

OPEN LETTER FROM WAO BOD TO REXANO

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From: S Straw [mailto:slstraw@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, September 15, 2010 11:41 AM
To: contact@REXANO.org
Subject: WAO

To Whom It May Concern -

Rexano has been a large source of information (for my reference) about the history of WAO.

While the majority of the information pre-dates my involvement with them, it is clear that Rexano is not a fan of the sanctuary - and it would appear - for very good reasons.

My very first visit to the Wild Animal Orphanage in San Antonio was on May 23, 2010.

A friend was one of the Animal Caretakers, and invited me out for a tour of the Leslie Road property.

Apparently WAO had recently underwent yet another change in management and board leadership, so they were looking to build a new board.

Because of both my animal husbandry background (paid and volunteer), as well as my past experience as a professional fund raiser, I was invited to submit my resume for the new board to consider.

I recognized that WAO needed leadership, and that the financial challenges they faced did not accumulate overnight. Being an optimist, I also knew that these challenges would not be remedied overnight either, so I wanted to offer my help.

So on May 28, 2010, I officially became a volunteer WAO board member.

During the next two months, as the new board became increasingly aware of the gravity of the situation, steps to relocate some of the animals to other facilities began. This was to both find more suitable sanctuary enclosures, as well as to reduce the costs associated with the care and feeding of so many exotic animals.

The process was slow and arduous. With just a skeleton crew on hand to care for the animals, it was difficult to do the research, make the calls, and send out emails inquiring about space in other sanctuaries.

Finally, after discussing the matter with the USDA and the Texas State Attorney General's office, the current WAO Board of Directors unanimously voted on August 31, 2010 to dissolve the orphanage and find homes for all the animals.

This is NOT a gimmick for attention or just to raise money - we are actively transporting animals to other facilities because we are over-populated, severely under-funded (and under-staffed), and we have some enclosures that are not sufficient for our beautiful animals.

While you may think what you will about our current situation, we desperately need help and funds to continue feeding the animals, and to keep the lights on, until they are placed in their new home. Some of our Animal Caretakers' paychecks have bounced - that's how upside down we are financially.

Additionally, when we are approached by "Hollywood producers," we may not be able to honor their request to develop a show or segment about WAO, due to time, labor and cost constraints.

Just last week, a film crew documented the transport of animals leaving WAO for a better home. The agreement to allow filming was made weeks prior to our August 31, 2010 resolution to close.

Unbeknownst to us, the film crew required several cumulative days of filming and hand-holding by our already over-stretched Animal Caretakers. We can not afford to have our Caretakers spending their already limited amount of time with film crews. We can only justify filming again in the future if a substantial donation to WAO can off-set the lost-labor costs.

Local news reporters may be granted brief access for filming and reporting to the local San Antonio market, since (1) I will be volunteering my time for the interview, and (2) the immediate nature of news reporting to the local community is justifiable -- versus for a television production that may or may not air months later.

So, if Rexano and its readers truly care at all for these precious animals, we would very much appreciate your assistance in reaching our goal.

Based on the questionable history, I can totally understand your (and the public's) skepticism, but I wanted to explain our situation, and now you can decide how you would like to proceed.

Continuing to "bash" WAO (and its former management and board) is counter-productive to helping the animals, so kindly keep that in mind when deciding whether to publish derogatory statements. We need all the supportive, animal-loving aid we can get!

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Suzanne L. Straw

www.REXANO.org