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Farming For Health

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

Care farming—also known as green care, farm care, or farming for health—is well established in Europe. For example, in the Netherlands there are more than 1,000 established care farms. Great Britain and Ireland have hundreds of them, and there are dozens more in other European countries.

In the U.S., there's just one—so far. On a 55-acre slice of heaven where Mule Creek meets the Applegate River, the folks at Sanctuary One are working toward the day when care farms are as commonplace in the U.S. as they are overseas.

At its core, care farming is a rural development initiative that creates a more dependable, diverse revenue stream for farmers. But it's not just a win for farmers, it's a win-win. Care farms are a multidimensional rural healing center that improves the entire community's access to cheap, affordable, and effective animal-assisted therapy and horticultural therapy. They also make excellent resources for schools and other groups looking for service-learning opportunities.

The Sanctuary helps people from all walks of life experience nature's power to heal by providing them with an opportunity to volunteer on a real working farm. Working with animals and gardening has been widely shown to lower blood pressure, ease depression and stress, and help lonely people establish therapeutic relationships.

That was common sense and practice 50 years ago, back when most Americans lived on a farm. But now that city dwellers are the majority there are a lot of people out there who have never experienced the simple goodness of eating a fresh tomato, brushing a horse, or working with a neighbor to mend a fence.

One of the Sanctuary's keys to success is the unique spin it puts on the European concept of care farming, which is typically healthcare-centric. The Sanctuary's innovation is to combine human service programs, permaculture-inspired farming, and animal rescue to make the whole more than the sum of its parts. The Sanctuary's motto is—People, animals, and the earth: better together.

Other ways the Sanctuary benefits the community:

- It successfully converted a low-profit cattle ranch into a thriving nonprofit.
- More than 50 onsite volunteers are reaping the health benefits of care farming.
- It helped educate 1,200 tourists and school kids last year.
- It provides interns with in-depth, hands-on farming education.
- It provides a good, loving home for more than 60 farm animals and house pets that have been rescued from situations of abuse, neglect and abandonment.



Sanctuary volunteer working with a rescued horse.

- The farm's 55 acres are a safe haven for native wildlife.
- It puts most of the money raised straight back into the local economy via wages and purchases of goods and services.

Military veterans of all ages are especially welcome to volunteer at the Sanctuary. A group of veterans visits the farm one Saturday a month to work on a special project and have lunch together. Please let us know if you'd like to join them.

The Sanctuary welcomes anyone who wants to take a farm tour. During the tour, a staff member will guide you around the farm, answer your questions, and introduce you to our herd of rescued farm animals and house pets. Tours for families and individuals are available by appointment on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Group tours are available by appointment on other days, too.

To book a tour, please visit us on the Web at www.SanctuaryOne.org, or call 541.899.8627.

Save the Date!

The Sanctuary's annual **Bachelor Auction** fundraiser is scheduled for **Cinco de Mayo**. Like us on Facebook or subscribe to our e-newsletter to get an alert when tickets go on sale.


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