



Dear Friends,

June 2015

A current volunteer fad is called “Make a Difference Day.” To caring and compassionate people, a special day does not have to be declared. To the caring and compassionate, every day is make a difference day. It is not egotistical or self-aggrandizing to take warm, fuzzy pleasure in making differences. Many of us would be happy to have on our tombstones, “He/she made a difference. The world is a better place because he/she graced it for a while.”

But we don’t always get to see, or even know about, the miracles that flow from our kindnesses. I was thinking about this today, looking at the many Spring Farm animals whose lives you have dramatically changed in a very special way. Yes, you. You have shared a part of your heart and enabled these animals to find, not just a safe place to live, but a place where they are accepted for who they are and are not forced to live up to human expectations that they just can’t meet. Many of us know how that feels -- when people around us expect us to conform to their expectations, while we are trying to stay true to ourselves and find our own purposes. Self-discovery is a fundamental quest. Who am I? What am I here for?

It’s the same with the animals. Each of them is a special soul yearning for its own answers. So often in our commercial, and often cruel, world, they never get a chance to find the answers. But you reach out to the animals who have been fortunate enough to find their way to Spring Farm. You share your heart, give them support, and provide them with the chance they would otherwise never have had. Your gift to them, and so to yourself, is exceptionally important to those who have special problems, special needs, who are probably unadoptable, and, in conventional thinking, disposable. Thanks to your caring heart, no animal that comes to Spring Farm is disposable. And the chance that your generous heart gives to these special needs animals is, as the saying goes, a gift beyond the value of rubies. The difference that you make is profound.



It is important that you know that the animals know about you. They understand the blanket of care being provided for them, and the vast network of caring people who weave that blanket for them. It is amazing, and humbling, to experience the palpable gratitude that flows from out of each of them - simple, genuine gratitude. They never take anything for granted. And I want to share with you some of the stories, the changes, that we human caretakers here at Spring Farm are privileged to witness as animals go from desperate, sometimes even horrible, beginnings, to lives that are filled with comfort, hope, meaning, and love. We here at Spring Farm are fortunate enough to witness some of the downright miracles that occur as these special needs animals find themselves. We here at the farm get to feel warm and fuzzy a dozen times a day. It just isn’t right for us to keep that all to ourselves! So we are sharing!

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*David's story* is a great example. David came to us through our feral-cat spay/neuter (TNR) program. He had been humanely trapped at an urban stray-cat-colony feeding station where he had been seen for some time. When our volunteer vets prepped him for surgery, they discovered that he had a bad tail injury. The tail was dying and had to be amputated. Worse still, once that surgery was done, they found that he had a spinal fracture at the base of the tail, causing incontinence. He'd probably been hit by a car. It remained to be seen whether he could recover. But the problem was that David seemed totally feral and untouchable. What to do? We placed him in one of our cat rooms where for several weeks he leaked urine and feces and would not let anyone touch him. His prospects were grim. We couldn't release him back into his colony in this condition, yet what would life be like for him living indoors? We would need to handle him in order to keep him clean.



Finally one evening I went over to sit with David and take an honest look and listen to what he really wanted in life. Why was he here? Did he even know? I've been an animal communicator for over 25 years, and I am forever humbled by what the animals share – if we only remember to ask them. David was huddled on a shelf several feet away from me, making it obvious that he didn't want to be touched. I explained to him what we were trying to do -- that we needed to know how to help him. At first, he didn't know what to do with that. But slowly he began to tell me his story. He had lived with a woman in a house for many years. Something happened to the

woman and she was taken away and never came back. A man came and put him outside and David stayed there for weeks trying to figure out what to do. He was starving. So he headed out away to try to find food. He was hit by a car and crawled under a porch until he could move again. Then he found the feeding station and stuck close to it, joining the other cats in whatever shelter they had found. His dream in life was to sit on a lap again and be loved.

This communication did not at all match his behavior. Admittedly, I was skeptical. But I said to him, "I'm sorry you lost your home, but maybe we can offer you a place here. We certainly have laps you can sit on." It was early December and Christmas music was playing through the animal rooms. David said to me, "I miss Christmas decorations. She loved Christmas."

With that simple but profound communication he got up and walked over to where my hand was resting on the shelf. He allowed me to gently touch him. He started to purr. Then he reached out and held my finger tightly in his paw, like he didn't want to let me go. Our totally feral cat wasn't feral at all. He was just an abandoned soul looking for a safe place to land and for someone who would hear his pain and offer comfort. Within an hour, his room was festooned with Christmas decorations. And the next day when I came in, he jumped off his shelf and came right over and up into my lap. He then did the same with all of the animal caretakers. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

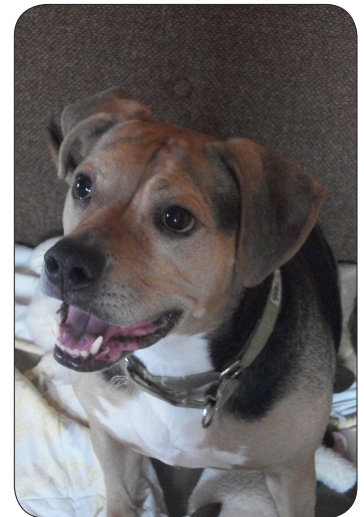
David now has his bladder expressed several times a day and is cleaned up as needed. He goes to the vet rehab clinic for acupuncture. He receives laser therapy and energy work, and has lots of laps to cuddle on. He purrs and purrs and purrs. Life is worth living again. A cat who was totally devastated, heart broken, and abandoned has found his way again. He is filled with gratitude for all of you who helped him get here. Listen with your heart, and you will hear his purrs. It's an amazing sound.

*Hannah's story* is another example of being lost in the world with no place to go. Watching her change and

grow over the years has been one of the most precious things I have seen. Looking at her this morning, I realized that hers was one of the stories I needed to share.

Hannah is a Pit Bull/Beagle mix. She was less than a year old when she came to us 14 years ago, picked up as a stray on a holiday weekend. She was only supposed to be with us for the weekend until a rescue could take her in. That rescue fell through, and we realized we had an unadoptable dog on our hands. Hannah was madly in love with the employee who had brought her to us and she spent a lot of time with Bonnie in her office. She was also fine with the other employees. However, she had a high prey drive, was dog and cat aggressive as well as viciously food aggressive, did not do well with strangers, was known to bite, and was involved in a couple of traumatizing dog-fights. As time went on, and new employees came and went, Hannah's "bad reputation" worked against her. Most were afraid of her, and only a certain few of her old friends among management and employees handled her. So that Hannah lived many years here with a small circle of friends. Yet Hannah showed us, in her interactions with those friends (and her wild joy when the employee who first rescued her occasionally comes to visit) that there was a Hannah deep down who was beautiful. She wanted to change and didn't know how. She didn't give up, and neither did we.

We have come to understand over the years that it is a fairy tale dream to think that every dog in the world has to have a home the way we think "a home" should look. Hannah could never have handled anything but a highly structured life. In short, for many years, Hannah couldn't have handled anything outside of her private room with comfy beds and adjoining enclosed sun porch and the few favored friends who fed, cleaned, walked her, and dispensed affection. Was it fair to her to live like that? Many would say no, and, for many dogs, that would be a horrible life. But Hannah let us know that she felt differently. She lived contentedly. And, of late, things have changed. One by one, tentatively at first, the staff began to understand that hidden heart of gold as Hannah began to understand it herself.



Over the course of 14 years, Hannah went from being a dog liked by few, feared by many, to a dog who is loved and cherished by many. She still has her own private room and porch, but her world has expanded to long jaunts around the farm with an array of new human friends, and a heck of a lot more affection being exchanged. She has also become friendly with the dog living next to her -- they are often taken on walks together. Quite simply, Hannah has settled. She has found her inner dog -- a beautiful soul, the dog that Hannah really wanted to be. Would she do okay now in a "normal" home? No. But Hannah has her proper home, her healing place, right here, with us. And with you.

Thanks to you, Hannah was given the time, the space, the care, the understanding, and the patience to help her leave whatever were her own fears behind, and move forward in trust. Hannah will leave this world knowing the kindness of her own heart. What a wonderful gift! She will leave cherishing the gentleness of human touch and the importance of friends, human or other. She will carry that love for others wherever she goes. And those who have cared for her, and been transformed along with her -- what a wonderful gift of love and understanding they have received. This gift is for you as well.

*And then there is Molly who was a show pony.* A talented jumper with a lot of promise. Till tragedy struck. A disease abruptly took her eyesight. Only 13 years old, a true athlete and performer, her life was her work, her work her life, her identity. Suddenly all gone, even life seemingly ended. Indeed, in all too usual human terms, Molly's life was at an end, worth nothing. If we hadn't taken her, she would have been euthanized. But we had other blind horses who were living fulfilling lives with us. We felt that she would fit in.

Her transition, however, was tough. It was like watching a professional human athlete in the same position. With everything that she had known, lived for and loved, her very reason for being, gone, just gone, she didn't know what to do, where to turn in this dark new world. She had no idea how to just be a pony. We watched as our other horses moved in and showed her the ropes. Annie, a sighted pony, agreed to be her seeing-eye guide. Gratefully, Molly accepted the help and they became fast friends. But months passed before she came to the realization that she no longer had to perform in order to prove her worth and to live. Molly. She could just be Molly. Just herself. To watch that unfolding was a joy for all of us. Molly now handles her blindness very well, and, thanks to her horse friends, she has found a deeper understanding of life and of herself. She is content and joyful, with a sort of inner light. One has only to spend two minutes with her to feel the gratitude that she has for everything that she now has in life. Her life now isn't about what she lost, it is about what she found.



There are so many stories I wish I could share with you. We hope that you will visit the farm to meet these magnificent animals for yourselves. You can also follow their stories on our website and on Facebook. We want you to experience the difference that you make.

Each year 275 – 300 animals find refuge in our Sanctuary. Some stay here permanently, though many of the cats, especially, are adopted into forever homes. No matter how long their stays with us last, their lives are enriched, largely by you. You are the difference that allows healing and creates miracles.

Each year we reach out to you for your continued support, and we are humbled by your compassion and generosity. Each year we need to raise nearly \$275,000 to close the funding gap, in order to keep doing what we do. Again, we can assure you that every penny you share goes directly to the care of the animals. All of our administrative costs are covered by an endowment and we do not hire outside fundraisers. But in order to maintain the high quality of what we do for these animals -- to maintain the “Spring Farm Difference” -- we need your help. You provide the stability that allows an animal like Hannah to finally find herself -- you are the light leading out of the darkness of despair for animals like David, and like Molly. You are their miracles. Our vast family, animal and human, here at SFC, sends to you from deep out of our many hearts, gratitude for the difference that you make.

Blessings to you and your animal family,  
*Dawn*

Dawn Hayman  
Co-Founder/Assistant Director  
Spring Farm CARES



We are always grateful for our corporate sponsor Staffworks and their continued support on behalf of animals in our community.