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## 'This is full-circle learning'

Students get close look at animals under the care of Sanctuary One

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Ashland Middle School students Ananda Lockheed, left, and Regina McGough shovel manure while student teacher Jennifer Craugh assists them during the field trip. Mail Tribune / Julia Moore

Julia Moore

May 03, 2011

By **Sanne Specht**  
Mail Tribune

Ashland Middle School student Madison Crook is initially leery of leading a llama during a Monday field trip to Sanctuary One at Double Oak Farm in the Applegate Valley.

The long-legged, high-headed, exotic-looking creatures are known to scream, stomp and spit up the contents of their stomach when annoyed. And at least one of the llamas is feeling rather cranky, the 13-year-old has just been informed.

"I'll just watch," she says, stepping back with a polite smile.

Sanctuary One is the first care farm in Southern Oregon. Such farms bring people, animals and nature together for mutual healing, says Sansa Collins, Sanctuary One's animal care manager.

The llamas are among 50 animals that have come to Sanctuary One from other rescue facilities. The care farm and shelter does not accept animals from the public. But they have taken in everything from cats and dogs to horses, donkeys, cows, sheep, goats, geese and pigs, says Collins.

"Keep your energy low and calm," Collins advises the students. "Many of our animals are coming from abusive situations."

Collins is skilled at soothing both beasts and humans. She continues to encourage Madison by promising to stay between her and the spittin' end of the big shaggy critter if Madison will just grab hold of the very end of the llama's lead rope.

"Her name is Cassie," Collins says with an encouraging smile.

Suddenly Madison is all smiles, too.

"I have a friend named Cassie," Madison announces, leading her new four-legged friend for a little nosh on some green pasture grass. Groups of up to 30 Ashland students have been visiting the nonprofit farm for the past week. The lesson in llama wrangling was just one of many for Monday's group of students. The middle-schoolers also worked with Gene Griffith, the farm's earth care manager, making raised beds out of straw bales, cardboard, compost and manure.

"We've been planting potatoes," Griffith says, adding many of the students were surprised to see what a baby spud looks like.

Madisyn Ingle, 12, helped move the straw bales and place cardboard on the floor of the beds so weeds and grasses won't sprout up in the veggie garden. And the seventh-grader also got a lesson in manure, she says.

"The manure smells bad," Madisyn says. "With cow manure you have to put compost in. But you don't have to with goat (manure)."

Della Merrill, the people care manager, talks to the students about building trust and communication through body language. Merrill leads a group of kids into a 100-year-old barn built with wooden pegs and hand-peeled logs from trees

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grown on the property. Inside one stall reside an unlikely couple — Stevie, a goat, and Rosie, a pot-bellied pig. Stevie's hooves were so neglected by his former owners that his legs suffered permanent damage, Merrill says.

"He walks on his knees," Merrill says.

Rosie is an example of people adopting pets because they are cute as babies, but then abandon them after they grow up. Rosie wasn't looking to bond with anyone at the ranch, until she adopted Stevie as her buddy. Now the pig watches over Stevie like a mother hen with one chick.

"She keeps him safe," Merrill says.

Kirsti Healy, a science teacher at Ashland Middle School, said the real-life lessons learned during trips to Sanctuary One help her students understand the relevance of the scientific information learned in a classroom.

"It's keeping them connected to their world," Healy says. "This is full-circle learning."

But it isn't only the kids who are learning. And the positive contact animals like Rosie have experienced this past week helps them understand interaction with people can be safe and positive, Collins and Merrill say.

"The animals have made such progress since you guys came," Merrill says.

Back in the llama pasture, as Collins continues to discuss the ins and outs of llama lore, the formerly unaffectionate Cassie seems to have developed a certain fondness for 13-year-old Quentin Nguyen-duy. Nuzzling the boy's hair, the blond beast offers up not a spit, but a split-lipped smooch.

"She wants to be your girlfriend," teases fellow seventh-grader Caden Stiemsma. "You're gonna have to look her up on Facebook."

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