

One Way to soothe traumatized child

By Nicholas G. Jonson
Journal-News

FARFIELD

Every night before going to bed, a 12-year-old boy at the One Way Farm wheels a red wagon out to an animal barn to say goodnight to the animals.

At each cage, he stops to say a few words. The animals, always glad to have human visitors, try to push their noses through the cage wires to touch his face.

After saying goodnight, the child quietly pulls his wagon back to the shelter and goes to sleep.

It's a scene that is familiar to Executive Director Barbara Condo, who with a handful of staff members, has tried to comfort child victims of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse for 25 years.

"They've lost their trust," Condo said of the children.

"Children who have been sexually abused do not understand the concept of touch of any kind. What

might seem normal to you and me feels uncomfortable to them."

Condo began One Way Farm 25 years ago with the 12-

acre plot her house sits on and \$59. Over the years, the farm and its staff have provided

comfort more than to 7,000 troubled children from throughout the county.

The animal therapy

program began by accident about eight months ago, Condo said, when she noticed how children

responded to her dog "Pokey," a wire-hair terrier.

The children, many of whom had been

emotionally traumatized and walked with their heads down, seemed to

come alive when walking or taking care of the dog.

Since then, Condo has added another dog, several cats and a slew

of rabbits, guinea pigs and ferrets.

Condo has used the animals "when a child is in major distress; when he's lost hope, thought of taking his life."

The animals "became complete therapeutic tools," she said.

Condo said she has

seen children sit for hours petting an animal, sometimes crying,

sometimes talking about whom they love, whom they hate, what kind of a day they had at school.

The result is a healing process by which the children slowly regain a sense of trust, she said.

"They seem to feel 'I can tell (the animals)

anything and they won't tell anybody and they won't get mad'.

Barbara Condo animals do nothing but respond," Condo said.

"They become a vital part of that child's mental health."

EVERYBODY HAS A STORY

They seem to feel 'I

can tell (the animals) anything and they won't tell anybody and they won't get mad'.

Barbara Condo animals do nothing but respond," Condo said.



Greg Lynch/Journal-News
One Way Farm Executive Director Barbara Condo and second-shift supervisor Edna York sit with some of the animals at the farm.