

Beyond the Bar

West Place Animal Sanctuary: Helping our fine feathered friends



Peepers the Wild Turkey
in treatment



Peepers after a full recovery

Learning and understanding the nature of law typically takes seven years of schooling, a library card so worn it needs a replacement monthly, and a social life that extends as far as a head nod to the bailiff as court documents are handed off. But, when it comes to the laws of nature pertaining to wildlife, one Rhode Island attorney knows that there isn't always a bar separating our two worlds.

Wendy Taylor Humphrey, full time attorney and partner in the Providence law firm Taylor Fay, P.C., has been taking in and caring for injured, orphaned, and unwanted farm animals for nearly a decade. As the number of animals needing help grew, she decided to offer her experience and compassion for needy animals to the Saunterstown-based Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of Rhode Island (WRARI). WRARI is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization providing medical care and rehabilitation to injured and orphaned wild animals and birds in Rhode Island since 1993. Licensed by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), WRARI operates The Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island, which trains and supports many of the state's licensed rehabilitators including Wendy. "The various rehabilitators each specialize in different types of wildlife, and we volunteer as extensions of the clinic. Since many more animals are delivered to the clinic than they have room or staff to handle, the additional wildlife is sent to the rehabilitators."

Wendy's initial focus volunteering for the clinic four years ago was baby songbirds, but when she realized the time commitment required by their multiple daytime feedings, she shifted her attention to the more self-sufficient Eastern Wild Turkeys and other water fowl. After the clinic became inundated with the turkeys, and with no other rehabilitators having focused on them, Wendy became their go-to rehabilitator. Luckily for the turkeys, and many other species of animals, Wendy had plenty of room for them at the wildlife sanctuary she runs out of her own property. "With the number of wildlife and farm animals always growing, I felt I could do even more to help them if I started a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to

their rehabilitation, and food and medical care, expenses which continue to rise year after year."

"Three years ago, with the help of my current law partner, Thomas J. Fay, we created the West Place Animal Sanctuary." With her husband taking on the role of handyman, and the help of a local girl cleaning stalls and hutches, Wendy now runs the sanctuary while also practicing as a full time attorney. "Currently there are over 40 animals being cared for at the property, although each spring, with the influx of wildlife, we can easily have 60 or 70 at a given time. Stringent records must be kept on each and every wild animal a rehabilitator cares for, detailing the history, care provided, and release or disposition information."

Wendy notes that wildlife can present in the form of an injured adult, an orphaned baby, or anything in between. The main goal is to treat the sick and the injured and allow them to heal using nutrition, shelter and medicine; the more complicated task thereafter is deciding where and how to release the wildlife. "Some animals require a 'soft' release, where they are set free on one's property, with shelter and food still available to allow them time to become comfortable in the wild. Others are taken to a location known to attract their species, so that they may be released, and learn from others like them."

Wendy hopes her non-profit will continue to allow her to provide care for animals in need through fundraising opportunities and charitable donations. While funding is necessary for a sanctuary to run successfully, Wendy's passion for and commitment to the animals is the driving force behind West Place. "I think anyone, no matter what their situation, would have the same answer. Sometimes work interferes with life, and sometimes life interferes with work, but if you want to make time to do it all and you believe in what you do, you find a way to balance it all out and enjoy the best of both worlds." ❖