



Henderson and friend
at Marist College's
Meatout Event

Animal House

Transform your college campus into a vegan oasis. *By Mat Thomas*

"THERE ARE FEW EARTHLY THINGS MORE beautiful," wrote the British poet John Masefield, "than a university: a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see."

Indeed, the very word "university" (from the Latin *universitas*, meaning "the whole") implies it is an entire self-contained universe, existing both within and apart from the mundane, workaday world. In this rarified atmosphere, exploration, questioning accepted values, and finding one's true calling are paramount. Add to this the sudden freedom many college students experience being away from their families and hometowns for the first time, and you have a fertile environment in which veganism can flourish.

Robin Henderson, class of '07 graduate of Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, knows firsthand about the potential for campus activism. A vegetarian since the age of 14, she founded FoxPAW (combining the school's mascot with an acronym for People for Animal Welfare) as a transfer student her sophomore year. FoxPAW was an extraordinarily effective advocacy group under Henderson's leadership, and had an enormous positive impact at Marist for animals and vegans.

"Most college students don't realize what a profound effect they can have on their campuses," says Henderson. Take, for example, FoxPAW's successful cafeteria campaign. Henderson approached school officials about featuring more plant-based meals on campus, and was offered a seat on

the dining committee to represent the interests of Marist's vegans and vegetarians. In this role, she was able to increase the availability of veg staples like soy cream cheese and seitan, while ensuring that vegetarian and vegan foods were accurately labeled in the dining hall.

"As students, we're the school's 'customers,'" Henderson maintains. "We pay thousands of dollars a year for their services, so if they want our business, they must cater to our needs, whether it's about diet or some other aspect of campus life."

As such, FoxPAW tackled a range of issues, from getting the school store to allow them to label personal care products not tested on animals with the leaping bunny symbol and convincing the fashion department to prohibit the display of student projects using fur, to persuading the school to buy only cage-free eggs. Henderson also made sure that the group held weekly meetings and engaged in regular outreach through tabling and other educational events, such as film screenings

and "Veg 101" talks in the dorms, featuring free vegan food samples.

"FoxPAW got Gene Baur from Farm Sanctuary and cartoonist Dan Piraro to speak at Marist about animal issues," remembers Henderson. "We arranged for shuttles to the local SPCA on volunteer nights so students could be trained to walk dogs." She also focused on building bridges with other socially progressive campus groups: "I'd attend the ecology club's meetings and talk about the links between veganism and environmentalism to recruit new members," she recalls. One year, FoxPAW co-sponsored bringing the AIDS quilt to campus with the LGBT club. "I wanted people to see the interconnectedness between caring for people, animals, and the environment," says Henderson, "and that animal advocates care about all these issues."

For all the time she spent making FoxPAW a success, Henderson also excelled academically, stayed socially active, and worked weekends at the Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary, now her full-time job. Having earned her BS in Integrative Studies, Henderson handed leadership of FoxPAW over to another student this spring, and has applied to the Master's program at the Institute for Humane Education.

Students interested in establishing similar programs at their schools may use Henderson as a resource. She welcomes queries at robin@woodstockfas.org. [VN](#)

Mat Thomas pens *NewsBeet* in every edition of *VegNews*. Read more of his writing at animalrighter.org.

GetActive

One simple way to raise awareness about animal rights and vegan issues is to host a film screening on your campus. Try these flicks for an unforgettable film fest sure to change hearts and minds:

- ❖ *Earthlings*
- ❖ *McLibel*
- ❖ *Meet Your Meat*
- ❖ *Peaceable Kingdom*
- ❖ *Super Size Me*
- ❖ *Your Mommy Kills Animals*