

Living with Purpose

By Lorna Oppedisano



“Once you have the farm, and you have the room where you can take [rescue animals] in, it just kind of spawned from that.” — Sandra Seabrook, Purpose Farm president and founder



Photography by Alexis Emm

"My earliest memory in life is riding a rocking horse nonstop. My parents could not get me off of that thing for years," said Sandra Seabrook, the president and founder of Purpose Farm.

It's fitting that Sandra now runs a nonprofit organization, pairing primarily rescued animals — many of them horses — with children ages 6 to 18 who have undergone emotional trauma from neglect or abuse.

"I definitely know that this was my purpose," Sandra said.

Sandra and her family established Purpose Farm in 2012, after feeling called to action by a missions trip to Romania and the death of an abused and neglected 12-year-old girl in Palermo, N.Y.

The efforts started with a horse farm, and Purpose Farm has since grown to house more than 40 animals, most of which are rescues.

"Once you have the farm, and you have the room where you can take them in, it just kind of spawned from that," Sandra explained. "And the need is unbelievable."

Even if my father and mother
ABANDON ME
the Lord **WILL HOLD ME CLOSE**
Psalm 27:10

The farm is run primarily by Sandra and her family, with the help of a few volunteers. Sandra and her daughter, Raven, run the sessions for the children, who visit every other week from June through November. On the farm's offseason, the family keeps in touch with the children with get-togethers, visits and pen pal letters.

The Purpose Farm team currently works with local agencies and some individuals, but Sandra would like to eventually expand to offer their services into local school districts.

"That's where we can really blossom and grow," she said, adding that the children they're helping now definitely do need

their presence. "I want to reach some [children] who haven't been found yet. But we're just not big enough for me to do that."

In order to expand their reach, the team would need to add more paid staff. She'd like to be able to hire more individuals to lead sessions, but that would require more funding.

While the news of Purpose Farm has been spreading and they've received more funding lately — the family's own income was the original monetary source — a lot of the money coming in has been from one-time awards, such as A Cause to Celebrate and 100 Women Who Care.



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Sandra explained that while the awards have immensely helped Purpose Farm, they still get concerned about, “What’s going to happen next year — or next month?”

They’re awaiting word on a couple grants at the time of this interview, and do have a few monthly donations from individuals.

And recently, they’ve discovered the power of goat yoga — which is simply yoga with goats — as a sustainable fundraiser.

“It’s the most steady funds that we’ve been able to get,” Sandra said with a smile, “and the biggest steady funds that we’ve been able to get.”

When a visitor to the farm suggested they explore the option of hosting goat yoga, Sandra didn’t look into the idea right

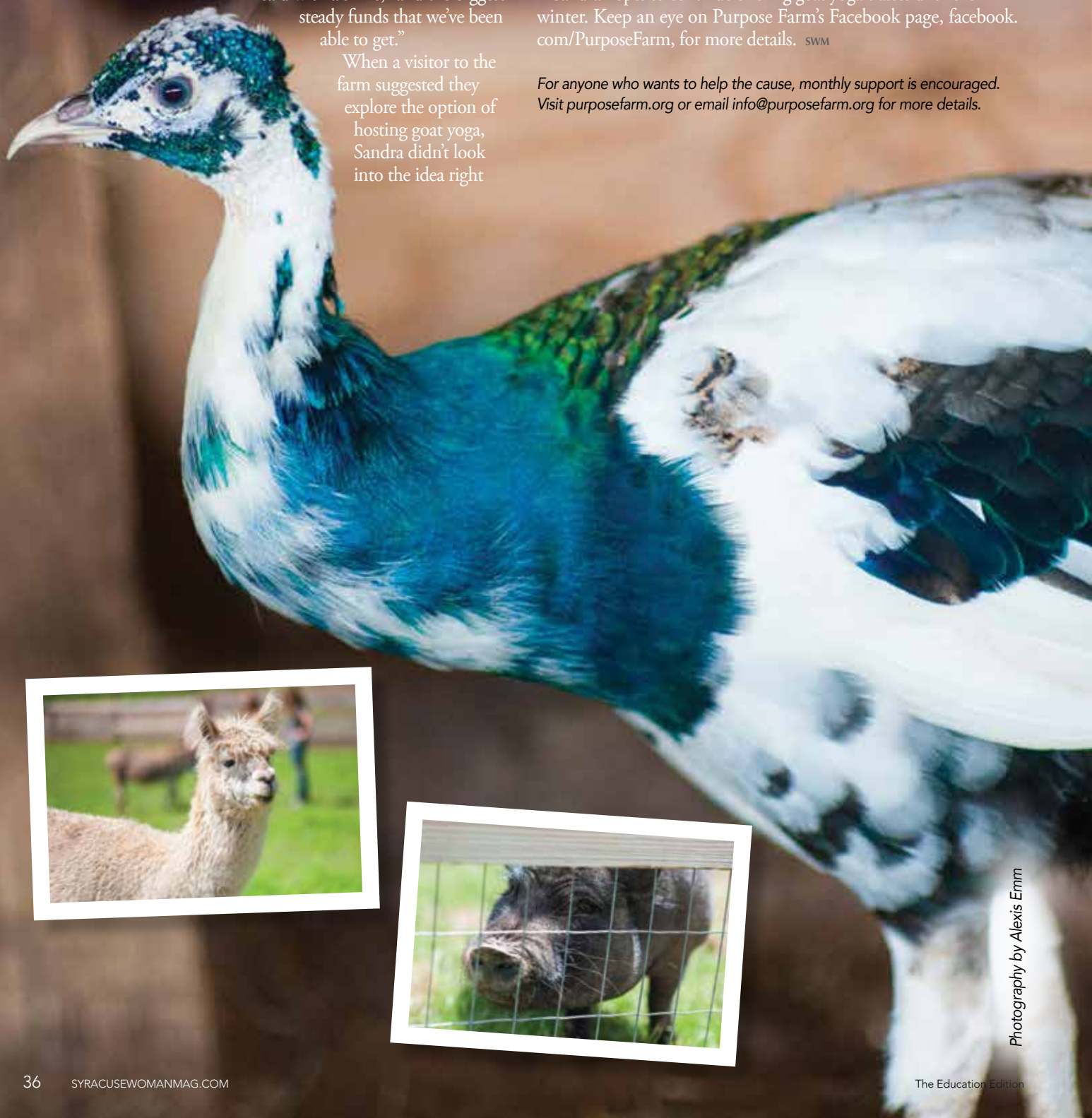
away. But when she eventually did, she realized it was a popular trend, and one that hadn’t yet hit the Syracuse area. They decided to try it out.

The Purpose Farm team put the word out about their first goat yoga class to contacts at Syracuse.com, and within 30 minutes of the article’s online publication, the session was sold out.

“It was at that point that we knew that we had something good here,” Sandra said.

Sandra hopes to continue offering goat yoga classes until the winter. Keep an eye on Purpose Farm’s Facebook page, facebook.com/PurposeFarm, for more details. SWM

For anyone who wants to help the cause, monthly support is encouraged. Visit purposefarm.org or email info@purposefarm.org for more details.



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