



Spring Farm CARES

Animal & Nature Sanctuary

June 2021

The Ifs, Ands, & Butts

Dear Friends,

"Ifs"

And so, we find ourselves in a second season of uncertainty due to the pandemic. We are constantly asked, "When are you going to open?" "When can we come back to visit?" "When are Dawn's workshops starting again?" There are so many "ifs" out there that planning for anything is a challenge. We're sure that it is the same for you. We must not be disheartened. You are needed and so appreciated. We hope this finds you well.

Our mission, of which you are a part, has never wavered...to help heal the human heart through our connections with animals and nature. The mission is a constant, whatever happens in the world around us. Because the need for love and kindness among all living things is the constant of the universe. We need you more than ever, working together with the animals and with us, to keep our combined light of hope and love shining brightly in this world.

Spring Farm CARES has found ways to move forward even during these times of uncertainty. And the animals' hearts and wisdom are needed more than ever right now. Because it's a challenging time to be a human. The time, however, is also filled with windows of opportunity for changes and for growth that might have been previously put off for "another time." The adage, "There's no time like the present," is poignantly true right now.

"If" all goes well and the pandemic eases, we hope to open to visitors again later this year. We also hope to be able to host in-person workshops towards the end of the year. We will not set dates until we have a clearer picture of what lies ahead. There are just too many "ifs" to even consider booking anything at this time. But we miss you! The animals miss you! And we set our sights on seeing you again soon.

In the meantime, we have been steadily making changes and additions to help further our mission. We have exciting news and heart-touching stories to share with you.

"Ands"

Spring Farm CARES is proud to announce the addition of a full-time, on-staff veterinarian. In January, we welcomed Christine Schneider, DVM, cVMA as our Director of Animal Welfare. Dr. Christine brings new opportunities for the expansion and deepening of the care available to the animals in our sanctuary, because Dr. Christine is focusing not only on the medical care of the animals, but also on the enrichment of their surroundings and on adding "fun" things to their lives. She combines all of this with an on-going education of our staff. Dr. Christine is also in for the long run at SFC. We have often been asked whether we have firm plans for the future of the organization...frankly, whether things can continue once any of the founders are gone. Dr. Christine is part of a solid future for Spring Farm CARES. Along with her veterinary skills, she brings to us her incredibly large and giving heart, plus, so importantly, a total commitment to, and understanding of, our mission. The angels sent her. Read below for examples of how the animals are immediately benefiting from even more specialized care, often without having to leave the farm for treatment. We would never have been able to take this step without your support.

Another exciting development is the building of our Learning Center...dedicated to our mission of touching and teaching the human heart through the wisdom of our animal teachers. If Covid has taught us one thing, however, it is

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that we need to be able to reach out to you when you can't come to us. The Learning Center therefore combines the technological capabilities of video conferencing (like Zoom) with a large in-person area for classes and workshops. It is a delight to watch the space come into being. It's a space for you, a lovely and peaceful space where you can open to the feeling of Spring Farm and to the teaching of humans and animals alike. But, until you can be here in person, Zoom meetings and classes will be offered. In fact, by the time that you get this letter, some of you may have actually participated in a class! Again, none of this would be possible without your support.

"Butts"

We'd like to share with you the stories of three animals with extraordinary needs who you've helped this year. None of the three had anywhere else to go. All were faced with incredible odds. Each of their stories has a different ending. The one thing that each of them found at Spring Farm, however, was a safe haven, all the medical help they needed, and a whole lot of love.

Miss Dandy



Dandelion arrived with three siblings at one week of age. Something had happened to their mother, they were found abandoned and in desperate need of care. One kitten died shortly after arriving. The other three came around. Little Dandelion, or Miss Dandy as she came to be known, was always smaller than the others, but, bottle raised by co-founder Bonnie, she seemed to be doing well. Until it was time for the litter to begin eating solid food. Bonnie realized that Dandy was having trouble passing stool. Indeed, what was found was devastating. Her condition was a first here at Spring Farm CARES...a birth defect called Atresia Ani, Type 1. She had a very small rectal opening that was not properly connected to her colon. The only thing that did connect the colon to the outside world was a very thin tube. Because of this, things backed up in the colon and she also developed megacolon, a condition where the colon becomes plugged with stool and expands way past its normal state. Motility is affected and the colon ceases to be able to move stool to, and out of, the rectum. What Dandy had was life threatening.

We found a surgeon who was willing to attempt the surgery needed to try to create a proper rectum and to attach the colon to it so that Dandy could defecate. Obviously, it was a dicey surgery. We are grateful to be able to tell you that the surgery was a complete success. She required a great deal of care, and repeated cleaning, until her plumbing got used to its new self and began to operate properly. But she is now able to defecate normally. Not only that, an x-ray weeks later revealed that her megacolon condition had reversed itself. Miss Dandy is now off all medication, leading a totally normal life. She is growing by leaps and bounds, making up for lost time, and she is a real firecracker. She has the run of our small-animal facility, owns the place and everyone in it, and knows it. Dandy came to us on a major mission. We look forward to watching this little imp unfold and step into her role as a master teacher when she is ready. Right now, all she wants to do is run and play and explore. We are giving her all the time and space she needs to do so.

Laney

Less than two months after Dandy's surgery, another tiny kitten arrived. Dr. Christine knew immediately that something was wrong. Laney was seven weeks old yet didn't even weigh a pound. We are talking tiny. As we all sat on the floor with this little bundle of cuteness, Dr. Christine picked her up and looked under her tail to check on gender. She was a calico so we assumed her to be female. But seeing the look on Dr. Christine's face made us know that something was very wrong. In over thirty years we never had a case of Atresia Ani until Miss Dandy. What were the chances of two cases in just two months?



Laney's case was even harder. She was born with no rectal opening at all. Her diagnosis was Atresia Ani Type 3. X-rays showed that, inside, her colon was foreshortened and attached to her urinary tract! (Hence, she could not be given solid food and was kept nursing on KMR.) Surgery would be incredibly complicated. And she was so tiny! On top of all else, she could not use her back legs, probably a neurological issue. We had to try the surgery. We had no other option. But we knew that the odds were against our tiny Laney.

That kitten exemplifies, is the heart of, what we do here. We listen to the animal every step of the way. Laney was a fighter and true calico in temperament. She made it clear that she wanted to try. The surgical team assembled. We couldn't wait for her to grow bigger or stronger. She had to have a way to pass stool or die.

Laney's surgery was a success! Since she had not yet been vaccinated, in order to limit her exposure to a hospital environment, she came home the very next day. Thanks to Dr. Christine's presence, she could recuperate in her own little nest. Dr. Christine conferred daily with the surgeon and we surrounded Laney with light and love... which she radiated right back at us. She ate her first solid food with gusto. It was manna from heaven. She played (carefully and under supervision) with toys. She was held and loved constantly. She showed us her own love, her humor, and her spunk. When she didn't like something that needed to be done with her, she let us know. But she also shared with us her gratitude for the help. There were cheers and tears of joy when she passed her first stool. Having just been through it with Dandy, we all filled with hope. Each day her surgical site, the newly constructed rectum and attached colon, healed more and more. Much to our amazement, she even began to use her back legs. With rehab, she would surely begin to walk normally. Everything was so promising. She was a trooper. Life clearly felt good to her. But, though she was eating and eating and eating, two weeks postop she had barely broken the one-pound mark. Something was still not right. She was passing stool, but not enough to compensate for what she was eating. Just when we thought that for the second time we had made the impossible happen, Laney's life did an about face.

Her light, that had burned so brightly, started to dim. She stopped passing stool, stopped eating, and wanted only to remain curled up in her nest. A trip back to the surgeon and more tests determined that there was an additional birth defect that none of us could have known. Her colon was not capable of moving stool through. It lacked the mechanism that created the spasmodic action that moves things along, and her intestines were totally packed. No medications could help. There was another surgical procedure that could potentially have been tried. But we all understood that it was not right for her. She most likely couldn't have survived the procedure. And, importantly, we had reached the line between doing something for her as opposed to doing something to her. Her journey with us was over. It was time to let her go. We brought her home and surrounded her with the love that she always knew that she had from us. It was hard to say good-bye. But we all, including Laney, knew that it was time. She was so peaceful and calm at the end, gazing up at us with those beautiful eyes. She will forever be a part of Spring Farm CARES. She taught us a great deal. We understand the blessing that graced us for a short while, and we are forever grateful.

Max

Max came to us five years ago at the age of two. His tail had been amputated after he had been hit by a car. Unfortunately, the tail was amputated too short, causing nerve damage to his bowel and bladder and leaving him incontinent. Max was young, loving, and vibrant. His people didn't want to see him euthanized, but they could not manage his special needs. We took him into our facility and he instantly waltzed into our hearts. Two to three times a day for the past five years, our staff manually expressed his bladder and bowels. As time went on, however, that became increasingly difficult. This past year it was discovered that his bladder had deteriorated to a point where it could no longer be manually expressed. It was like squeezing a water balloon, where the water just keeps sloshing from one side to the other without emptying. Dr. Christine began looking for alternatives. Clearly, Max did not want to die. But he couldn't live his life



with a catheter permanently attached. Again, we did a lot of soul searching to be sure that we were listening to Max and not pushing our own agenda. Max is a very special boy.

Dr. Christine learned of a procedure to install a port directly into his bladder that would attach to his abdomen, where, externally, we could draw urine out by syringe. There were many questions. Would Max tolerate such a device? Would he leave it alone or have to wear a cone all the time... which would ruin his quality of life. After much deliberation and consultation with surgeons, we gave it a go. We didn't have answers to our questions unless we tried. If Max was miserable, well...we would then need to implement Plan E.

We are so proud of Max. This has been his call all along. He handled the surgery well. He leaves the port alone, and is living a life as close to normal as possible...even spending his days luxuriating in a bed on a dotting Dr. Christine's desk. He is clearly happy. And, recently, we began to see signs that he may be starting to be able to pass stool on his own. That would be an amazing benefit. But, regardless, we have given Max more time to love his life.

These are just a few examples of the help that your support has allowed us give to our animal friends. We can't put a price on the lives of Dandy and Max. We can only watch them and share in their happiness. Hopefully, soon, visitors will be able to come here, meet them in person, share in an understanding of the difference that your support has made, and feel their gentle touches upon the human heart. They are magnificent beings and teachers. We are blessed to have them with us.

Our dear little Laney is a reminder that things don't always turn out the way that we hope they will, but that that does not necessarily constitute failure. Laney found something of eternal value in her two months with us. While our lives were made richer by what she brought to us. She added to the strength of our mission and the validity of our organization. She brought a light of remembrance into our lives at a time when we sorely needed to remember what really matters. Success cannot be judged by outcome. We must look at each aspect and every being individually, valuing what they bring to the world and to others in it. Winning or losing matters very little. Loving and living from kindness and compassion matters a lot. Laney re-taught that lesson to us. And she reminded us that it is not the length of time, but the depth of love that matters.

Your help is essential to us as we continue to deepen our connections and our knowledge and the scope of our mission. We are not about growing bigger. We are about reaching deeper. And now is the time to reach deeper...deeper into the heart of humanity. There is such beauty in the human heart...such an abundance of hope...such kindness and compassion and unconditional love. We are sure of this. We feel it every day. We see it in the eyes of Dandy and Max and the other animals. And we seek always to share what we see with you. From deep in our hearts, and the hearts of the animals whose lives you do so much to enrich... .. thank you. Thank you.

With great blessings,

Bonnie

Bonnie Reynolds
President

Dawn

Dawn Hayman
Vice-President

Margot

Margot Unkel
Treasurer

Peggy

Margaret (Peggy) G. Brown
Secretary