

Sanctuary One: A volunteer's story

BY DELLA MERRILL

Sanctuary One is a care farm in the Applegate Valley. We now care for more than 100 farm and domestic animals. We also have gardens to tend, pastures to irrigate, and all the other responsibilities that go into caring for a 55-acre farm. How do we do this with a staff of just four? Hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours make this project successful. Without their help, dedication and support, we could not possibly do what we do. I asked one of our volunteers, Debra, what inspires her to help, to drive an hour each way, every week, to volunteer at Sanctuary One. Below is her story.

Debra's story

I believe in the interconnectedness of all things. Volunteering at Sanctuary One is one place that I can see this working out in a very real, tangible way. Connecting with animals, the earth and other humans to create a healing space is one of the most profound experiences I've been witness to. Healing and transformation happens all the time there.

I started volunteering after I had a severe relapse with a health condition and being around people was too draining for me. I was in a very discouraged place. I didn't have a lot of energy, but I felt that by working with animals, I might be able to speed up my own healing, as well as help others in some small way.

One of my goals was to work with the sanctuary horses, since I've never had much exposure to them except for occasional horseback rides. I wanted to learn about who they really are, find out how to communicate with them, develop a relationship with them, and to get over my fear of being in their presence. I also thought this might help me get over some

of the fears I was experiencing regarding my own illness.

I have benefited greatly from this opportunity. My physical health is much stronger, and I feel I can still contribute to the world. The silence of nature, punctuated by the various sounds and antics of the animals, has been very healing. Seeing abused or injured animals begin to relax, learn to trust, and play again with the love and gentle care of others is beyond words.

Every time I go to Sanctuary One, some wonderful little miracle happens. One of my favorite moments was when I went to the big pasture to find one of the mares, Crissy, to groom her. Instead, Calli, who I had only worked with once before and who was usually quite standoffish, came right up to me, allowed me to halter her, groom her, and play a few natural horsemanship games. I then took the halter off, and instead of Calli romping off to find her horse buddy Rogue, she stayed right next to me and followed me around the pasture for a good while. For some reason, Calli and I bonded for those moments, and I will never forget it.

We currently have two full-time volunteer internships opening up in the fall. We also have an ongoing need for volunteers willing to help out once a week or more. Please call general manager Della Merrill at 541-899-8627 or email info@sanctuaryone.org if you are interested and/or would like more information.

Della Merrill
541-899-8627
General Manager
Sanctuary One
info@sanctuaryone.org



Sanctuary One volunteers bathing Junior (photo, top right), exercising dogs (photo, middle right), and planting raspberries (photo, bottom right).

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