

Harness Hope

On her farm for rescued animals, Sandra Seabrook teaches kids how to care for others—and love themselves.

ON A BUCOLIC 11-acre property west of Syracuse, NY, Sandra Seabrook houses rescue animals such as horses, pigs, alpaca, goats and chickens. But it's the farm's guests—teenagers from the local community—who make this place truly special.

Twice a week, 10 troubled kids participate in Purpose Farm's free mentorship program, run by Sandra and her daughter Raven, 18. Some of the kids suffer from severe anxiety, often the result of problems at home and school.

But as they care for the animals, most of which the Seabrooks save from derelict farms and abusive owners, they learn compassion and camaraderie. "Both the animals and kids come to the farm searching for friends and yearning for love," Sandra says.

PASSION PROJECT

Sandra began thinking about the therapeutic effect of animals on children in 2008, on a mission trip to a Romanian orphanage near a horse farm. Back home, she took action. Over the next few years, the Seabrooks sold their house, bought farmland, then sought animals and kids in need.



"There's no special skill involved in loving a child," says Sandra (right), with her daughter Raven.

Today, the students, who come for individual 60- to 90-minute sessions, assist with chores like filling water buckets, dropping hay in the fields or cleaning the barn. They also groom and ride horses, lead pigs to a nearby river to swim, or pet alpaca in the pastures. All the while, Sandra and Raven talk to them about setting and achieving goals.

Purpose Farm helps Rosie*, 11, channel her anger and frustration. One afternoon, Rosie's mother, Deb, spotted a glimpse of her in the fields, gently brushing a horse and listening intently to Sandra and Raven.

"Rosie was so calm," Deb marvels. "She may not realize it, but Purpose Farm brings out a relaxed, focused side of her. It gives her the chance to work on her coping and social skills."

HUMBLE HELPER

Sandra's determination to build kids' confidence and encourage them through hardships stems from her own difficult childhood. "I've always had a heart for the child who struggles," she says.

And it's working. Every day, caseworkers and relatives contact Sandra hoping to enroll their kids, but she's limited by funds (and time). Nevertheless, Sandra knows the farm is her future. As she tells the kids: "We're all made on purpose for a purpose. And this is mine."

You Can Help

Find out about ways to support Sandra's mission to care for kids and animals by going to purposefarm.org.