



Animal Speak - September 2016 - Santa Fe

A Sacred Journey to Kindred Spirits

By Lynne McMahan

“When animals enter our life, we start on a journey filled with adventure, learning, and love. The animals reach deep into us and change us in ways that can hardly be described. We grow in love. And upon their leaving, we are lost, devastated. Over time, we explore the story and see the meaning, and stand in awe of these remarkable beings. What an honor they give us when they walk a part of our lives with us” (Barbara Janelle as quoted in *Animals in Spirit: Our Faithful Companions’ Transition to the Afterlife* by Penelope Smith).

No where has this profound sacred journey been more visible to me than during my recent visit to an amazing organization and very special place, the Kindred Spirits Animal Sanctuary (KSAS, <http://www.kindredspiritsnm.org>). KSAS is an animal sanctuary that provides eldercare and hospice for dogs, horses and poultry. It has become the final home for abandoned and unwanted senior animals, offering an environment focused on wellness care and from my observation, choice and freedom, not usually afforded our aging animals. The Wellness Care Program begins when the elder animal arrives, often traumatized physically, emotionally, mentally and/ or spiritually. The program includes the following steps for care: feeling safe, mobility, nutrition, healthcare, organization and structure, non-toxic environment, community of own kind, caregiver community, end of life care, and hospice care. Beyond this program, the sanctuary receives veterinary support and also offers workshops and education in caring for one another and the natural end of life stages. The senior animals and their care givers develop a heart connected, reciprocal relationship, where each can grow in mindfulness and appreciation of all life.

My sacred journey to this place of love, care and honor was taken in order to share this place with my readers of *Animal Speak*. Ulla Pedersen founded Kindred Spirits in 2002 at her beautiful ranch south of Santa Fe and welcomed me with open arms. On the day I visited, I approached the gate of the sanctuary and was greeted by two dog elders, Polli and Clifford, who guided me to Ulla, a beautiful spirit in human form. She later shared Polli's story, now age 17, who came to the sanctuary suffering from arthritis and fear and had to be carried from one place to the next when she first arrived. Through careful handling and good nutrition, she developed a sense of hope, community and health balance. Her rhythm now is to go with the flow—following the peaceful, quiet days with ease. Her 14 year old companion, Clifford is blind, but he too has found his rhythm in the day and in his community, following Polli and Juniper (another dog elder) to the barns where they help the wonderful staff members feed their horse family members, Jack (32), Blondie (29) and Moon Spirit (30). Though each horse elder came to the sanctuary with a serious ailment from early lives of hardship, through pain medication, good nutrition, gentle exercise, and canine and human love, they are thriving in their own community.

Beyond the three horses and my three dog elder greeters, there are 7 additional elder "big dogs" and 10 "littles," with separate areas for feeding, wondering, and napping. Sixty poultry family members are housed in their amazing, meandering, shaded and well-protected area--peacocks, ducks, chickens, and turkeys, all living in blissful harmony. And that's not all who share this beautiful sanctuary--4 part-time employees, countless devoted volunteers and donors, as well as the nature spirits themselves who call this place home. As written in the KSAS 2016 Summer newsletter, "Each [family member] has contributed to the Wellness Care program...this includes a nurturing and healthy environment, an eco system with sustainable practices and careful reuse of all organic materials...this makes it a sanctuary also for the wild birds and the critters that we don't usually see, like the earth worms and micro organisms in the soil. In return we all benefit from vibrant and happy soil energy."

What I experienced in the three short hours on this first sacred journey to KSAS was a lifetime of lessons in love, elder care, and grace. Keri Lee, Ulla's Administrative Assistant, said it best in the summer newsletter reflecting on her time at the Kindred Spirits Animal Sanctuary:

I have been pondering the true meaning of grace...Before: I used to be afraid of death...Now: These sweet beings are brought here not just for end of life care, but instead to make it their own individual journey towards the end...in a safe and loving community as everyone should be in their final times...I see there is a beauty in the soul's natural progression of aging and eventually dying...I see unconditional love, compassion and joy in the loving care given and received all around me...To all those senior animals before, during and yet to come-I thank you for the many, many heartfelt lessons that have made me become a better being on this planet."

Blessings all!

Lynne McMahan, Ed.D., En-Light-En Reiki, is a Usui/Holy Fire Karuna Reiki® Master and Mind-Body-Spirit Mentor, supporting the healing of each person or animal on their journey of transformation. For more information: enlightenreiki.com, enlighten.reiki@gmail.com, or 505.400.3168. Santa Fe office: 110 Delgado St.

