

INTERVIEWS – NEWS – EVENTS (INE) ©2018

INE Note: All links are at the end of the interview.

INE: Welcome all. Today I'm very lucky to interview Susan Cox, Director of Animals Reaching Kids (ARK), a ministry of Crystal Cove Community Church in Palm Harbor, FL.

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INE: Hi Susan. Thank you for agreeing to this interview.

Tell us a little about yourself and the ARK team.

SC: We are all volunteers with varied backgrounds. Some bring animal experience, some special needs therapy, some education.

INE: How did ARK get started and what is the purpose for the program?

SC: My life experiences taught me that animals reach kids; but the LORD made the program ARK Animals Reaching Kids possible. The church here at Crystal Cove invited me to do the program here and support us for the feed for the animals. Other expenses veterinarian, farrier etc., are raised by donation.

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.
Proverbs 3:5-6*

ARK is a program designed to allow students of all ages to learn to handle animals. The basics of good training are applied: consistency, patience, positive reinforcement, reward, and the self-esteem gained by the ability to maintain an obedient partnership with the animal.

Once students have become proficient in training the animals, they become volunteers who then train new students.

Since a large part of training is repetition or practice, all volunteers are working to make the animals obedient so that even students with special needs can have success with the animals.

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INE: I see you have a barn full of animals, and then some. What types of animals do you have at ARK? What are their names? What tricks does each specialize in?

SC: **The big white horse “Lazarus” says prayers and gives kisses.**



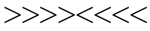
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The donkeys Boaz, Elijah, and Zechariah teach new students and stand on their stage.



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The miniature horses Jonah and Joshua take jumps and get on their stage.



Faith and Grace are the sheep who are also clicker trained and get on a stage.



Priscilla and Phoebe are goats who say a little prayer and touch the target with their nose.



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INE: Do the animals enjoy music, or people singing to them?

SC: Yes, they respond to music and gentle tones of voice.

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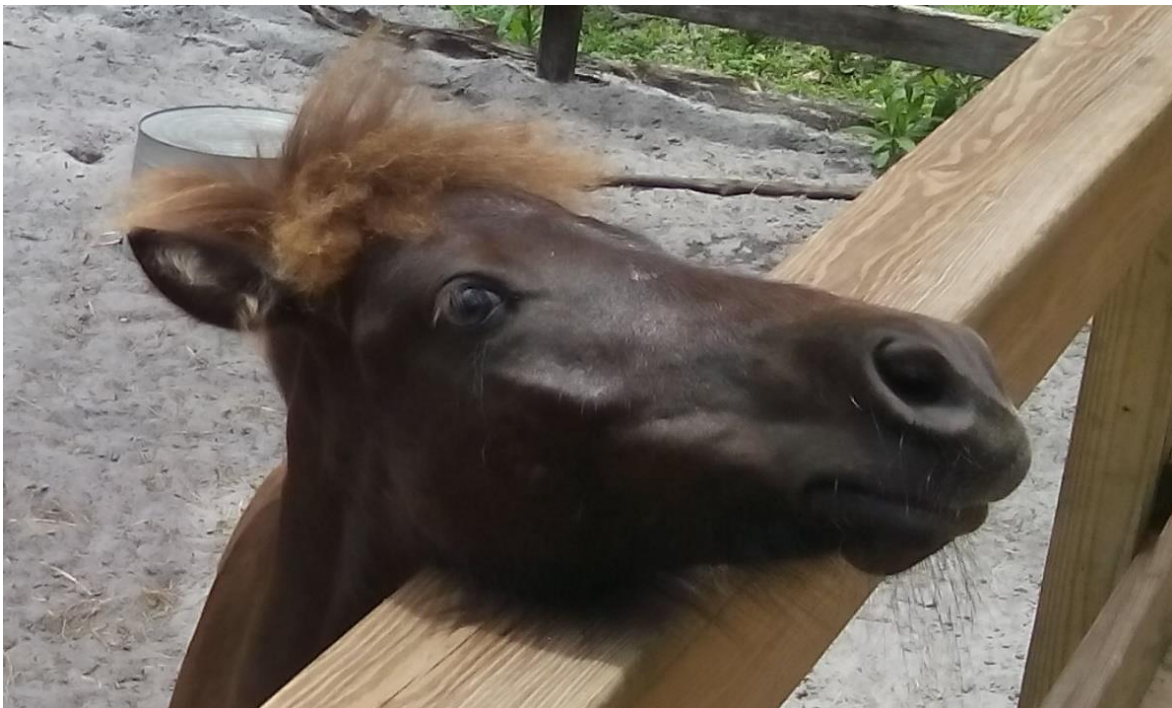


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INE: What key lesson have you learned from your interaction with these beautiful animals?

SC: That consistency inspires trust which leads to partnership.

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INE: What types of classes do you offer for those wishing to learn to work with the animals?

SC: Donkey 101 teaches haltering, grooming, leading, and clicker training; the basis of all animal training.

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INE: Can anyone volunteer?

SC: Yes, once completing donkey 101 (three one-hour classes), students can volunteer in a specific area.

INE: Tell us about a few ARK program successes.

SC: High School special needs non-responsive girl changes to student able to communicate commands clearly to animal, expect the animal to obey, and receives appropriate response timing from the animal's obedience. Reward given correctly and on time.

Elementary school boy unable to focus on anything or even hold anything in hand changes to communicate with animal, do grooming and lead the animal to appropriate position and place lead rope up and over post as required. Accomplished with once per week session approximately fifteen minutes per session.

INE: What advice might you offer to kids and adults when interacting with their own pets?

SC: Find treat that is irresistible to pet. Decide on simple trick give it a name, (sit). Show animal clearly what you want him to do. When he does it click the clicker tell him good boy or girl and give the treat. Be clear in your command, use same word. Never react to bad behavior, just go back to sit and good boy. Never give treat for anything less than commanded. Always end on a good boy and don't train for more than a few minutes at a time.

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INE: What is your favorite quote?

SC: There is no "can't" at ARK

INE: Do you accept donations for the animals? What items are on your Wish List?

SC: Donations are cheerfully accepted. Money donations – see website link below.

- Volunteers – see link below for Volunteer Match site,
- a refillable helium tank for balloons,
- two miniature horse driving harnesses,
- gently used or new wood 4x4, 2x6, 2x4,

- deck screws 1 ½” 2 ½”and 3”,
- peppermints (the Starlite candies – Not sugar free, please) used for reward,
- kale,
- carrots,
- romaine lettuce,
- collard greens,
- Puffins cereal – peanut butter flavor (Sprouts, Walmart, online) used for reward.



INE: Just a few more pictures of these lovable earth angels.

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INE: How can readers discover more about Animals Reaching Kids (ARK) in Palm Harbor, FL?

SC: Phone: To visit, volunteer or for program information (727)709-1267

Email: susanc@crystalcovecc.org

For classes: <http://crystalcovecc.org/weekly/>

Website: Crystal Cove Community Church ARK: <http://crystalcovecc.org/ark/>

Money donation – you may specify it is for ARK: <http://crystalcovecc.org/ark/>

YouTube video about ARK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVbm81T0Sbo>

To volunteer with ARK: Volunteer Match <https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/org783157.jsp>

or <https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp2930856.jsp>

INE: Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to interview. Best of luck and much success for the future.

INE: To suggest more interviews for INE – provide event news – or suggest a general topic you would like to read on this blog, please add your name to our contact form with a brief note in the comments box found at www.lcoakes.jimdo.com.

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INE Note: answers are provided by the interviewee and are not altered by INE unless the response is deemed inappropriate for a general audience.