



NICK DAGGY/FAIRFIELD ECHO

BARB CONDO, the executive director of the One Way Farm in Fairfield, sits in a girl's room surrounded by stuffed animals. Condo says that the stuffed animals make the kids feel nurtured and safe.

Mom of 8,000

Condo is the brains, heart behind Fairfield's home for abused, neglected kids

By **DAVE GREBER**
Fairfield Echo

"Whatever it takes."

It's a mentality that has motivated the mother of some 8,007 children during the past three decades.

That's a number that is profound in any circle of child care. But for Barb Condo, executive director of the Fairfield-based One Way Farm, the unwavering desire to make severely abused and neglected

children whole is business as usual.

A hometown war room

Condo begins each day around 7 a.m. at Pearl's Diner on Ohio 4. Surrounding herself with family and friends, it is her war room away from the life she has chosen along a 12-acre site on River Road, which houses 10 boys and 10 girls ages 10 to 21.

She hears reports from the previous day or from the weekend from

some of the One Way Farm staff. She quietly nibbles at a diet free of carbohydrates, while digesting the behavior of her children, the maintenance needs at the Farm's facilities and the future of a dream from which she will never awake.

Peace is found easily at Pearl's Diner. But in a few hours, deep in the trenches of making decisions about the \$1 million-a-year facility, it will be harder to come by.

Not to worry, though. Tomor-

row and the next day will present the same situation.

Three brains, many hats

It's 8:30 a.m. Condo's "three brains" are cranking alongside her employees at the administrative offices on the One Way Farm campus. Flanked almost constantly by wall-sized calendars in each office

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Condo

One Way Farm director has devoted life to caring for kids

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— full of doctor's appointments for the children, countless meetings and various speaking engagements — she visits each staff member with a definitive purpose.

Condo wears many hats this early in the morning. Fund-raiser. Lawyer. Mother.

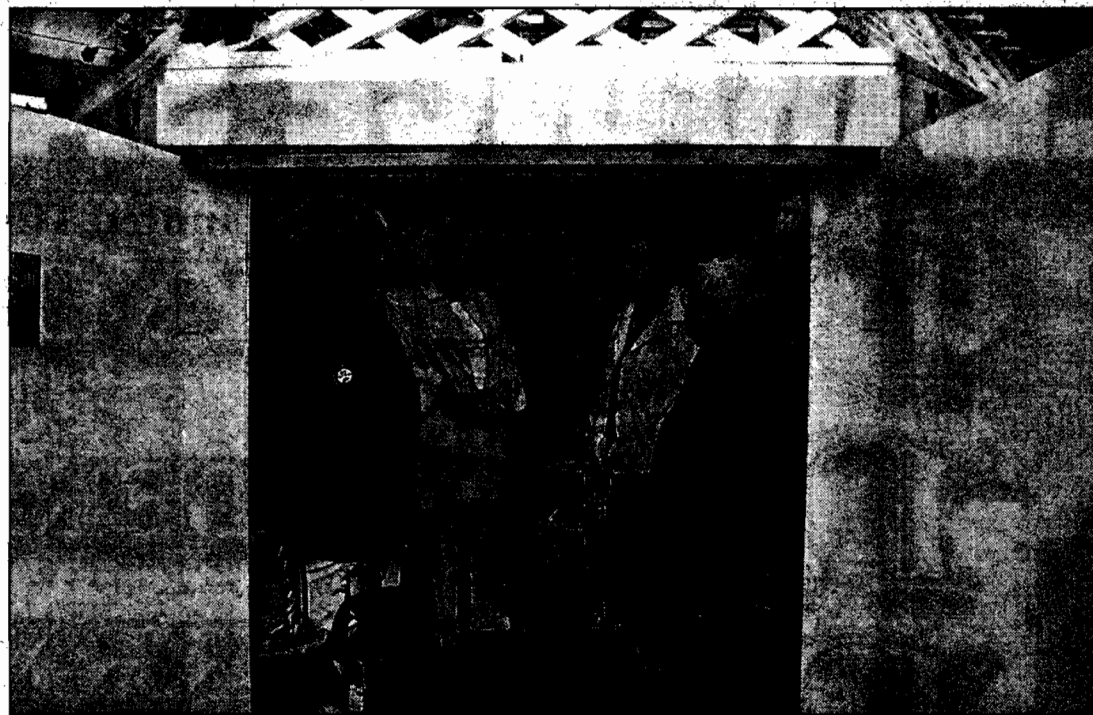
She has her hands in every decision made at the One Way Farm, a practice that contributed to quadruple bypass surgery six years ago. Even then, she worked from her bedroom. For the past few months, the afternoon has been used for naps on an office couch and tying up loose ends, but it doesn't mean she goes home early.

"I forget what time it is at night," Condo said. "I'll dial the phone and I'll have to hang up real quick because it's 11:30 p.m."

Behind her passion for returning her children to childhood, though, is the experience of her own youth, which was taken at an early age.

Condo, now 68, bounced back and forth from abusive parents in the south to affluent aunts and uncles in the north. One situation taught her the finest aspects of life, like the purpose behind a full setting of tableware and cleanliness. The other prepared her for what she would be faced with in adulthood: raising children from backgrounds of severe physical and sexual abuse, neglect and abandonment. Most of the 8,000 children who have passed through the doors of One Way Farm are better for it — the remaining seven are Condo's biological children, who are now politicians, social workers and in other successful professions.

"Our goal is not just to have you here," Condo said of the One Way Farm experience. "Our goal is to



NICK POGGY/FAIRFIELD ECHO

BARB CONDO GIVES A TOUR of the doll house in the basement of one of the houses on the One Way Farm in Fairfield. Condo built these houses in 1976 to shelter severely abused children. The doll house was specifically designed to have windows in the front and lattice in the ceiling so that the kids could see who was coming and their problems could escape.

make you a productive citizen. For as long as a child is here, I can teach them more than they have ever known."

The grounds

The facilities at One Way Farm — two houses, one barn and an office — are immaculate, despite the fact that they are inhabited by 20 adolescents of varied and unthinkable backgrounds. Instructional signs adorn nearly every wall of each of the four buildings. That way, time is not wasted on repetition, Condo said. It's the same for employees as it is for the children: Either you get it, or you don't. The latter will mean your stay at One Way Farm will be short, she said.

"The reason these kids are like this is because they haven't been taught the social graces of life," Condo said. "We have success. We're not just housing kids."

The foundation of those teachings is based on dedication,

Condo's employees said of her.

"The same care that your mother gave you, that's the commitment that she gives to each of these kids," said Michelle Chasteen, One Way Farm's coordinator of marketing and development. "And it's the same care for this company that she's given her life to."

Nowadays, much of Condo's life is based on raising money for the One Way Farm's day-to-day operation, facility upkeep and future expansions.

Donations are constant but sometimes fall short of expectations and real needs. When she began the Farm — inside her own home, which sits at the corner of the 14-acre lot on the west side of Fairfield — Condo had \$59. Fund-raising sheets pasted on dry-erase boards now feature six- and seven-figure numbers.

"Being a mother to these kids isn't a headache," Condo said. "It's all the variables that

interfere with it."

But the children are far away from this reality. They know very little about the financial situation of One Way Farm and most of its intricate workings.

Their world now is filled with tough love and compassion, results-based rules and the kind of comfort for whom each has been searching but never attained. They are happy. They offer hugs to One Way Farm staff openly and without hesitation. Most importantly, though, they are protected.

"These children are an island unto themselves," Condo said. "We are here to build a foundation. We empower them. We're here to create memories like they've never had before."

In the meantime, Condo receives a few memories herself, which act like fuel for her soul.

"If something is natural to you, you don't have to worry about losing it or wearing it out," she said. "It's just the way I am."