



Winslow Farm's Debra White Early OSV visits inspire animal rescuer

Old Sturbridge Village Member Debra White's earliest memories include childhood visits with her engineer father, who was replicating the Grist Mill waterwheel for a client. While his attention was on the waterwheel, hers was on the animals.

White, the founder of Winslow Farm Animal Sanctuary in Norton, Massachusetts, traces her connection to animals to those early OSV visits. "I had to stay by his side while he sketched, but I really just wanted to be with the animals – the chickens, oxen, and sheep."

Because of her father's subsequent illness and early death from Parkinson's disease, White cherishes her memories of OSV. "It was an uplifting place that gave us happiness as a family."

Today, White saves neglected and abandoned animals and others slated to be slaughtered or sent to factory farms. Her Winslow Farm is a "rescue and stay-for-life" sanctuary, home to 300 rescued animals, including horses, sheep, llamas, alpacas, goats, peacocks, chickens, ducks, geese, donkeys, mules, pheasants, cats, dogs, and even emus.

The animals are free to mingle, roam, trot, prance, and waddle about. Ponies and goats wander up to greet visitors, and it's all quite a contrast to the abuse, neglect, and "cage stress" the animals have experienced.

"Rabbits should live on the ground and not sit in a stupid hutch all day," White says. "They love to burrow and dig, and being little rabbits, they love to hop and play – even with the cats."

White's rescue efforts have attracted national attention. The Associated Press featured Winslow Farm in 2004, and the September 2010 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* ran a story on the close friendship between "Waterford the pig" and two farm cats who play tug-of-war with the pig.

In addition to its day-to-day mission of saving animals, Winslow Farm also hosts tours, monthly special events, and visits by some 3,000 visitors a year. Now with a staff of six and 35 volunteers, running the farm commands White's full-time attention, and she describes herself as "CEO, bottle washer, and stall mucker."

White brings other Old Sturbridge Village influences to her farm, including wool dyeing demonstrations, post-and-beam architecture, split rail fences, and period gardening methods she learned at OSV.

"People visit and say, 'This is like Old Sturbridge Village,' and that's the best compliment anyone could give me. I am so thankful that OSV has been in my life."

Learn more about Winslow Farm: www.winslowfarm.com; 508-285-6451.



Photo: Sheepish Grin Pet Photography



TOP: Debra White with one of Winslow Farm's rescue horses, an Arabian named Spirit.

CENTER: A visit to Old Sturbridge Village circa 1971

(l-r): Debra with her aunt, Jean Gumula; her parents, Helen and David White; and her grandmother, Ann Gumula.

BOTTOM: Debra visiting OSV's Freeman Farm, circa 1971.