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Ricki and Rocky Go To Rehab

JULY 24TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Written by
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Dexter, Missouri – It was finally time to get off the bottle and move on to more enticing foods such as insects, worms, fruits, vegetables, and nuts. But it was difficult at first to let them go. As far back as she could remember, Jessica Loflin, wanted to take care of the sick and injured animals.

"Some day when I grow up, I am going to be a animal doctor and take care of all the animals in the world," she would declare as a young child. As she grew older, she new she wanted to be a veterinarian.

Our house has and probably will always be full of animals of all shapes and sizes. Some with fur, some with scales, and some with shells. No matter what the species, they have always been welcome. There is perhaps an invisible sign on the front door that welcomes all animals, lost ones and stray ones and those that just stop by for a meal or a treat before moving on.

Murtle, the turtle has been in our family well over 60 years. She was first brought home by Jessica's grandfather who has since passed on, but has been handed down through the family as a keepsake. She begs for food most any night. Her diet consists of meal worms, fruits, vegetables and dry dog food. She loves scrambled eggs and pizza and on occasion hamburger. Her most recent favorite has been squash dipped in cherry cool-aid!

Most of the other critters have been rats, mice, guinea pigs, hamsters, cats, dogs, turtles, lizards, and snakes. Jars of various species of insects and spiders typically are on the kitchen table, waiting to hatch, lay eggs, or make their cocoons.

When "Ricki and Rocky" were discovered in an attic in the middle of Dexter, the owner had no idea what to do with them. Their mother had been killed by a car just down the street and they were hungry, cold, and wanted to be with their mommy. They looked to be about a week old, eyes were not even open yet. Somehow like many lost souls, they managed to find their way into Jessica's care and before long the little ladies were being nourished back to health. They were cute! They even had different personalities.

But raccoons are critters not to be raised in the living room nor kept in captivity. They eat all the time and require socialization with other raccoons and are extremely messy. Jessica was bottle feeding around the clock as their small stomachs could not hold much formula. As soon as one completed a bottle the other was waiting to attack. Back and forth until they were either too tired or they simply could hold no more. Once they were eating solid food it was time to start their journey back to the wild.

</images/Ricky and Rocky 4.jpg>

Knowing that they needed to find a home and that they required at least another 5 months of care without too much human interaction, Jessica contacted the Watkins Wildlife Rehab located in Sedgewickville, Missouri.

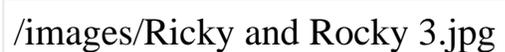
Mrs. Carolyn Watkins, owner and operator for more than 45 years answered the phone and agreed to take Ricki and Rocky into rehab, as baby raccoons stay for about six to eight months with their mother before they can be released on their own.

The girls traveled to their new home and were placed in a rather large totally enclosed area with several other baby raccoons of the same age. They immediately began to play and eat and climb the fencing. They were happy! They were socializing with their own kind. Jessica felt she had ultimately saved their lives and was glad she found them a place to grow and learn how to be raccoons. She was also overwhelmed with emotion of seeing so many animals in

need.

On the day Ricky and Rocky were taken in, there were 9 baby deer, two coyote pups, one fox, one male Bald Eagle, one female Bald Eagle, one wolf, three baby skunks, two baby possums, one owl, thirty or more raccoons of three different age groups, and many more in the care of the Watkins Wildlife Rehab. Carolyn even received two phone calls from a veterinarian and conservation agent and found she would be receiving a baby bat, another raccoon and two baby woodpeckers.

The Watkins also have a menagerie of their own pets: four dogs, five cats, a chinchilla, parrot, three horses (rescued), goats, sheep, a burrow, a turkey, ducks, peacocks, and geese. “A lot of them were just dumped off because people didn’t want them anymore. We just love animals and couldn’t say no.” says Carolyn.



The Watkins Wildlife Rehab homes several species of animals throughout the year and even has some long term residents who can never return to their natural habitat. They are a nonprofit, charitable organization serving Southeast Missouri. Their mission is to respond to the rehabilitative needs of sick, injured, and orphaned Missouri mammals, reptiles, birds of prey, and migratory wildfowl.

“I do get attached. A lot of people ask me that, if I hate when they leave,” says Carolyn. She bonds with the animals, especially those that require more hands-on time like the coyotes and bobcats. “I know the ultimate goal is to set them free. Sometimes they shoot out the door and take off and never look back when we are releasing them. Others hang around and sniff the air. It’s a whole new world for them.”

Still caring for so many animals every day can take its toll. The cleaning and feeding never ends. Volunteers staff their facility and they are funded entirely by charitable donations. John and Carolyn Watkins, have forty plus years of experience caring for orphaned and injured wildlife, and hold the following licenses: Missouri Department of Conservation Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit #354, which provides authority for qualified individuals to take, possess, transport and hold in captivity for rehabilitation, sick or injured wildlife; and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit MB683425-0, which provides

authorization for raptor rehabilitation.

They receive no state or federal funding. The cost of food, medication, and sheltered wildlife enclosures comes entirely from private sources. Throughout the year, orphaned and injured animals are brought to them from private citizens like Jessica, veterinarians, law enforcement, and conservation agents.

Tax deductible donations can make it possible for them to care for these animals until they can safely be released back into the wild. ***You may donate securely online at their website, <http://www.watkinswildliferehab.org> through PayPal by clicking the “Donate” button. You may also send a check to Watkins Wildlife Rehab, HCR 62, Box 17, Sedgewickville, MO 63781.***

Offering your help and time can also be a tremendous and useful way to benefit the animals. Just contact Carolyn Watkins at **573-866-3436** to set up a time. The grounds area can always utilize someone mowing, weed-eating, and general clean-up of cages and enclosed areas. Also if you have mice available to donate, please contact her. Mice are quite expensive and they are a main source of foods for hawks, owls, and eagles. They had all three the day Ricki and Rocky came to stay.

Does your Boy Scout troop or Girl Scout troop need a project? There is plenty of painting to be done or perhaps they can host a food drive. The animals are in need of dry kitten food for baby raccoons and opossums, timothy or alfalfa hay for rabbits, canned kitten food or canned cat food for foxes, raccoons, and opossums, dry puppy food for baby coyotes, cedar chip bedding which prevents bugs in their dens, bird feed, kitten milk replacement for baby deer, baby rice cereal used in with the milk replacement, unsalted nuts for squirrels and birds, rabbit food pellets, freeze dried fruit without the sugar, and puppy milk replacement.

People have been generous to them. Through the donations over the past few years they have been able to get a concrete platform poured with drains. This is not only easier to clean but also saves money on bedding. In addition, they have two new metal cages and some smaller wooden cages. Some wonderful volunteers even rehabbed the old cages and recycled some items from around the farm and built new cages.

Even with this generosity, the need never ends. Since Watkins Wildlife Rehab is funded through private donations, fundraising is necessary to continue the mission to care for injured, ill and orphaned wildlife.

</images/Ricky and Rocky 5.jpg>

Please visit their website and make a donation, www.watkinswildliferehab.org.

You may also call **Jessica Loflin at 573-380-9787** for food, bedding, or other donations. She will be glad to pick them up and deliver them!

Jessica will be attending Southeast Missouri State University this year in anticipation of completing her pre-veterinary curriculum. Once completed she will be applying to the University of Missouri – Veterinary School to further her education.

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