

In the life of a Sanctuary One intern

by Kirk Stonick

First of all, and least importantly, let me introduce myself. My name is Kirk, and I am a 26-year old from Portland who recently decided to drop everything—my career, my relationship, and the city I called home—in order to start in a new life direction, beginning with an internship opportunity in the Applegate Valley at Sanctuary One, one of the country’s few *care farms*. Now, a month into my new life, I have decided to write and share a few paragraphs about some of the beautiful sights and wonderful connections that I have experienced here so far.

Every morning, bright and early for chores, I wake to find the sun peeking up over the eastern hills, igniting the landscape around me in a shimmering, snowy white light. For a short time Sanctuary One is left alone in shadow, and this window of time each day is precious to me, as the contrast makes all of the brights seem brighter, the green trees greener, the bald hilltops golden. And everywhere I look in nearly a complete circle, the surrounding hills glow, exceptionally alive and beautiful.



Cream the cow says hello.



Leela, a rescued dog that was recently adopted.

And speaking of the surrounding landscape, these hills, like much of the Applegate Valley, are decorated with a spiderweb of fantastic trails. But what make our nearby trails special are the few “secret” benches that lie alone, offering rest and beautiful views from the hillsides. One, flecking old, barn-red paint, offers hikers the most tranquil of atmospheres, and, for me at least, brings to life all of the thoughts and ideas lying jumbled in my head, waiting to be processed. I’m sure that if I ever have a genius moment it will be while sitting on that bench, and so I’ve named it Eureka Bench. Another bench, located high above the farm and offering a full-spectrum view of it, seems to siphon sound up to hikers, and though the people, livestock, and cars dance like ants and beetles from the distance, hikers can clearly hear the murmur of voices, the bark of dogs, and the bleat of Oliver, our opera-destined sheep. No need to even hold a funnel up to your ear.

We (the other interns and I) spend much of each day feeding, cleaning up after, and interacting with our 90-plus animal friends, and I’d like to give you a peek into what makes them special. Leo, our sweet old yellow lab, holds nothing but pure love and loyalty in his gaze. Cream (see photo), a Charolais cow, has a white coat so beautiful it looks almost like a million small pearls sewn together. Oliver, our lone sheep that I mentioned earlier, looks as if he’s hearing angels sing whenever he tastes a pear.

Scooby Keith, a little black goat, refuses to be a goat and instead spends 100% of his time with the llamas, even forgoing the warm indoor goat pens on snowy nights. Elwood, one of our roosters, has blond highlights streaking through his speckled black and white plumage that he ruffles whenever he's indignant or about to peck at your ankles in misplaced territorialism. Estrella, a white llama, stands out with her eyes the color of an early morning light-blue sky.

My favorite moment so far here was a realization that came to me suddenly in mid-January. We'd received a poor, starving white dog (an American Staffordshire Terrier/Bulldog mix) from a local shelter and we'd named her Leela (see photo). Leela looked as if she had given up hope. She would stare blankly, didn't want to walk or play, had hardly any appetite, and seemed completely oblivious to hands and voices showering her with warmth and affection. After a few days with her, I was returning her to her room after a nice long walk, and as I knelt down to remove her leash she pressed her head against my chest, started wagging her tail energetically, and then hopped up and licked my face. I was shocked to discover how quickly she had essentially been brought back to life! The physical and emotional care that animals receive here at Sanctuary One is clearly transformative. And after only a couple of weeks here with us, a sweet family fell in love with Leela and gave her a new home.

Sanctuary One thrives off of volunteer help, both from full-time interns like myself and from anyone who is willing to donate a little of their time on a regular basis. If you are interested in helping us with animal rehabilitation and permaculture gardening, or would just like more information, please call general manager Della Merrill at 541-899-8627 or email info@sanctuaryone.org. You can also check out our website at www.sanctuaryone.org.

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