is appreciated. If you would like more information on how you can get involved, or if you just have questions, please feel free to call us at 541-734-9505. You may also visit us online at www.rovco.org and click on "Food & Friends." Our "Events" page contains more details on the event, registration, and more. We hope to see you in Ashland on May 19th!



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