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## Home is where the animals are

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Sansa Collins, new manager of Sanctuary One, was pregnant with Zelda when she and her family moved to the Applegate Valley in May. Zelda was born in July.

Photo by Jim Craven

**By Claire Krulikowski**

September 16, 2009

My dream has always been to live on an animal sanctuary," explains Sansa Collins. "I'd think about — if I could work, save up money and retire — that is what I wanted to do."

Collins' dream came true in May when she became resident manager at Sanctuary One, a nonprofit animal sanctuary located on 55 acres at Double Oak Farm in the Applegate Valley.

"I'm amazed to have this dream be given to me," Collins says. "If I'd worked my whole life, I couldn't have founded a place like this."

Collins and her family — husband Joe, youngster Joey, three dogs and two cats — made the move to Sanctuary One while Collins was pregnant, taking over the sanctuary's large manufactured home. Baby Zelda was born on July 6.

The on-site job enables Collins, a 2005 graduate of Southern Oregon University, to spend plenty of time during the day with Joey and Zelda.

"I really love that the kitchen table overlooks the barn," Collin says. "In the early morning, I can see my husband, Joe, feeding the horses and watch the caretaker (Jerry Henning) — who's kind of a longtime cowboy who can do everything — mentoring Joe. Just seeing my husband in this environment and being taught to be a cowboy is so much fun."

Joe, who works full time in Ashland, put his SOU computer networking studies on hold to help Sansa realize her dream.

"My hubby is a trooper," Collins says. "He's doing the animal feeding and irrigation work."

A variety of animals, including horses, burros, roosters and goats, rescued from dire straits by animal groups and some by regulatory agencies, reside at the sanctuary. There had also been seven feral cats prowling outside, but Collins seems to be successfully socializing six. (Sanctuary One is not set up to accept animals from private citizens, and anyone who abandons an animal there will be prosecuted.)

While her love of animals drew her to her new life, Collins does not directly care for the animals at the sanctuary. She helps them in other ways.

"She is the face of the organization," says Lin Bernhardt, president of the Sanctuary One board of directors, "meeting the public ... developing the volunteer program, creating new community programs, building relationships, as well as handling all the office responsibilities and requests that come in."

The combination of Collins' "» love of working with animals, her 'just right' personality, good enthusiasm for this work and previous experience developing volunteer programs" through Friends of the Animal Shelter made her the right choice for manager, Bernhardt explains. "She's a fantastic person "» and we couldn't be happier."

It hasn't taken long for Collins to have an impact. A cat structure she requested is near completion. Building a cadre of volunteers is another priority for her.

"We need people willing to do anything, from grooming animals, to people who really know how to work with animals ... like a horse who needs work on manners."

Collins recently developed and implemented the Community Justice Partnership Program, teaming with Mediation Works and Jackson County Community Justice to provide a select group of juveniles with an alternative to the traditional corrections program.

"Something good comes from situations where the kids see themselves as worthwhile," Collins says. "These kids have been abused and neglected, and they and their mentors "» work with the animals and see the animals can heal, and they can, too. The program is tailored for need and safety. We don't want violent criminals. We stipulate

### YOU CAN HELP

Sanctuary One is open to the public on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The organization has immediate needs for monetary donations to assist with purchasing hay, whole oats and Equine Senior, a feed supplement for older horses.

Also needed are volunteers, potential animal adopters and people who can foster an animal.

For more information about Sanctuary One or to make a donation,

call 541-899-8697 or visit [www.sanctuaryone.org](http://www.sanctuaryone.org).

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the number of kids, what ages, their schedule."

Other community partnerships involve veterans, children and school groups.

Collins seems to have found her calling.

"I get to see the direct result here of what happens when people care," she says. "And it's gorgeous. I'm happy because this is where I've always wanted to be."

## Reader Reaction

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