

# Kingdom Keepers

## Profiling some of the Best People



VSPCA rescued this sweet bull for his retirement years before he was sent to a slaughterhouse.

### VISAKHA SOCIETY FOR PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

On the east coast of India near the Bay of Bengal is one of the fastest growing cities in India—Visakhapatnam. In 1996, a small group of animal lovers founded the Visakha Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (VSPCA) to aid suffering animals, prevent cruelty and neglect, to protect wildlife and conduct humane education programs throughout the region.

India's animal shelters are unique as they generally work on animal welfare, animal rights, wildlife rescue/rehab, vegetarian and environmental advocacy groups all rolled into one.

Surprisingly, India has some of the best animal welfare laws in the world due to the ancient religious philosophy of ahimsa (non-harming). Ensuring that these laws are enforced and also integrating innovative animal care into the shelter is the main driving force behind VSPCA's work. Goals include stopping illegal animal transport and slaughtering for human food. Under India's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, there are strict rules for humane transportation of all kinds of animals.

Intense love for animals has kept Pradeep Kumar Nath, Founder and President of VSPCA, continuing to strongly fulfill his life's purpose: "To see animals free from suffering and focusing on making the VSPCA shelter into one of the best in India." Its influence now extends across the entire state and throughout India. Due to the emergency of the 2004 tsunami, VSPCA's work received international attention as disaster relief for the animals became paramount. Visits by veterinarians from the west to help after the tsunami forged an ongoing

relationship that greatly improved the shelter's animal care standards.

The VSPCA also conducts extensive spay/neuter campaigns to curb dog and cat overpopulation, provides rescue and ambulance services with animal ambulances on-call regularly and during natural disasters, and raids illegal wildlife activities, often taking in animals for rehabilitation.

VSPCA teaches humane education and companion animal care. As India becomes more affluent, companion animals are becoming more popular. Most humane education in the area is provided by VSPCA.

As an eco-friendly shelter, the VSPCA environment is in as natural a state as possible to make the resident animals happy as well as provide a place where the public can visit and learn. The use of vermicompost (worm composting) and biogas (recycling cow dung for energy) contribute to making the shelter more self-sufficient.

Livestock in the region are primarily bullocks used for plowing and dairy cattle who continue to be an important part of Indian rural life. VSPCA teaches farmers how to produce biogas from cow dung that provides incentive for farmers to keep cattle alive past the point where they are usually considered "productive" for milk or work.

One of the most important projects is the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program for dogs and cats with several mobile ABC camps throughout the area. VSPCA's innovative spay/neuter programs have sterilized more than 30,000 street dogs. While they are technically stray dogs, many of them are community-owned and fed. Fewer dogs means fewer bites and fewer dogs retaliated against. In addition to a rotating population of around 100 ABC dogs and cats in residence at the shelter are 78 vegetarian dogs and 57 mostly vegetarian cats.

The sea turtle program began 11 years ago and is a major success. VSPCA has convinced fishing communities to protect the Olive Ridley Sea Turtles. Prior to this, most fishermen captured and killed the turtles for meat. Every year during sea turtle season, VSPCA volunteers patrol the beaches, protecting



VSPCA promotes the adoption of mixed breed Indian dogs.



VSPCA's "goshala" (cow sanctuary) houses over 600 rescued cows, bulls and buffaloes. Its state-of-the art facility boasts a high roof that allows for cooling breezes and protection from hot sun and rain. Daily turn-out is offered for grazing on surrounding hillsides.

**"A man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellow men, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help."**

—Albert Schweitzer

the turtle eggs until hatching and counting the turtle nests for census lists.

The migratory bird program, a few hours north of Visakha, educates people about the value of not killing storks and pelicans for food. Previously no one had taught the villages of the special value of these animals and their need for protection.



**After being used for entertainment or racing, horses are routinely abandoned on the roadside.**

Without any endowments or steady funding, meeting operational expenses are a huge struggle as there are now over 1,050 animals who need daily care, including 600 cows and buffalo. With every contribution, Visakha SPCA will continue its good work in making a profound difference for animals. And this is just the beginning. Already, VSPCA provides a model and influence it hopes to help other shelters in India achieve.

*Eileen Weintraub, VSPCA's Volunteer Global Outreach Director, has visited Visakha SPCA and other animal shelters in India each year since 2003. She lives in Seattle and may be reached by email at [info@visakhaspca.org](mailto:info@visakhaspca.org). For more information, visit Visakha Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ([www.vspca.com](http://www.vspca.com)).*

## THE GENTLE BARN FOUNDATION

The Gentle Barn Foundation in Santa Clarita, California, is home to sixty animals rescued from abuse, and to abused children, young people recovering from substance abuse, kids who are on probation, foster children and adults with mental, emotional and physical challenges.

Through the interaction with animals the children learn forgiveness, courage, strength, leadership skills, trust, empathy and kindness. The healing that takes place when kids get together with animals is miraculous.



The 60 farmed animals who reside at The Gentle Barn have all been rescued from severe abuse. They have been rehabilitated using deep tissue massage therapy, chiropractic care, acupuncture, western medicine, herbs, nutritional supplements, top quality feed, and countless hours in the arms of the Gentle Barn staff. Animal survivors have regained their trust in humankind by realizing that they are now loved, and their ordeals are over. Because of their ongoing physical and psychological needs, however, they can't be adopted, so they are given sanctuary with The Gentle Barn for the rest of their lives.

The Gentle Barn—home to horses, donkeys, cows, pigs, sheep, goats, turkeys, chickens, dogs, and cats—believes that everyone deserves a chance at life regardless as to whether they are blind, crippled, deformed, sick, wounded, or just old. At The Gentle Barn, the animals leave when they are done, not when someone is done with them.



For more information or to donate, visit The Gentle Barn at [www.gentlebarn.org](http://www.gentlebarn.org) or call (661) 252-2440.