

# CELEBRATING A COMPASSIONATE THANKSGIVING WITH FARM SANCTUARY

By Mat Thomas

Thanksgiving can be trying for people who care about animals, mainly because of what this holiday means for turkeys. More than *46 million* of these birds are slaughtered every year for this one feast — most of them having first been genetically manipulated, physically mutilated and crowded with thousands of other birds into dark, filthy warehouses on factory farms. Yet farm animal advocates need not despair, because we still have much to celebrate and be thankful for — including all the ways we can help save turkeys.

For more than two decades, Farm Sanctuary has been creating new Thanksgiving traditions that encompass the true spirit and noble values of this holiday: love, respect, appreciation, and compassion for *everyone*. The centerpiece of these efforts is our *Adopt-A-Turkey Project*, which offers alternative ways to enjoy a meaningful Thanksgiving by taking concrete actions that help turkeys and change people's perceptions of these beautiful birds. That is, instead of *eating* a turkey at Thanksgiving, we give people the chance to *feed, sponsor or adopt turkeys* who we have rescued from harm.

## Feeding Frenzy: A Celebration *FOR* the Turkeys

Every year in both New York and California, Farm Sanctuary hosts our perennially popular *Celebration FOR the Turkeys*. This event not only gives people a chance to hand-feed turkeys a delicious holiday meal during the "Feeding of the Turkeys Ceremony," enjoy a voluptuous vegan feast with all the trimmings, and attend inspiring presentations by premiere animal advocates, but also, for many, it is a way to inspire others and engage in something that is good for the soul.

Alida Labia, longtime vegetarian and Farm Sanctuary member from Truckee, California, has been coming to the *Celebration* at our Orland shelter since 2003 for these very reasons. "The symbolism of feeding turkeys instead of eating them makes my Thanksgiving incredibly special," she explains. "I invite meat-eating friends to join me so they'll see that turkeys' lives are worth

more than mere meat on a dinner plate."

Like Alida, Phoenix resident and Farm Sanctuary member Michelle Andria has attended the last six California Shelter *Celebrations* with her family — all of whom are vegan or vegetarian. "Being around likeminded people *and* rescued farm animals is a great way to spend any holiday," says Michelle. "That's why we've made the *Celebration* an Andria family tradition!"

Farm Sanctuary member Heidi Kadick of Syracuse, New York has also attended the last six *Celebrations* with her husband and some friends. As a vegan in her 60s who hasn't eaten meat in over 30 years, Heidi says that "Feeding the turkeys not only nourishes the birds, but our souls. The feeling of happiness it brings sustains me throughout the year."

In addition to our California and New York Shelter events, we'll also be holding a special compassionate holiday benefit for our feathered friends at Tavern on the Green in New York City this year, so we hope you'll be able to join us (see the back cover of this magazine for all the details). But even if you can't make it to one of our Thanksgiving *Celebrations*, you can still make a big dif-





ference for turkeys and feel good this holiday season — no matter where you live — by sponsoring the care of turkeys in need.

### The Joys of Turkey Sponsorship

Farm Sanctuary has rescued thousands of animals over the years, but we wouldn't be able to provide for them without our members' generous support. One of the main ways we generate essential animal care funds this time of year is through turkey sponsorships, which allow people to honor and protect our feathered friends at Thanksgiving.

Farm Sanctuary members Bruce and Deborah Wagman of Stinson Beach, California see the holidays as an opportunity to advocate for animals, and use sponsorships to send a message of compassion. "We sponsor turkeys for about 25 meat-eating families and friends every year around Thanksgiving to help them see that there is a living, feeling being behind their dinner," Bruce explains. "Over the years, a few friends have gone vegan as a result, proving that turkey sponsorship gifts do change people's lives."

One of these friends is Kathy Davis, who had a strong reaction to seeing her turkey's photo on the adoption certificate in 2004. "Her name was Maya, and it looked like the expression on her face said 'Please don't eat me!' My husband Rob and I didn't have any turkey that Thanksgiving, and stopped eating meat altogether in January 2005. Rob suffers from Crohn's disease and literally ate a diet of *only* meat and potatoes for 15 years, but now we're both healthy vegetarians — thanks to Bruce and Deb's gesture of kindness!"

While Bruce and Deborah use turkey sponsorships as an activism tool, San Jose, California resident and Farm Sanctuary member Sandra Bregar has taken the program more personally by sponsoring a turkey herself for the last five years. Sandra and her son Adam have been vegetarian since the early 90s, and spend every Thanksgiving at a family member's home — where everyone else eats turkey. "Sponsoring a turkey is our way of making up for our family's choice to eat one at Thanksgiving," Sandra said. "Just knowing that a turkey is safe and loved puts my heart more at peace during the holiday."

### All Aboard the Turkey Express: Taking Turkeys Home!

In addition to providing refuge to rescued animals at our shelters, we also place hundreds more in the homes of caring people through our *Farm Animal Adoption Network* every year. As part

of this program, we deliver birds spared from slaughter to permanent, loving, vegetarian homes during our fall *Turkey Express* adoption event.

When Karen Oeh of Ben Lomond, California adopted Rhoslyn and Ariala from us in 2007, the *New York Times* featured them in a front-page article on Thanksgiving Day, but that was just the beginning of their adventure. The pair quickly adapted to their new life, which they share with other rescued farm animals. "My girls are very social: they love meeting new people, and welcome visitors with chirps and fanned tail feathers," Karen reports. "They also like to follow me around, observing me and their surroundings with great curiosity. I highly recommend turkeys as companion animals because, much like dogs, they really enjoy human companionship — and they are excellent company, as well!"

Turkeys enjoy the simple pleasures in life, and they require what any dog or cat would need to be happy: nutritious food, a safe environment, somewhere warm and comfortable to sleep, veterinary checkups, the company of friends, and lots of affection will just about do it. If turkeys touch your heart and you would like to welcome some into your home, visit [adoptaturkey.org](http://adoptaturkey.org) or call 607-583-2225 for more information.



Photo by Connie Pugh

### A Compassionate Holiday Tradition Begins With You!

A beloved and time-tested tradition for members coast-to-coast, our *Adopt-A-Turkey Project* provides everyone with several very effective ways to make helping turkeys a fun and fulfilling part of their Thanksgiving festivities. The gratification that comes from feeding a turkey, seeing a friend's face light up when she opens her turkey sponsorship certificate, or giving rescued birds a loving home is priceless because it makes a real difference. We are very thankful to our many members who are already part of this powerful program, and invite *everyone* to join in this Thanksgiving. Thank *you* for being a holiday hero for the birds this and every year! Learn more today at [adoptaturkey.org](http://adoptaturkey.org).



HBO's "Big Love" star Ginnifer Goodwin signed on as our official 2009 *Adopt-A-Turkey Project* spokesperson! See what Ginnifer's doing this year to promote a compassionate Thanksgiving at [adoptaturkey.org](http://adoptaturkey.org)!

