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Mistreated animals become blue-chip livestock at farm

Donors can sponsor 'residents' of nonprofit sanctuary

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Most of the volunteers cleaning pens and feeding animals at the Lighthouse Farm Sanctuary are vegan or vegetarian -- but you don't have to be a vegetarian to enjoy volunteering at the sanctuary.

"I'm not a vegetarian," said David Fridenmaker of Keizer, "but I still think you should take care of the animals."

He was among about eight volunteers who showed up Saturday for a work party at the farm.

About 150 farm animals fall under the care of the sanctuary. They all came from situations of abuse or neglect; none is an "exotic" or pet.

That's because Wayne Geiger, the president of the nonprofit sanctuary, was an animal-welfare director for the Willamette Humane Society, where one of his duties was to oversee animal-cruelty cases.

"We didn't have facilities to handle livestock, and we had a situation involving four starving sheep," Geiger said. "There was no place for them to go. I threw up a fence and brought them home. Then, it was a goat here, a chicken there -- it just kept going."



THOMAS PATTERSON | STATESMAN JOURNAL
The Lighthouse Farm Sanctuary is home to about 150 unwanted farm animals saved from abusive situations or from the dinner table. Above, sanctuary President Wayne Geiger feeds a carrot to Marty the llama.

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Now, turkeys, llamas, donkeys, pigs, cows, horses and other farm animals have a permanent home where they live out their days with "no fear, no injury, no electric fences," Geiger said.

Hundreds of schoolchildren visit the farm each year and see that "animals are unique and have character, and there's an alternative to buying them in a store in a Styrofoam package," Geiger said.

Just how important that lesson can be was brought home when a group of foster and homeless children from Cottage Grove visited the farm earlier this year, Geiger said.

"Many of these kids had not been treated well -- had been abused in their own lives. It really impacted them to see animals being treated well," he said.

"The big lesson is not to accept or tolerate animal abuse -- or abuse of people."

Animals at the farm are supported entirely by means of donations, and "sponsorship" of animals ranges from \$7 per month to sponsor Sydney the chicken to \$360 per year to sponsor Roy the steer.

"It's a unique gift for a special person," Geiger said.

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