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Special thanks to this month's supermodel: Sadie, the gorgeous lady from Sanctuary One www.sanctuaryone.org

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Care Farming: What We've Learned

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

As 2012 draws to a close, we're celebrating the conclusion of our best year ever here at the Sanctuary. Thank you to all the donors, volunteers, visitors, and adopters who helped make this year one for the record books.

For those who are new to the concept, care farming is essentially a combination of agriculture and healthcare. It's also called green care, social farming, and farming for health.

One of the things that makes care farms such a valuable community resource is the wide range of therapeutic, recreational, and educational activities that a care farm can offer, including: animal-assisted and horticultural therapy for at-risk youth, people with disabilities, and veterans; farm tours and volunteer opportunities that are fun for the whole family; and field trips where students enjoy hands-on learning about nature and animals.

The number of care farms worldwide continues to grow at an astonishing rate. Although there's still only one farm in the U.S. which identifies itself as a care farm—that's us—there are now more than 1,000 care farms in The Netherlands, several hundred in Great Britain, and hundreds more scattered throughout Ireland, Scandinavia, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Italy.

Given the growth rate of care farms overseas and the tremendous outpouring of support Sanctuary One has received since we opened in 2008, I predict there will be more than 100 care farms in the U.S. by the year 2025 and more than 1,000 by 2050.

Meanwhile, one of the challenges of being the first care farm in the U.S. is having to learn through trial and error. We can't do things by the book because there is no book. Some of the lessons we've learned over the course of our first five years of operation include:

- We need to find new and creative ways to reach out to human-service and healthcare professionals whose clients might benefit from spending time at our care farm.
- Providing a safe haven for formerly abused, disabled, elderly, or injured animals is not just the right thing to do, it's also practical. Whereas most European care farms raise animals for their meat, milk, or fiber, we've found that an animal rescue program like ours generates more in income and donations than most farms of a comparable size earn through traditional farming practices.
- Converting an old 55-acre cattle and timber ranch into a permaculture-inspired "food forest"—that is, a low-maintenance ecosystem replete with copious amounts food-bearing plants for people and animals—is going to take years. We might not even live to see the results. But our children might, and our grandchildren almost certainly will.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to Sanctuary One this holiday season. Any amount will be appreciated and we'll promptly send you a receipt. Our mailing address is 13195 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530. Credit cards donations may be made on our website: www.SanctuaryOne.org.



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