

# Leilani Farm — A Makawao sanctuary for rescued animals

By **TOM BLACKBURN-RODRIGUEZ**

Laurelee Blanchard is the Director of the Leilani Farm Sanctuary in Haiku. Her day job is as a successful Realtor® (S) with Coldwell Banker Island Properties in Makawao.

Blanchard moved to Maui in 1991 from California where she was Vice President of Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services, Inc. in Newport Beach. In California, she volunteered for Orange County People for Animals and founded the California Coalition for Pet Population Control.

She started the Leilani Farm Sanctuary as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization to provide care for rescued animals and humane education for the community.

The Sanctuary is an educational facility that teaches children and adults about animals in a way that changes their perspective about themselves and the world around them.

“The emphasis is teaching children that even though we all look different we are all the same inside,” said Blanchard.

“Every living being needs food, water, shelter, shade, love, and has language,” she added. “Through interaction with animals, children learn forgiveness, courage, strength,



leadership skills, trust, empathy, and kindness. The healing that takes place when children get together with the animals is miraculous.”

Rescued animals may not be deer or goats or other large animal, in fact they can be as small as a chicken.

In 2007 the Makawao egg factory closed down, leaving many abandoned hens to die of thirst and starvation. Blanchard and her friends, with permission from the groundskeeper, retrieved more than sixty dying hens, nursed them back to health and placed all of them in new homes.

Blanchard stays active in other areas as well. For the past eight years she has volunteered as the Maui Director of the Vegetarian Society of Hawaii.



Photo courtesy of PETER DOBIAS, DVM

Laurelee Blanchard holds a young Goat that was rescued by the Leilani Farm Sanctuary in Haiku after its mother had died.

The Vegetarian Society of Hawaii hosts monthly lectures, which are free and open to the public. In all she has coordinated over a hundred of these events, attended by a cross-section of the Maui community.

Kindness and love are, unfortunately, not free. To help pay the bills at the Sanctuary, Blanchard donates 25 percent of her real estate commissions to the Leilani Farm Sanctuary. If a client calls her with a re-

quirement that is out of her area of expertise she will refer the client to another agent and donate her referral fee to the sanctuary.

At the sanctuary, there are rolling green pastures for goats and donkeys to graze, hundreds of trees for the cats to climb, a botanical garden for rabbits, and jungle environments for the chickens to explore. As Blanchard describes it, “The sanctuary is truly a par-

adise for animals who have been rescued from a life of deprivation and now have an opportunity to enjoy a bit of heaven right here on earth. Leilani Farm Sanctuary is a healing place for animals and humans alike.”

Currently, the Leilani Farm Sanctuary is home to eight goats, twelve cats, forty chickens, five rabbits and two donkeys. One of the goats had been tied up alone for ten

years. One of the donkeys was rescued after being kept under the dark crawl space of a house. Some of the rabbits became unwanted after Easter. Richard the rooster escaped from a cockfighting compound and most of the cats were rescued after people abandoned them.

Leilani Farm Sanctuary is providing our community with another example of how one dedicated individual with Aloha in their heart can change the world and make it a better place for all of us.

The Sanctuary provides a unique hands-on experience that is not only thought provoking but also stimulates social and emotional growth. It teaches children and adults how to be empathetic and compassionate.

In meeting its mission, Leilani Farm Sanctuary may be as valuable a gift for the people who come to visit as it is for the animals who receive their attention and care.

Farm tours are offered Wednesdays at 4 p.m. and Saturdays at 10 a.m. A \$10 tax-deductible donation is requested for the tour and reservations are required. Contact [info@leilanifarmsanctuary.org](mailto:info@leilanifarmsanctuary.org) or call 298-8544. You can also visit their website at [www.leilanifarmsanctuary.org](http://www.leilanifarmsanctuary.org)