



Wildlife Works, Inc.

P.O. Box 113 Youngwood, PA 15697

Phone & Fax: 724-925-6862

wildlifeworks@comcast.net

"Dedicated to the rehabilitation and release of distressed wildlife and the promotion of responsible attitudes about the preservation of native species, habitat, and the environment."

October 26, 2024

Dear Friends,

I'm worried about Wildlife Works. I am worried in the here and now, and also for the future.

At present, we are struggling to make ends meet. I'm sure many other small non-profits are also experiencing a decline in donations. Additionally, because of my personal health issues, we have missed opportunities to have at least one charity event and two special appeal letters in the last two years. I have been unable to participate in fund-raisers, or write the copy for the letters that needed mailed on a timely basis. We have been living on general and animal admission donations, as well as in-kind participation by our community support base to keep us in essentials, like tissues and detergent. Unfortunately, folks leave nothing on over half of our admissions.

You might wonder why fundraising can't go on without me. It can, and it has, but the Wildlife Works machine always runs better when I am involved. I feel very fortunate that none of my health problems were long-term or life-altering. But they did interfere with what is normally on my plate, and put added pressure and stress on my staff in my absences. These issues also made it pretty clear that Beth has a shelf life and won't live forever. I first became interested in wildlife rehab in 1989, got licensed in 1991 and I have been doing this ever since. I am proud of what I've built here with the help of so many wonderful people along the way, and it is my fondest dream that Wildlife Works will continue well into the future after I can no longer do this. But we have no succession plan in place, and I turned 70 this year. Something needs to happen, and soon.

I am currently surrounded by the most awesome and supportive staff. My office manager, Monica Leuthold is a dream to work with. But the core of my paid and volunteer staff is, like me, women of retirement age, and there is not much chance that I can promote someone from within. Understand, I am responsible for so much more than the hands-on animal care. I am involved daily in the office with the usual paperwork. With Monica's help, I write 90% of the copy in our newsletters. I help recruit and train new staff. I make monetary decisions on purchases and projects. I act as liaison with veterinarians, other wildlife professionals, contractors and the PGC, as well as grantors. I am responsible for writing all of our grant proposals. I assess and set up treatment plans for all of our patients. I am currently mentoring several folks who want to get permitted to do rehab, and I work directly with our interns to assure they are getting the most out of their time here. I help coordinate everything from education programs to continuing education for my staff to vet appointments. I am so blessed to have been able to do what I have done in the last few decades. But I simply cannot go on at this rate forever.

I have a wonderful board of directors who help me organizationally along the way, but none of them really has experience in the financial realm. And that's where the problem comes in. Because it is going to take money to solve it. In order to guarantee Wildlife Works' future, I need to find a successor. And not just anybody. Someone with the drive and the passion to take this on as their life's work, the way I have. In order to find such a quality candidate, WWI is going to have to create a job description and hire someone.

"We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals."

Immanuel Kant

The offered salary is going to have to be competitive. We are thinking \$30,000-ish. And, not only will it be necessary to have that salary paid for the hire's first year, we need to have something in place to guarantee the salary beyond that. Most substantial grants don't favor paying salaries, or even operating expenses. They want a capital expenditure to fund, such as new construction, etc.

Organizationally, we honestly don't know what the next step should be. How do we tap into financial support beyond our current resources? Who should we be talking to? We have thought about an endowment, but that would take a substantial initial donation and we don't know where to turn on that idea. We know that the community loves and supports us. We know that the work we do here is good. We know that Wildlife Works is one of only 27 licensed facilities in the whole state. We know that we are a valuable resource to Westmoreland and surrounding counties, and yet, we receive no support whatsoever from any entity besides our grantors, members and community friends.

And so, I am reaching out to all of you who have followed us and supported us through the years, to ask you to think about this. Talk to family, friends, business associates, bankers, financial advisors. Anyone who might be able and willing to give us some feedback on taking this huge but absolutely necessary step of hiring a full-time wildlife rehab coordinator.

It goes without saying how much I love Wildlife Works. I have given 30+ years to it and will continue to give, but I just can no longer do what I did even 10 years ago. The time has come, perhaps even past time, for me to pass the baton. My husband, Bill and I plan to leave everything to WWI when we are gone – the house and all of the property. In order for this ultimate gift to be a blessing for WWI, it is essential to find – and be able to pay - the person who will take my place. Right now, I have a dedicated staff who love and support me, and I make it my business to care for them as if they are family, because they are. They are part of the Wildlife Works family, and so are you. If you can offer help in any way, please give us a call or better yet, shoot us an email. Your feedback and ideas may help keep both me and the dream of Wildlife Works, Inc. alive.

Sincerely yours,



Beth Shoaf
Executive Director and Sr Rehabilitator,
Wildlife Works Inc.

"We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals."

Immanuel Kant