

Farming for Health

Sanctuary One is the first care farm in Southern Oregon

Medford Sneak Preview
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by Robert Casserly

Most farmers instinctively know that every living thing is connected, although it is not easy to describe how or why.

For example, for more than a century scientists have tried and failed to figure out exactly how many and what kinds of microorganisms are beneficial to crops. They say billions upon billions of unknown life forms exist in a mere handful of dirt. Yet in a matter of seconds a farmer can scoop up some dirt, examine it, and know whether or not it will grow a good crop.

The staff and volunteers who work at Sanctuary One hearken back to old-fashioned farming that increases life by fostering the connection between living things. These folks care for more than just the physical health of crops, fields, and animals; they farm for mental and spiritual health, too. To them, nursing the overall health of people, animals, and the land is a daily chore just as important as bucking hay or mucking out the barn.



sanctuaryone
at Double Oak Farm

Farming for health is called “care farming” in Great Britain and other European countries. Over there, hundreds of ordinary farms have been converted to Care Farms to comfort people with health problems in a simple, cheap, and effective way. Care Farms also help rural areas become more economically and environmentally sustainable, which benefits everyone in the community.

Located on 55 acres in the scenic Applegate Valley, Sanctuary One is the first de facto Care Farm in Southern Oregon. The farmstead was purchased in 2006 by Sanctuary One founder Lloyd Haines. Haines is an admirer of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and ecology.

Dozens of formerly abused, neglected, or abandoned animals have found safe haven at Sanctuary One. Visitors to the farm can meet a menagerie of rescued horses, goats, ducks, geese, chickens, cats, dogs, and an adorable pig named Rosie who loves carrots and belly rubs. A couple of cows are reportedly arriving soon.

Some of the animals at Sanctuary One are adoptable, but only to a good home where the animal will be well cared for. For example, a recent visitor decided to adopt all of the farm’s burros after meeting and falling in love with them. Adopters are thoroughly screened to ensure they are

committed to lifetime care for the animals. Each animal has been evaluated and vaccinated by a veterinarian. In addition, all Sanctuary One animals undergo a basic behavioral assessment and have their diets evaluated and specialized as needed. These animals are the victims of neglect, abuse, and abandonment, and therefore require owners equipped to handle their special needs.

Sanctuary One does not take in animals directly from the public. If they did, the farm would soon be swamped with more animals than they could possibly manage. Instead, the farm is populated with lucky animals transferred in from overcrowded County animal shelters, private humane societies, and other animal sanctuaries.

The farm is also a sanctuary for untold numbers of wild creatures who seem to sense that it is a safe place to stop by for a visit. A vast national forest bordering Sanctuary One teems with all kinds of wildlife, especially birds. Bird watchers may catch a glimpse of feathered gems like bald eagles, owls, quail, ravens, ouzels, and hummingbirds.

The primary crop grown at Sanctuary One is hay. Their hay is a blend of Timothy grass, cheat grass, and Dutch clover. Irrigation drawn from the Applegate River helps the hayfield produce a bountiful crop even in the driest years. Fruit and nut trees, some of them quite old, are also plentiful. Plans to build a large organic garden are underway.

Volunteers are welcome to become a “farmer for a day” at Sanctuary One. About a dozen local residents are already volunteering there on a regular basis. What’s more, as word about Sanctuary One spreads far and wide via the Internet, people from across the globe are calling with benisons and encouragement. For example, two young women from Quebec recently visited the farm and spent four days feeding and grooming animals, taking photographs, and harvesting walnuts.

Military veterans are especially welcome to contact Sanctuary One and learn more about how a little R&R on the farm can help mitigate PTS and IED disorders. The sanctuary caretaker, Jerry Henning, is a veteran himself.

Sanctuary One offers free tours on Saturdays. For more information, call Sanctuary One at 541.899.8627 or visit them on the Web at www.SanctuaryOne.org.