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KRISSIE NEWMAN'S RESCUE RANCH

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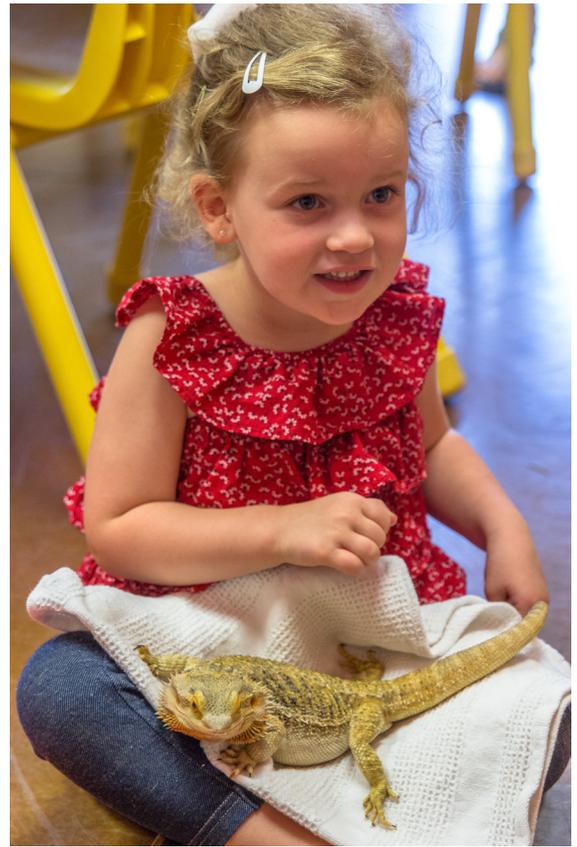
Tiny Hands, Big Hearts

Rescue Ranch teaches responsible pet ownership, building on children's natural compassion and love for animals.

by MICHAEL J. SOLENDER • photos by GRANT BALDWIN







Krissie Newman's voice is tinged with emotion as she shares details of the incident that sowed the seeds for what would eventually become Rescue Ranch, the Statesville-based nonprofit animal education and rehabilitation organization she founded with her husband, NASCAR superstar Ryan Newman.

"In the fall of 2004, I was approached by a young teenage girl at the racetrack in Martinsville, Virginia," recalls Newman, 37. "She knew of my love of animals and passed a note along to me asking for help for a litter of puppies she was trying to

have adopted. She was fearful that they'd be put down and she wanted help in assuring that wouldn't happen. Her story really touched me."

When Newman followed up, she learned the young girl's family could barely support themselves and were borrowing bread from neighbors in order to feed their dogs.

"This opened my eyes to the scope and magnitude of the animal welfare challenges faced by many," says Newman. "I'd been working with various humane societies, though I felt the need to make

an even bigger impact. We started the Ryan Newman Foundation shortly after this. Our focus was supporting education and responsible pet ownership including spaying and neutering."

Work with Children

Through their foundation, they've donated more than \$1 million to animal shelters throughout the U.S. In 2013 Newman opened the doors to Rescue Ranch, merging it with the couple's foundation in order to extend their impact and work in



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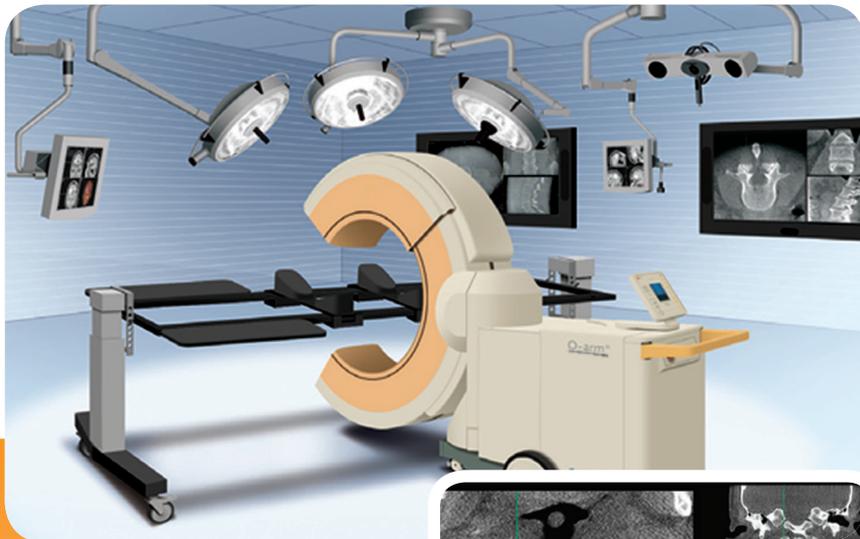


educating children.

“In working with kids, we make a difference that lasts a lifetime, bringing lessons that transfer into other aspects of life,” says Newman. “Kids learn that caring for animals takes responsibility; animals need attention. Here they discover what’s involved in caring for their pets, how to keep them clean, the importance of appropriate diet, and that animals have feelings—just like they do.”

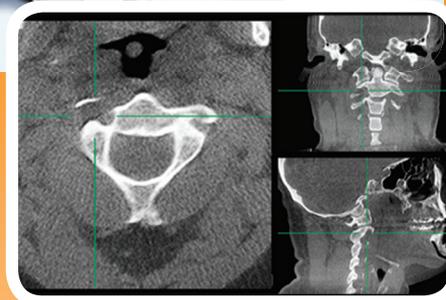
Just three miles off the heavily traveled interstate, the 77-acre ranch is a rural world away from the urban environment where most visiting kids live.

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Unique Menagerie

Pulling up around the giant circular drive in front of the education building, kids initially spy a herd of fainting goats, so named as their muscles contract when unnerved causing them to fall over or faint. They share their generous pasture with a donkey and some cattle—all part of the more than 40 animals on site surrendered or “re-homed” from previous owners who could not care for them.

Kids find a unique menagerie of creatures at the ranch including Ivy, a Flemish giant rabbit, hedgehogs, birds, turtles, snakes, iguanas, and guinea pigs. Each of the animals has been screened for temperament and safe handling by the children.

Year-round educational programming is provided for children as young as toddlers on up. Their summer “Critter Camps” are particularly popular. Here kids learn about various species, their diets, and how they adapt and survive in the wild.

Home school programs are a recent addition to the ranch’s offerings. With curriculum designed and delivered by certified instructors, classes involve time with animals, craft making, and storytelling.

“Our programming is designed to be fun, interactive, and age appropriate,” says Humane Education Manager Stacey Reavis, 29. “We build the programs using established common core standards.”

More than 2,800 children were touched by Rescue Ranch in 2014.

Newman’s contribution to the community through the ranch and her philanthropic work received national attention recently as she has been named a finalist in the Lady Godiva (Chocolate) Program which celebrates inspirational women around the world. Newman is one of eight finalists competing for a \$10,000 grant to support their work. The award will be announced later this year.

“This is what I was meant to do,” says Newman, speaking about her role in establishing the nonprofit. “We save lives here.” **LNM**



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