

DownEast

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Sponsored Content

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Stories of Giving Back

Maine's nonprofit community provides helping hands wherever there's need, and offer much to say thanks for this season.



Courtesy of Peace Ridge Sanctuary.

Safe Haven

***Peace Ridge Sanctuary** offers a beautiful forever home for animals on the midcoast, while preserving a piece of Maine's treasured landscape.*

Just 15 minutes from downtown Belfast, atop a hill flanked by tributaries that feed into Marsh Stream, idyllic grassy countryside unfurls as far as the eye can see. Cows, horses, donkeys, sheep, and goats graze in the rolling fields near a quaint 1830s farmhouse while geese and ducks swim on a pair of ponds.

It's the kind of bucolic setting that's increasingly rare in Maine. And thanks to Peace Ridge Sanctuary, it's also a safe haven for over 300 previously abused and neglected animals that are finally getting the care and protection they deserve.



Courtesy of Peace Ridge Sanctuary.

Unlike conventional shelters that only take household pets like dogs and cats, Peace Ridge also takes in equines and farm animals like pigs, cows, goats, and sheep, most of which have been seized by animal control officials from circumstances they likely wouldn't have survived. In a few cases, thoughtful individuals set aside funds for their animals to be cared for on site when they became unable.

Peace Ridge is one of only a handful of sanctuaries on the East Coast that serve a growing need. The organization has taken in over 1,100 hard to place animals since it began in 2001. A staff of eight along with many volunteers provide daily care.

“Since 2001, Peace Ridge has taken in over 1,100 hard-to-place animals, and provided nourishment, medical attention, and a safe place to live out their days.”

“It's round-the-clock work, seven days a week,” says founder and director Daniella Tessier, “But it's a gift to be able to help these animals, while preserving this beautiful landscape.”

The backstories of the Peace Ridge animals are heartbreaking. A number of the resident goats were discovered by animal welfare officers in an Aroostook County barn, living atop a pile of manure that had risen so high the goats were bumping their horns against rafters. Many were pregnant, most

were malnourished. A 25-year-old Belgian draft horse was found tied to a tree in the middle of a blizzard — covered in lice, with infected hooves, and skeletal at only half his ideal weight. After refeeding programs and veterinary care, these animals are all thriving. They spend their days roaming in green pastures and retire to clean, safe stables to rest.

“It’s amazing to see the transformations,” Tessier says.



Courtesy of Peace Ridge Sanctuary.

Peace Ridge’s 800-acre site — a former hay and tree farm that donors helped the nonprofit organization buy in 2015 — is open for scheduled tours, special events, and educational programs. Peace Ridge also devotes more than 650 acres to wildlife conservation. Peace Ridge runs entirely on the generosity of donors. They have launched a campaign to create an endowment that will allow the organization to remain secure and productive for future generations. Peace Ridge hopes to find the special people needed to invest in the longevity of the sanctuary in this way.

“When we had an opportunity to buy this farm, we were so happy to help preserve this breathtaking place while providing a special refuge for these animals,” Tessier says. “We want to make sure it remains here forever.”

➤ To learn more, visit peaceridgesanctuary.org.