Critter Corner

Hello! There have been so many changes in the Barnyard lately, that I want to provide several updates.

First, I want to start with acknowledging that three of our longtime residents that have departed this physical plane. Their physical presence may have left but they will never leave our hearts and minds. They all lived extraordinarily long lives, and we are so grateful for having been able to share this lifetime with them. Each made an indelible impact on every staff member and volunteer that worked with them, and we share a sense of gratitude for all they taught us.

In Memoriam

“Half Pint,” our 24-years old female donkey, was humanely euthanized after a long health battle. Half Pint was truly one of the superstars of Hart Park. When she was younger, she was a star on the 4th of July parade route. Then, over the years, she spent a lot of time walking around the park with her handlers, to educate and to interact with the public. She loved her treats, even when they became the required low-sugar/low-carb variety, mandated by her health issues. And, when she wanted treats, she learned to ‘shake’ with one of her front legs. Her personality was certainly larger than life! She was happy to walk right into the office or Hart Hall, acting like she belonged there. Half Pint was a staff, volunteer and patron favorite – and we are all going to miss her presence. She was cremated and her ashes were placed in the memorial area (located behind Fritz’s Graveyard), next to her former pen mate – a 40-years old horse, named “Blackie” that passed away several years ago.

“Monty,” our 36-years old quarter horse, was humanely euthanized after suffering a debilitating stroke, which followed an illness. Monty had been declining in health in the last year, due to his very advanced age for a horse. He was still a character, though. When our new animal additions came into the corral where he resided, he was quick to let them know that he may be old and toothless (due to his age) but he still ruled the roost! Monty was also very bonded with Half Pint. And, even though we had taken in new companionship for him, he missed his girlfriend. Monty was also cremated and, once we receive his ashes back, he will be placed next to Blackie and Half Pint, in the memorial area. They are all together again!

“Bertha,” our 36-years old American bison female, was humanely euthanized after her health declined to a point that it became necessary. Bison do not live this long, even in captivity, so she was a standout for living such a long, productive life. When I started at Hart Park in June 2013, Bertha was the dominant female. She was a very large female that was dominant to the rest of the bison herd, except for the two males. Over the years, as she aged and her health started to decline, she moved down the ladder of hierarchy, within the herd. By the end, she became the least dominant member – a far cry from the leader that she had been, in her prime. Bison are herd animals and this is normal, natural behavior – it really is ‘survival of the fittest’ in the Animal Kingdom. Bertha descended from the original herd of bison that Walt Disney gifted Hart Park in 1962.

New Additions

On 10/3/24, we took in “Celeste,” a beautiful black and while, Lionhead rabbit from the Carson Shelter. One of our longtime volunteers, Jade, had discovered the rabbit at the shelter, in need of a home. Celeste is very friendly, and participated in an SCVTV Community Corner interview on 12/4/24. She was a star, and very comfortable in front of the cameras!

On 10/21/24, we took in three new donkeys (pictured L to R): “Smokey” (younger son), “Dusty” (older son), and “Fern” (their mom). Their loving family was moving out of state, to an area with a wet climate. They chose to place them with us, to ensure they maintained the best climate for their health and well-being. They are super friendly and love getting groomed! Our other donkey, “Mr. Fred,” had been so depressed, after Half Pint’s passing. So, he was very excited to have new donkeys to interact with.

On 11/10/24, we got “Rosie,” a female cow, from a family that could no longer keep her. She is a gorgeous red head, believed to be a cross between Hereford and Dexter. She is extremely friendly, and used to living with equine, so she adapted very quickly to her new surroundings, once out of quarantine.

On 11/17/24, we took in two Peking ducks: “Bosco” (female) and “Wonky” (male), from a private owner that was threatened with eviction from the landlord if he didn’t place his ducks elsewhere. They are beautiful white ducks, with pale yellow undertones. It took a little while for them to adjust to the existing flock of waterfowl birds, but they are now doing really well in their new habitat.

On 12/1/24, we took in another duck – this time, a chocolate Indian Runner duck, named “Lucky.” She was living in an apartment with her family but, ultimately, needed a situation where she could be outdoors and with other ducks. Lucky also went to the SCVTV Community Corner interview on 12/4, though was a little more camera-shy than Celeste, the rabbit. It was a big day for an 8-week old duck, to become a TV star!

(You can see the show, along with Celeste and Lucky, by clicking HERE.)

Those are all our animal updates, but I want to take this opportunity to thank our human friends, particularly those who donated pumpkins to our critters! The critters love them, and we really appreciate all of you!

And speaking of being thankful, on Thanksgiving, I worked (like I do every year) and I made lunch for my staff and volunteers to celebrate. Special thanks to Kim & Val, for their contributions. I am so grateful for the amazing team of people that help care for our beloved critters, at Hart Park!

And speaking of holidays, this brings me to: The 4th Annual Barnyard Holiday Lights Tour! We are excited to, once again, provide this FREE evening of fun, lights, snacks, raffles, animal interactions, and Santa and his ‘reindeer’ for the public to come and enjoy! It is on Saturday, 12/14, from 5pm-7:30pm, at the park. Our address is: 24151 Newhall Ave. in Newhall. There is FREE parking, throughout the park. This is also a great opportunity to come and see our newest animal residents!

William S. Hart Park Barnyard Staff, Volunteers, and Critters – wish you a very happy, safe, prosperous, and peace-filled holiday season!