

Animal Lovers Unite at New Sanctuary Location



Eliza Smith, 2, feeds kale to rescued chickens at the Woodstock Farm Sanctuary's grand opening of its new facility in High Falls.

By Amanda Loviza-Vickery

HIGH FALLS - Cars were backed up half a mile down the aptly-named Rescue Road on Saturday, as people poured into the new 150-acre location of the **Woodstock Farm Sanctuary**.

After relocating from a much smaller property in Willow, Woodstock Farm Sanctuary's re-opening celebration was not quite a typical petting zoo or festival. Toddlers in cow T-shirts that said "Friends not Food" laughed as they pet a sheep with a prosthetic leg. Long lines snaked around food trucks with names

like “Veggie Oasis” as families waited to buy meals of falafel, vegan burgers and frozen dairy-free desserts.

Cuddling a chicken named Sadie, Dawn Ellsworth sat in the shade of a chicken house and answered guests’ questions about the factory farm industry, veganism and the sanctuary’s animal rescue work. Ellsworth, who lives in Port Ewen, said she has been volunteering at Woodstock Farm Sanctuary since it opened in 2004.

“It’s my favorite place in the world,” said Ellsworth, who is excited that the new space will allow the sanctuary to host more community outreach events.

Ellsworth is a passionate vegan and has four rescued chickens at home. The first animal she rescued was a rooster with deformed legs, and she has been rescuing deformed and injured animals ever since. Chickens are especially close to her heart.

“Chickens are the most exploited animals on the planet,” Ellsworth said. “It’s horrible what we do to them.”

Activist and documentary director Marisa Miller Wolfson, who lives in New York City, said places like Woodstock Farm Sanctuary are great because they open visitors’ eyes to the lives of food animals, and people can learn why veganism is a positive lifestyle.

“Usually when they have an experience like this, it sets them on a different path, or at least a different way of thinking,” said Wolfson, who has been vegan for 13 years.

While veganism is promoted at the sanctuary, not every animal lover has to be vegan. New York City residents Dana Moyal and Alex Kolevzon said they have been bringing their children to the sanctuary for about five years. They love the animals, but their family eats meat, except beef. They may eventually stop eating meat, Moyal said, but in the meantime they will still enjoy visiting the sanctuary animals often.

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