



Education is a very important issue to share with humans of all ages. Because of the number of economically challenged children who come to our free events we have expanded both our educational and our fun programs for them. Our Youth Director focuses specifically on programs for children. Some programs are shared by adults and children:

- We had special programs for many pre-veterinary students where they receive hands-on training working with animals.
- Once a month, during 2010, we had an educational tour, this will expand to weekly in 2011. Tours are often attended as a family outing. Our Christmas Day tour was advertised by the Fredericksburg paper as a wonderful event for children and their families. Over 125 people spent their Christmas afternoon visiting and learning about the animals.
- We visited festivals, shows and events where we had booths, educational information as well as fun things for kids, like making toys for animals.
- We have special programs for children, magic shows, visit Santa Claus, visit the Easter Bunny, Halloween events, and a safe Haunted Forest event for older children.
- Many of the children attending such events come from very poor rural areas where virtually no other safe entertainment with good family values is available.
- Since the services and programs are free, they are very well attended.
- In 2010 we operated our first annual summer camp program for teenagers and preteens, attended weekly during the summer by 30 kids, some kids stood out as leaders, and they will be back in the summer of 2011 leading our second annual summer camp, and teaching useful skills and social interactions to more children.
- Zoe Wang is a 13 year old who fell in love with Mascot Vincent at a cat show in Chantilly. She did a neighborhood food collection and brought a group of kids and adults to do a day of Community Service at our sanctuary.



Rikki's Refuge is important to not just me but many other people. As a high school student, I have seen the effects of lack of discipline, and loss of compassion take a deadly toll on the characters of our young generation. They are selfish, and begin to use their minds less and less. Rikki's Refuge helps reverse this. When children come here to work, this is a place to release not only energy, but creativity, passion, and have fun, whilst benefiting the community. Not only does Rikki's create a safe niche and community for many people, it begins many lives that, throughout the rest of their lives, will give back to the same community that we know seek to preserve.



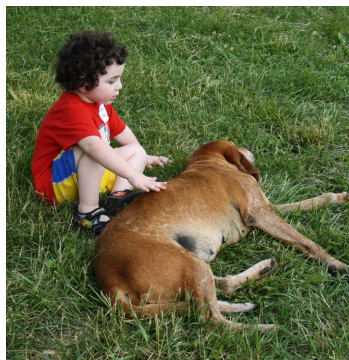
Rikki's Refuge has saved the lives of hundreds of animals, taking in homeless cats and abused dogs, rescuing neglected goats and rabbits. Whether it's because of the rainbow colored cat adorning the gate or the ecstatic barking of their welcome committee, being at Rikki's Refuge is also extremely beneficial for humans. From the moment my friends and I hopped out of the car on our first visit there, we fell in love with the refuge. Before I even had time to turn

around and close the car door behind me, there were two cats twining around my ankles and a big, fluffy dog trying to get me to pet him. There were all sorts of animals milling around the refuge, from ordinary pets to emus and guinea fowl. It was amazing to see how well everyone got along. The cats, dogs, chickens, rabbits, and goats coexist better than most family members do. The upbeat, casual environment has a very calming effect.



Being around so many friendly, social animals is an instant confidence booster. With the overwhelming social pressures that exist in middle/high schools, teenagers like me hardly ever get a moment to just pet cats and receive showers of unconditional love and friendship. Animals have no prejudices; they don't care if you have pimples or if you're overweight. It was such a relief to actually not feel awkward and self-conscious like I always am at school. Even after stepping in poop and getting covered in fur, I couldn't stop smiling. Rikki's Refuge provides an opportunity for young people to put aside the less pleasant things in their life and just have fun. It's a chance for unappreciative, moody teenagers like myself to understand that community service is something you can be proud of yourself for, not just another task forced upon us poor students by inconsiderate civics teachers. Volunteering at Rikki's taught me more about cooperation and compassion than any school curriculum could.

Zoe Wang





As well as companion animals, Rikki's houses farm animals. This provides the opportunity for people to be around, and learn more, about them. In a world where many city children do not know where... milk comes from, Rikki's provides educational opportunities. There are several routes by which human health and welfare can be improved, although some are indirect. By reflecting on the conditions



in which animals are kept more people might be willing to pay more for higher welfare-standards produce. This affects not only animal welfare but human health as well, as the antibiotics and growth-promoters routinely used to produce low-cost meat are starting to cause concern about their potential impact on human health. More significantly, people might be encouraged to reduce their consumption of animal protein, which is already known to have health benefits.

Kate Viscardi

What's Happening Outside of Rikki's Refuge?
by Laurie Karnay, Events Director



One important aspect of community outreach by Rikki's Refuge is the participation in various events in and around the Orange/Fredericksburg and northern Virginia area by Rikki's Refuge volunteers. As some of you may know, I and a small group of volunteers help to get the word out about RR by attending various events such as the Reston (VA) Pet Fiesta and the Charlottesville (VA) Vegetarian Festival. Although these events generally do not raise much money, they are one more way for the public to learn about Rikki's Refuge and hopefully come visit us and then become a financial supporter and/or volunteer. At several of these events, we can bring animals and it's a great way for people to be introduced to us. If no Rikki's Refuge animals are available, I can usually rely on Walker, Rikki's Refuge Alumnus Spokes Dog to carry the day (see photo). He's a perfect example of all the great and wonderful things that Rikki's Refuge accomplishes and that I have the honor of supporting in this small way.



For me personally, it has been an opportunity to attend events I normally would not, meet and develop new friendships and interact with other rescue groups. If you know of any event that might be a new opportunity for Rikki's Refuge to attend, please let me know or feel free to stop by our booth, look for the cow canopy (at most events), and say hello!

