

# ANIMAL PLACE — A FRIENDLY FARM

By Kim Sturla, Animal Place Co-founder and President



Nick Lammers, Oakland Tribune

*Animal Place, a 60-acre sanctuary, lies in the rolling hills of Northern California at the end of a long, quiet dirt road. A community of nearly 100 animals lives here, reveling in their second chance at life.*



One such animal is Diabla, a goat born at Animal Place (AP) after her mother and 240 other dairy-breed goats were rescued by humane officers from the most horrid of conditions. Their quarters were a combination of mud, feces and urine that in some cases was belly deep. Many goats suffered the crippling effect of overgrown hooves, diarrhea, systemic abscesses, and respiratory illnesses. Forty of the does impounded were pregnant. Diabla was born into freedom and here she remains free, healthy and peaceful at AP.

Animal Place works to impart upon visitors that each animal living here, like them, is unique. Here the animals' personalities blossom with the freedom to roam, groom, graze, sleep and interact with their own species.

Eve was just a woolly little four-week-old lamb when she was purchased. The people bought her for a special holiday - Easter Sunday. Her fate? To be barbecued. Tied to a

three-foot rope at a gas station, she awaited slaughter. She was fed little and mostly ignored until a kind citizen complained. This one complaint made to the animal control department changed everything. It saved Eve's life and today she roams with other sheep and is protected from all harm at AP.

Animal Place realizes that the animals rescued are but a 'drop in the bucket' when compared with the billions killed annually for food in this country. But, as unwitting ambassadors for their siblings, they show visitors to this peaceful sanctuary that all life is precious.

Emma, a piglet, was just few weeks old when she managed to escape. Maybe she sensed the urgency to defect. Like Eve, Emma Jean was purchased to be fattened up for another holiday dinner - Thanksgiving. Emma, thankfully, got away. She was covered with pig lice and scabies and hungry for nurturing love when the animal control depart-

ment found Emma and brought her to AP. On her very first Thanksgiving she was AP's guest of honor - not the entree.

Animal Place residents, like tiny Emma Jean, remain here throughout their natural life span. It's a safe haven for those who have no where else to go. After all, where else might a stray piglet go after animal control workers picked her up running loose in a San Francisco suburb?

Howie, a charming steer, came to Animal Place when just a week old. His mother died during birthing. At less than a day old, he was dumped off in the middle of the night at the county shelter. Normally all livestock received go to auction and end up on the butcher block. However, shelter workers diagnosed Howie as too sickly for auction, and decided to raffle him off. Whoever plunked down \$2 for a raffle ticket had the chance of winning an orphaned calf. A group of high school 4-H students purchased dozens of raffle tickets; they wanted Howie for their cattle-rearing pro-

gram - the end point being auction and slaughter. Animal Place intervened and reluctantly they agreed to release Howie to us.

Henry David Thoreau said, "For every ten people who are chopping at the branches of evil, you're lucky to find one who's hacking at the roots." How true. Besides our dramatic animal rescues, Animal Place is hacking at the roots all the while. Our primary goal is education. Through sanctuary tours, educational materials, and vegetarian cooking classes we help people examine their relationship with animals. After visitors have interacted with animals usually thought of as 'food,' it is Animal Place's hope they will have a change in attitude, and ultimately one that will lead to a change in behavior. Not everyone alters their daily menu after meeting the Animal Place residents, but as one mother remarked, "It's hard to forget [Eve and the other sheep] on our next trip to the grocery store."

We ask the hard questions and tackle the larger issues. If we promote treating dogs and cats with kindness, how then can we teach kids to nurse a sick calf, raise and love him, only to see how much per pound he'll get at the auction or state fair? If we believe that animals called pets should be loved, respected and cared for, why do we condone treating other animals so inhumanely?

How confusing are these messages to children? Can we truly have a non-violent and compassionate society if we continue being arbitrarily selective about whom we choose to protect?

Shouldn't the lesson be compassion for all living creatures?

Walking the walk, or role modeling is critically important for children to observe. One mother, distressed about her daughter's school "project," contacted AP. The young girl's elementary teacher had purchased fertilized eggs for the classroom so the students could watch the chicks as they hatched from the incubator and observe them for the first



few weeks of life. After two months had passed, the chicks were done serving their "educational" purpose and the teacher was planning to "dispose" of them.

Fortunately, this conscientious mom intervened. She rescued the ill-fated birds and drove 100 miles round trip to AP so that her child would learn that these feathered creatures her daughter had named Thelma and Louise were more than just disposable learning tools.

Animal Place deals with cruelty that comes in all forms. Some animals come to us as victims of malicious abuse, others have been used for educational purposes as with

Thelma and Louise, many have been severely neglected and were destined to be killed.

Not all the animals who arrive to Animal Place are receptive to people.

Norm the goat has no reason to trust people, and so he intimidates less confident guests. Ronnie the sheep always keeps a safe distance from those he doesn't know. Many chickens prefer to be left alone and most of the rabbits, all confiscated from a large cruelty case, keep many hops away from humans.

It was Margaret Mead who once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." At Animal Place, we are just a small group of committed citizens providing experiences and information to people so they might become more compassionate toward all creatures, not just those who live here at Animal Place.

For more information on Animal Place or how to become an Animal Place Foster Parent, contact us at 3448 Laguna Creek Trail, Vacaville, CA 95688, (707) 449-4814, E-mail [AnimalPlc@aol.com](mailto:AnimalPlc@aol.com) Web site: <http://AnimalPlace.org> 🐾

**Opposite: Animal Place, in Northern California, offers shelter for abused and abandoned animals of all types. Shown here is the Animal Place staff and some of their visitors; Emma Jean is fed by Kim Sturla shortly after her arrival; Brenda Grace talking a walk with Kim. This page, clockwise from upper right: Before coming to Animal Place, Eve was slated to be just another Easter lamb; Brenda Grace gets up close and personal; Diabla was born at Animal Place after her mother was rescued from horrid conditions.**