

WHIDBEY LIFE

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Marnie Jackson's rescue dogs Brodie, Russell, and Clover / Photo by Marnie Jackson

GIMME SHELTER

All sorts of animals need it.
All sorts of humans give it.



Marnie Jackson and adopted cow / Photo by Joan Forest.

By Patricia Herlevi

Animal rescuers are the unsung heroes among us who take unwanted creatures into their care, sometimes at great personal time and expense. Rescuers, who span all ages, use their own resources to house an injured or stray animal. They fill their cars with crates, leashes, blankets, and kibble. When not acting as foster parents, they use social media to garner financial support and secure new homes for their temporary charges. Sometimes they even create entire sanctuaries.

From Chipmunks to Cows

For Marnie Jackson, communications manager for the Whidbey Institute and veteran animal advocate, rescuing animals comes second nature. Her former job at the Humane Society of Skagit Valley formalized what already came naturally, providing her with behind-the-scenes experience with dog and cat rescue. “I’ve scooped up many injured animals from roadsides and ditches in my lifetime—stray and injured cats, owls, pheasants, dogs, goats, cattle, horses, possums, rats, squirrels, shrews, deer, mice, chipmunks, and donkeys,” said Jackson. “We’re lucky we have some wildlife vets in our region who treat injured creatures.”



Sarah Santosa communes with cows Dahlia and Rosie Cotton in the Ballydidean farmyard. / Photo by Ansel Santosa

Jackson shares her home with animals in need of one. “My current pack is Russell, a miniature pinscher mix; Clover, a Chihuahua mix; and Brodie, a labrador/greyhound mix,” said Jackson. “Brodie has been living with diabetes and Cushing’s disease, but he’s doing great.”

Few of Jackson’s missions of mercy have been for animals as large as Dahlia, but the cow who became homeless long past her prime won Jackson’s heart. Through

crowd funding, Jackson purchased Dahlia and eventually found her a home on property owned by Ansel and Sarah Santosa.

A Rural Sanctuary

In 2018, the Santosas bought a farm in Clinton and created Ballydidean (a Gaelic term meaning “sanctuary farm”). With no experience rescuing animals or running a farm, they

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Senior alpacas Cuzco and Zorro at Ballydidean. / Photo by Ansel Santosa

sold their home in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood and relocated to Whidbey to pursue a heartfelt mission.

Dahlia and companion cow Rosie Cotton are two of several permanent residents among hens, cats, llamas, and Billy goats. "Male goats are less desirable than females because they don't produce milk, but you have to breed your females to keep them with milk," said Ansel Santosa. "We're delighted to take those boy goats so they can live long happy lives instead of becoming meat."

While some don't picture Millennials mucking cow stalls, a surprising number of younger people are venturing into farming and animal rescue. "We didn't know we'd end up on Whidbey," reflected Ansel. "But despite being city kids all of our lives, we always felt called to rural life and animals. We're both vegetarians and feel strongly about protecting animals."

Making a Squawk

On the other end of the spectrum, the founder of Flying



A gray dove settles on the fingers of Susan Hilliard at Flying Colors Aviary. Photo by Sarah Sanborn



Sun parakeets Smartie, Shredders, and Toots seem to converse with Susan Hilliard at Flying Colors Aviary. / Photo by Sarah Sanborn



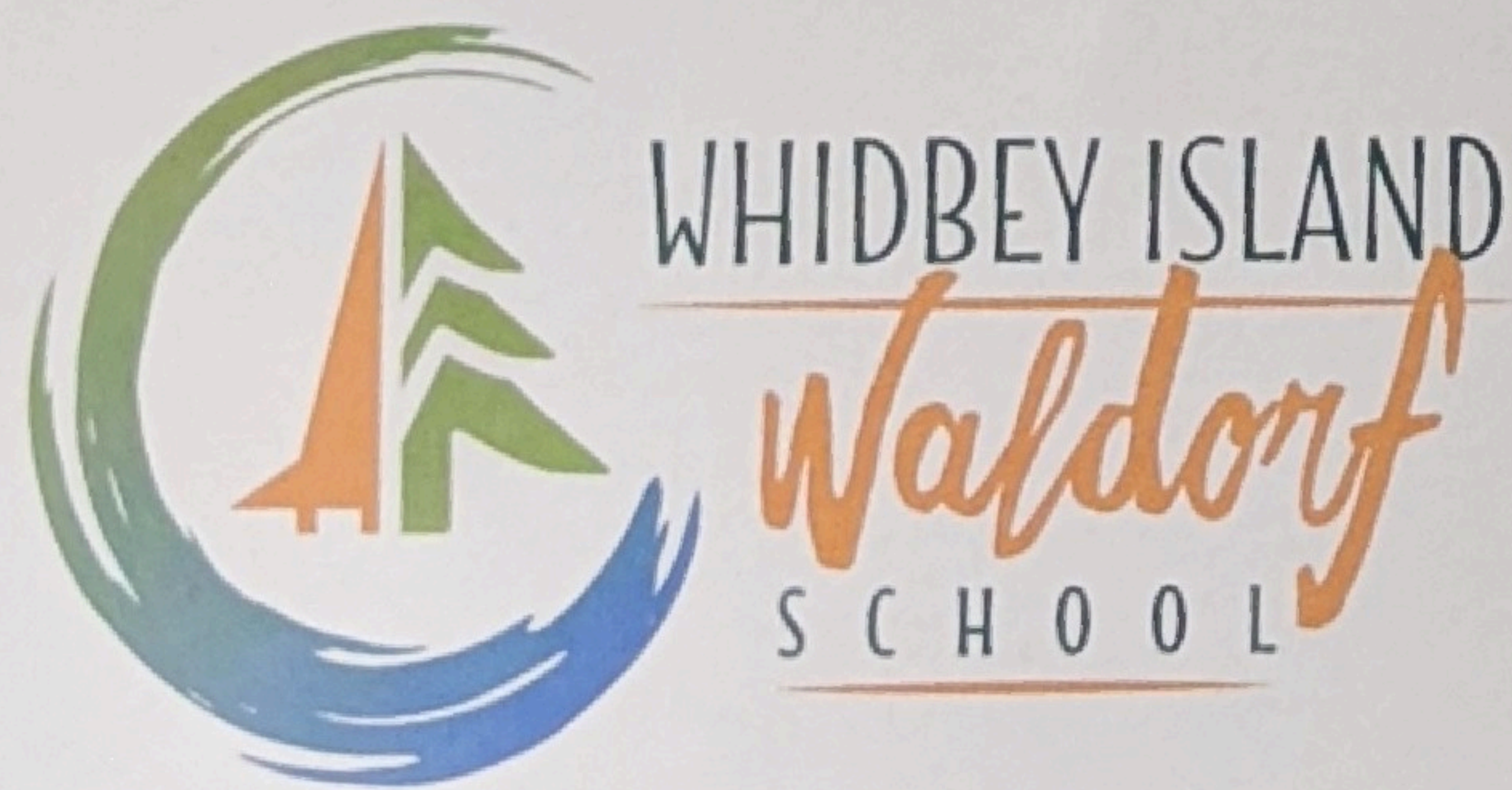
The Santosas welcome Dahlia to Ballydidean. / Photo by Ansel Santosa

Colors Aviary hails from a family of animal rescuers. Prior to starting an aviary, Susan Hilliard took in dogs. As well as fostering poodles, dachshunds, Great Danes, and springer spaniels in her own home, Hilliard belonged to several dog-rescue organizations. Now, it's birds that receive her attentions.

A visitor is welcomed to Flying Colors by a cacophony of sound from macaws, parrots, cockatoos, and other avian species. In the main enclosure, 150 birds squawk in cages, flit

from branches, or land on human shoulders. Tooie, a spirited Triton cockatoo, wishes everyone a happy birthday. A green parrot named Singer performs opera. Hercules, a Moluccan cockatoo, clamors for attention. Other enclosures contain pheasants, an oriole, a recovering robin, doves, pigeons, and peacocks.

Equal parts bird rescuer and public educator, Hilliard also boards birds at Flying Colors. Since psittaciformes (parrots



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Green macaw Kate and blue macaw Dudley / Photo by Sarah Sanborn

and related birds) live up to 80 years, it's not uncommon for them to land in an aviary sometime in the course of their long lives. "They mostly come from homes that don't want them any more due to the parrot being difficult or the owner wanting a freer life," said the soft-spoken advocate. According to Hilliard, it's not unusual that changing circumstances in the lives of owners mean big changes in the lives of their pets.

Giving Old Dogs New Gifts

Old Dog Haven (ODH), founded by Judith and Lee Piper in 2004, places senior dogs in foster homes. Placing senior dogs is a challenge, and they are more likely to languish in

shelters. Ten ODH foster homes currently exist on Whidbey.

"We adopt out those dogs with a reasonable life expectancy," explained Executive Director Ardeth Devries. "We care for the rest as members of the family in permanent foster homes—what we call Final Refuge—for as long as they have good quality of life. In addition, we try to assist owners in finding new homes for their senior dogs through our website and referrals."

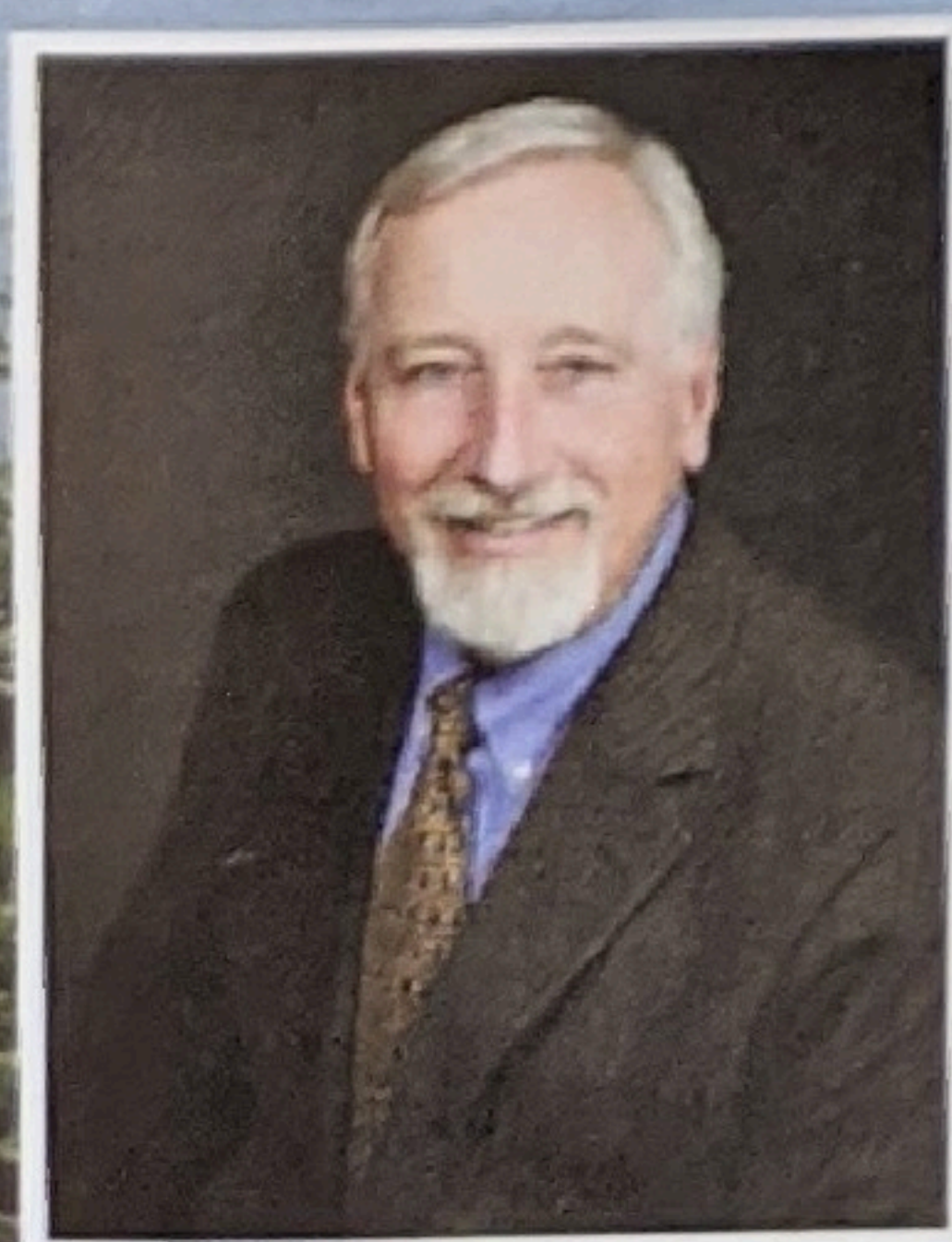
Compassionate Choices

Those—like Jackson, Hilliard, the Santosas, and the Pipers—who respond to the plight of suffering animals certainly improve the lives of our four-footed and feathered friends. But they also enlarge the collective human heart and deliver, through intentions and actions, a walloping dose of kindness to a world sorely in need of it.

Patricia Herlevi is a true Washingtonian. Her work has appeared in several publications. She enjoys practicing astrology, spending time outdoors, and exploring urban planning, architecture, and performing and fine arts.

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