

Happy Valley

Search AndersonValleyPost

Web Search
powered by **YAHOO!** SEARCH

Bella Vista Farms shares kindness

Jamie Weil, Guest Writer news@andersonvalleypost.com

Wednesday, February 4, 2009



Every so often a hero comes along and performs a deed so magical that she transforms the world into a happier place just by being in it.

Chic Miller, named a real hero of South County by the Red Cross last September, is that sort of person. Chic and her husband Bob work as a team to run Bella Vista Farms in Cottonwood, an animal sanctuary that currently houses approximately 400 animals.

On Thursday last week, Miller and her Irish miniature cow, Copper Penny, brought a little of that sanctuary to Stella Prudhomme's fourth grade Coyotes at North Cottonwood School. Sporting a "Be Kind to Animals" shirt and bearing bookmarks with the same motto for each student, Miller taught the students a lesson centering on kindness, a fundamental ingredient in animal care.

"The lesson integrated so nicely with the current fourth grade curriculum concerning kindness to the planet and student animal reports," remarked Prudhomme.

"What are the four essential ingredients to pet care?" an upbeat Miller asked a class of 31 attentive listeners.

An eager group of students, having visited the farm, knew the answer.

"Food, water, shelter, love!" they shouted in unison.

Miller says when she is out selling her famous shaved ice at local events to help fund the sanctuary, students will frequently run up to her and shout, "Food, water, shelter, love!" remembering their lesson from area schools. "They are like little sponges," says Miller. "When I return to their classrooms with additional lessons, I am amazed at how much they remember."

Miller is no stranger to the classroom having taught over 100 classes at Shasta County schools. Next to rescuing and caring for animals, going to the classrooms and teaching students about animal care is her passion.

Nicknamed the farm of kisses and cookies, Miller's sanctuary models the kindness she teaches. Residents range from llamas, goats, dogs, cats, miniature horses and goats.

Unlike other animal rescue organizations, an animal will spend its whole life at the sanctuary. Raised by her self-taught veterinarian grandfather back on a farm in Muskegon, Michigan, Miller knew early on that rescuing animals was her calling. Following a career in nursing, which she says is vital to running a sanctuary like hers, the Millers started Bella Vista Farms in 1990. The farm began in Bella Vista and then later moved to Cottonwood.

Miller is in the trenches with the animals, navigating a labyrinth of bottle-feedings, normal feedings, medical care, births and kisses throughout the day.

"This is a 24/7 world with no vacations and no days off," warned Miller to anybody thinking about starting an animal sanctuary of their own. "And a medical background is an absolute must!"

Her rescues can be harried. Take Isabella, a miniature horse attacked by a pit bull, so close to death Miller slept next to her in the horse trailer for two weeks. There was also Golden Nugget, a yellow lab stuck on a steep 36-foot cliff above a river raging below with telephone poles rushing by.

"My husband was my extreme hero on that one," Miller said. "I held a rope around a tree, lowered him down, and he tied up Nugget and I lifted him. Then I had to lift my husband. But we had to do it. He was in trouble." Bella Vista Farms receives no public funds and relies solely on private donations for food, spay/ neutering and medical needs. As Miller's time is mainly allocated to animal care, she does not have resources for fundraising. Please take any food donations, including peanut butter, dented canned food cans to any feed store and mark "Bella Vista Farms" to donate to the sanctuary. Checks are also appreciated and can be mailed directly to the Millers at 4301 Lower Gas Point Road, Cottonwood, CA 96022.



Scripps Interactive Newspapers Group
© 2009 The E.W. Scripps Co.
[Privacy Policy](#) | [User Agreement](#)

© 2009 Anderson Valley Post