

# One Way Farm | Children's shelter marks 25 years



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Edna York (center background) watches as animals are handled at One Way Farm in Fairfield. The children's shelter has served more than 8,000 youths with programs such as Hands, Paws and Hearts.

## Recovery begins at farm

### Animals help misguided, hurt kids

By Jenny Callison  
*Enquirer Contributor*

**FAIRFIELD** — Sometimes a snuggle with an animal is the best therapy in the world.

Just ask Barbara Condo, founder and director of One Way Farm, a residential center for abused youngsters or youngsters in trouble.

"When you give them an animal, they change their entire body language," she said. "Their head goes up, their posture straightens up. I began allowing my animals and the kids to intermix."

In 25 years, the farm has cared for thousands of children, growing from a house on 2 acres to a 12-acre complex with two residential buildings and the barn. About three years ago the farm created an Animal Therapy

Barn and adopted a few dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs and a ferret.

"If I have a child who's had a bit of a problem, and I want him to redirect, I say, 'Why don't we go down to the barn?' There are very few children who aren't interested in the animals," said Edna "Bonnie" York, a supervisor at the farm. "The children really like the idea that they have a pet to sit and stroke. It's like a soothing type thing for them."

One young woman recalled how lonely she felt during her five-month stay, and how attached she became to a rabbit named Lola.

"I knew she was the only one who could not leave me," the teen-ager said. When she was returned to her father's custody, the girl worked hard around the house to demonstrate her level of responsibility and eventually

was allowed to bring Lola home.

A golden retriever proved an essential link between a boy and farm staffers. When efforts to communicate with him failed, they noticed he often went to the fence and petted the retriever through the wire.

"That was our tool to try and reach the child," Ms. Condo said. "Then we learned he had been in a fire and a big dog had dragged him to safety."

One Way Farm has 10 girls and 10 boys at a time; average stay is nine months.

"In 25 years, the age of children who have become fragile has dropped tremendously," Ms. Condo said. "Our average age used to be 16 to 18; now it's 9 to 13."

Support comes mostly from donations; volunteers always are needed.

*For information about the farm, call 829-4768.*