

Central Coast Past, Present, Future

Feeling the love at Greener Pastures

By Mark James Miller, May 13, 2018

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” — Mohandas K. Gandhi.

Every picture tells a story, and at the Greener Pastures Farm Sanctuary in Arroyo Grande every animal — from Andre the floppy-eared goat to Donna the black hen — has a story to tell. Founder and Executive Director Diane Dieterich knows them all.

“Every animal is special,” she said, and her goal is to provide them with a loving home in a safe environment.

The animals at Greener Pastures were either abandoned, like Andre, or saved from appalling conditions, like Lemon, a large, multi-colored rooster.

“We rescued him from the egg industry,” said Erika Satkoski, who works with Diane. Lemon, who has a prominent blue-black tail and a large red comb on his head, crows in agreement.

Lemon and the other roosters and hens at Greener Pastures are fortunate. Chickens in the egg industry are subjected to especially cruel conditions. Crammed into spaces so small they can't even stretch their wings, their feet cut by the hard wire of their cages, they are slaughtered, often by gas, when their egg-laying production declines, many years before the end of their natural life cycle.

But the treatment of chickens is only one of many examples of the mistreatment of farm animals that groups like Greener Pastures want to save them from. Many cows live in cramped, manure-laden pens and have to lie in

their own feces. Many male calves are taken from their mothers at 2 days old, then chained in crates and killed for veal at four months. Female pigs are kept in breeding cages, some so small they cannot turn around, and frequently suffer from abrasions on their heads from trying to escape. The list, sadly, goes on and on.

But the goals of Diane and Erika do not stop at simply rescuing farm animals and rehabilitating them from the trauma they have suffered. They see an even greater purpose — making these animals available to at-risk children and helping them heal from emotional and or physical abuse by bonding with the animals at Greener Pastures. There they can discover that interacting with these animals can begin the healing process, sharing the love animals have to offer.

Greener Pastures is searching for a permanent location in San Luis Obispo County where this work can be carried on.

“We need five to 10 acres of flat land, preferably fenced, with a barn and living quarters,” Diane said.

That would enable them to help more animals and reach out to the community. Diane would like to have an extended youth program, and offer internships and workshops on how to be gentle with animals. She wants to emphasize educating children about animals, especially farm animals, and learn about the unconditional love animals have to offer.

While the focus is on children, others can benefit. Veterans and others with PTSD, handicapped or special-needs children, troubled teens, addicts and anyone else at risk can benefit from bonding with farm animals.

“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one’s soul remains unawakened,” Anatole France observed. The love for animals, and for humans too, can be felt on every inch of Greener Pastures.

Along with seeking a new location, Greener Pastures will be putting on an ‘80s-themed fund-raiser on Sept. 22, at Oddfellows Hall in San Luis Obispo. For more information, contact Greener Pastures Farm Sanctuary, P.O. Box 13513, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93406. You can also call 543-3786, or email GreenerPasturesSanctuary@gmail.com. Greener Pastures is also on Facebook. www.facebook.com/greenerpasturesfarmsanctuary/.

Mark James Miller is an associate English instructor at Allan Hancock College and president of the Part-Time Faculty Association. He can be reached at mark@pfaofahc.com.

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