



Our Hen House

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Interview with Farm Sanctuary Country Hoe Down Speakers

By OUR HEN HOUSE

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*Following is a transcript of interviews with **GENE BAUR** and **SUZANNE PENDER**; **CODY CARLSON** and **KIM HEYRMAN**; **SUSIE COSTON**; **JAY**; **MEARA**; **JO-ANNE MCARTHUR** and **LIZ MARSHALL**; and **ERICA MEIER** conducted by **JASMIN SINGER** and **MARIANN SULLIVAN** of [Our Hen House](#), for the [Our Hen House podcast](#). The interview aired on Episode 187.*

JASMIN: Today's episode is gonna be slightly different than others because we have so many interviews -- and we really want to bring you kind of a vicarious Hoe Down experience. For those of you who were not lucky enough to go, I think you'll find today's episode really enlightening 'cause we're talking to folks who were speakers there, we're talking to some kids who were there, we're talking to some of the people in attendance -- not just about the Hoe Down, but really about the role that the sanctuary movement plays in animal advocacy. And we're talking to people about hope and despair, which is a theme that I didn't even intend to make come out for today's episode, but in listening to the interviews as I was editing them, I was hearing myself and a lot of the people there talking about when and where we can find hope and how we can get involved. And I think that the beauty of our guests today will speak for itself. So, I'm going to get you started with Gene Baur because we should basically get everything started with Gene Baur.

MARIANN: Well, he kind of did start everything, didn't he?

JASMIN: He kind of did. Gene and his lovely girlfriend, Suzanne Pender, who is quite the athlete and animal advocate, they talked to us about their recent triathlon, the Ironman, that they just completed, and I'm excited to share that story with you now.

Welcome to Our Hen House, Gene.

GENE: It's great to be with you.

JASMIN: And Suzanne.

SUZANNE: Thanks!

JASMIN: So exciting to be here at Farm Sanctuary. Is it trippy for you, Gene, to be back here in Watkins Glen after you've already moved, but you started this basically out of nothing?

GENE: It's beautiful to come back and to see the place thriving and to see so many people here enjoying it and connecting with each other and connecting with these issues and thinking about how to live in a way that is compassionate and how to make a difference in the world. So, it's beautiful to come back and see such a great environment and such a great community.

JASMIN: Suzanne, have you been to the Hoe Down before?

SUZANNE: I have. This is my second Hoe Down.

JASMIN: What would you say is the essence of the Farm Sanctuary Hoe Down?

SUZANNE: A lot of people gathering together who love animals and love vegan living bonding, and just a lot of positive feelings.

JASMIN: I'm getting a lot of positive feelings from you. The two of you did a triathlon last week, is that right?

GENE: That's correct. We did the Ironman Lake Placid Triathlon which is a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, and then a marathon, which is 26.2 miles. And we both finished it and felt very good afterwards.

JASMIN: Oh, my God. Can you even imagine doing something like this?

MARIANN: No, like I'm blanking out 'cause I don't even know what he said.

JASMIN: It was like, he's apparently bi-lingual. This is really impressive. So, I just heard you giving a talk in there, Gene. It was really impressive and inspiring as usual, and you were talking a little bit about what it was like to compete in a triathlon -- Ironman? Can I call it a triathlon, or no?

GENE: Yeah. Ironman is a type of triathlon, and it's actually a brand, Ironman, but a triathlon is three events. It's a swim, and then a bike, and then a run. So, that's what a triathlon is and there are different lengths. There's a sprint, an Olympic distance, and a half-Ironman, and then there's the Ironman, which is the longest one that most people do, or consider doing. And it was neat to be there with all these athletes who are very sort of focused on competing and performing well. And doing it as vegans, as Suzanne and I did, we were able to demonstrate that you can get all the nutrients you need, all the nutrition you need, and do it all on plants and no animals. So, I'm a big fan of coconut water, and so I was running the marathon with that. I had the coconut water on the bike ride. And some of the other athletes were asking about it and I think might start using it, so it's a really good thing to see. If they can do that instead of cow's milk, that would be very positive. The dairy industry unfortunately was a big sponsor of this event, so when you finished the triathlon they gave you -- they foisted this chocolate cow's milk in your face. And so, if they can start doing coconut water instead, that would really be a positive shift.

MARIANN: When you're in the vegan movement, you hear about all of these fabulous vegan athletes and obviously you're one of them. But you were in a group of people who

were probably predominantly not vegan. Are they aware of this shift? Is there any consciousness about this shift to the acknowledgement that vegan eating can actually really enhance your performance?

GENE: There's starting to be that shift. Some of the people that we spoke with were reading books like Scott Jurek's book, and he's a vegan ultra-marathoner. There was one of the people that was staying in the same place where we were staying who asked what we did nutritionally, and when he heard about the coconut water, he said that if it would enhance his performance he could become a vegan. So, a lot of these people are starting now to be curious, and some I think are starting to eat more healthfully. There were some other athletes that we went up there with from the Washington, DC area, and I've gotta say a lot of the way they eat is just abysmal. I mean, they eat lots of meat, they drink Coca-Cola and lots of beer and food that's not that good for them, and I think that it probably affects their performance. And I think Suzanne and I, by eating vegan, and doing as well as we did, might start getting their attention.

JASMIN: Suzanne, tell me a little bit about your athleticism.

SUZANNE: Well, I teach boxing, part-time. And then I got into triathlons about five years ago, and I just really enjoy going from one to the next. It's always -- it's a day full of accomplishments. You finish the swim, one thing down. Finish the bike, next thing, one more to go. And it just, it feels great, and just the--

JASMIN: It's like a to-do list. Grocery shopping, check.

SUZANNE: Exactly.

JASMIN: So, are you a new vegan? How long have you been vegan?

SUZANNE: I have been vegetarian since about 1989, and a vegan since meeting Gene, although I was already getting close, because I remember I was doing a half Ironman up in Geneva in the Finger Lakes area the summer I met him. And I was in a training program, and one of the coaches, our nutritional segment, he said, "Does anyone know what the perfect recovery drink is?" He said "chocolate milk." And I raised my hand and I said, "I don't drink that; what about almond milk or soy milk?" So, I had already started shifting away from dairy, but I was not all the way there until I met Gene.

JASMIN: Yeah, I would think hooking up with Gene would probably be good for making one go vegan. But Suzanne, have you noticed any kind of shift in your performance ability since being vegan?

SUZANNE: I feel really strong -- I feel it's just such a clean diet -- and energized. And certainly, green smoothies, you sort of can feel the glow coming from within after you down one of those.

JASMIN: Gene, is there anything in particular this weekend that you're hoping people get from their experience being here at the Hoe Down, perhaps different than in the past that you're hoping for?

GENE: Well, I think the main thing is for people to be energized and to feel good about this way of living and hopefully inspired to go out and talk to others and to create positive shifts in their communities, which is sort of what we do every year. So, there's not really anything new, I would say, other than just more of the same good stuff. Hopefully, there's lots of new people here, and I think there are. There are also people that have not been here for like ten or more years, so some people coming back, which is really neat to see. And for vegans who are living in a non-vegan world, it can often be quite difficult because you're the minority, your point of view is one that is sometimes not respected, and even there can be hostility towards it. So, here at Farm Sanctuary, vegan is normal, it's a place to feel validated, to feel very comfortable in living this way. And hopefully there will be sort of a confidence and a comfort with being vegan that is imbued here. And as people go out, that can be shared and spread in an environment that is less friendly. So, hopefully here, we're building sort of vegan fortitude for when we go out into the world where it's a tougher environment to be vegan.

MARIANN: I think one of the great things about the Hoe Down is that it is the first time that some new vegans get to meet other people. It's also, I think, for a lot of people, the first time they get to visit a sanctuary. And what would you advise people to do the first time they're visiting the sanctuary, whether here or somewhere else? How do they get the most out of that experience?

GENE: I think just be in the moment, be in the present, which is the best way to live anyway. But here when you're at the sanctuary and with the animals, to connect with them, to look into their eyes, to get to know them as well as you can, and to know that we can live and be friends with them, instead of exploiting them, which is too often the case. And encourage others to come too, and take lots of pictures and share those pictures on Facebook, and share your experience with others. And just be there in the moment and take in the entire experience and get to know the individual animals here.

JASMIN: Suzanne, I have a final question for you. If somebody's listening to this and maybe a triathlon sounds as Greek as it sounds to me and Mariann, but maybe they want to get a little bit more athletic, do you have any tips for someone who might be vegan already for how they might really boost up their nutritional power and be the best athlete they can be?

SUZANNE: I think it's finding what really speaks to you, what sports speak to you. Joining a gym is great because there's a community there. There are running groups. For me, I actually just took a boxing class, and I got so into it that I was asked to instruct because it was just a stress reliever and I'm an intense workout person. Some other people might like yoga. And again, it's just a regular practice. I think that once you do something about three weeks it becomes habitual, and it doesn't feel right not to do it. So, I'd say, stick with something for three weeks, something that really feels good to you, and you'll stay with it.

MARIANN: I love the idea, too, of finding that community because that community probably isn't going to be vegan. Do you find that your athletic community gives you an opportunity to spread the word?

SUZANNE: A little bit. I'm right now wearing a "No Meat Athlete" t-shirt. And I teach boxing, and the people who come to my boxing class come every single week and they follow me on Facebook, so they all know where I am. And I tend to be pretty intense to teach a class

like that. We hit bags, we hit things. And so, it's sort of setting an example that I'm pretty hardcore, and I'm a vegan. So, it's great to spread that, yeah.

JASMIN: Gene, am I allowed to ask you how old you are, or am I putting you on the spot?

GENE: That's okay. I'm 51.

JASMIN: That's amazing. I just wanted to bring that out because you're doing all of this and, you know, you're not 25. Do you feel like this is a testament to your veganism?

GENE: I think it is, and that's one reason that I wanted to do the Ironman, is to show that on a vegan lifestyle you can do very well athletically, even as you start getting older. And I plan to do this for a number of years yet to come. So, we're actually starting to talk about what our next Ironman is going to be, or maybe I'll do some ultra-marathons. We're not sure yet. We're just sort of relishing the feeling of finishing Ironman Lake Placid right now. But we're also starting to become curious about what next, and just to show you can do this.

JASMIN: What about doing an Ironwoman?

SUZANNE: Oh. I know, my mom says "Ironlady." And I say, no, that's Margaret Thatcher.

JASMIN: Thank you both so much for talking to us and for being such an ongoing inspiration. Your inspiration really keeps evolving, Gene. I mean, you're really touch -- I wonder what *is* next for you. I can't even imagine what you're gonna take on next, but something tells me it's going to continue to change the world. Thank you so much for joining us.

GENE: Thank you. And thank you guys for your inspiration as well, and for doing everything you're doing.

JASMIN: Thanks, Suzanne.

SUZANNE: Thanks.

JASMIN: So, do you think you're gonna sign up for your next Ironman, Ironwoman?

MARIANN: I am so completely not inspired to do that, I have to admit, even though they look fabulous. I mean, you know, I'm never -- I've talked about it before and I'll talk about it again. I don't get it. Like, I understand why people are motivated to exercise like that in the sense that they want to look good and they want to be healthy, but it just seems like absolute torture to me. I feel like I'm out of step with our modern world.

JASMIN: I don't think that's true. I think there's a lot of people who can relate to what you're saying. And I mean, I obviously can't even fathom the idea of doing something like this, and I am someone who is a runner for -- although I don't feel like a runner after hearing Gene and Suzanne talk about how they, like, run thousands of miles every day.

MARIANN: Yeah, but I don't think you should say that 'cause it's kind of annoying from the point of view of people like me, who really are not athletic, to hear people like you, who are

sort of athletic, though not at that level, to, you know, pretend that they're not athletic. You are athletic, you know, not at the Ironman or Ironwoman level, but -- I'm not going -- we talk about this too often.

JASMIN: Yeah. This morning I was actually at the gym and I was trying to get in--

MARIANN: See?! See what I mean?!

JASMIN: No! Can I just say, I was trying to get in--

MARIANN: This morning, I wasn't at the gym!

JASMIN: I was trying to get in my three miles in a half an hour.

MARIANN: See?!

JASMIN: Can I just finish? And I was thinking, "God, I have no time for this, I have to get through this half an hour quickly!" And anyway, so I did, so I can't imagine if I was like "Oh it's another, it's Tuesday morning, time to run 50 miles" or something like that. Anyway, I thought it was great that Gene was talking about coconut water 'cause I know you hate it, you call it feet water.

MARIANN: Yeah, maybe it goes together. Maybe only athletic people like coconut water, and the rest of us think it tastes like feet.

JASMIN: I love coconut water, but I sort of am pessimistic about all of these health claims that is it has. I just think it's -- I feel like it probably has no difference than water. And I'm sure I'm gonna get emails now.

MARIANN: You're gonna get hate mail.

JASMIN: I'm gonna get total hate mail. But I'm saying I love it, and I have it. And I actually recently bought coconut water powder, which is made by Navitas. I was so excited about it, and it doesn't taste like coconut water at all. It tastes like kind of dirty water to me when you just put the powder in, doesn't work.

MARIANN: You know, I've heard of foot powder before. Is that what that is?

JASMIN: Similar. Let's just stop talking about feet now and talk about Cody Carlson and Kim Heyrman instead because they're just the opposite of feet.

MARIANN: I don't know what to say about that. They have feet, four amongst them, and they're not the opposite of feet. They grow out of their feet, and they're lovely people. There's nothing wrong with feet.

JASMIN: Well, I meant, okay, 'cause feet are kind of -- okay.

MARIANN: Feet are not ugly! And just because Cody and Kim happen to be exceptionally fine-looking people doesn't mean that they're the opposite of feet. You shouldn't insult feet.

JASMIN: No insult to feet. Did you happen to notice that everyone we have on the podcast today is exceptionally good-looking? Do you think that maybe there's something wrong with me, that I only will interview exceptionally good-looking people?

MARIANN: You know, that's really interesting, but that does happen to be true. Not that I generally go around judging people by their looks, though apparently I do, I just don't talk about it. But yeah, we have a very hot group today.

JASMIN: So, Cody has actually been on our podcast before. He of course has done a lot of undercover work, mainly for Mercy for Animals but also for the Humane Society of the United States. And I will say, since it's the Farm Sanctuary Hoe Down episode, that Cody, back in the day, was my intern at Farm Sanctuary when I worked at Farm Sanctuary.

MARIANN: You never let him forget that, do you?

JASMIN: I don't bring it up that often, only a couple times a week. Anyway, he was one of the speakers this weekend, and his partner Kim is also completely outstanding. I'm excited to talk to them. You know, when I was talking to them, I think I kind of put them on the spot a couple times, so I'm looking forward to putting them on the spot and on the air at the same time. So, here is Cody Carlson and Kim Heyrman.

Welcome to Our Hen House, Cody.

CODY: Hey Jasmin, glad to be here.

JASMIN: Hi Kim, welcome to Our Hen House.

KIM: Hi Jasmin, how are you?

JASMIN: It's so exciting to be here at Farm Sanctuary interviewing people.

MARIANN: It's so exciting to be here interviewing one of my former students who's now like one of the leading lights of the animal rights movement speaking here at the Hoe Down.

JASMIN: Yeah, no kidding. And Cody has been on our podcast before. Cody, you have quite a unique story. Can you give our listeners the nutshell version, if that's possible?

CODY: Sure, yeah. About five years ago, I started working for Mercy for Animals as an undercover investigator. I went to the Humane Society after that and spent about two years working in about five factory farms across the country. After that I went to Brooklyn Law School to study under Professor and Mariann.

JASMIN: And you lived to tell the tale.

CODY: Yeah, exactly, I survived. It was an amazing experience, and I've got to do some litigation work with Compassion Over Killing and the Humane Society, and it's been an amazing ride.

JASMIN: I can't even imagine the kind of career you've already had in animal rights, and yet in so many ways you're just beginning your career. Can you talk a little bit about what it's like to be around rescued farm animals in contrast to some of the situations you've seen when you were undercover?

CODY: Yeah, it's a little -- it's wonderful to be here, I love it. It's rejuvenating to be around all these like-minded people and see all these really happy animals in their element. But it's bittersweet because you see these really fully formed unique animals, you know, living the life that they should be living, and I think about the millions of brothers and mothers and granddaughters out there in these factory farms just twenty miles down the road who aren't so lucky and who never really get looked at as individuals and who are living lives of kind of constant agony. It's a bummer. Yeah.

JASMIN: We're constantly bumming people out, aren't we?

MARIANN: Yeah, well, you know. We're animal rights activists; that's what we do.

JASMIN: And then we lift them up. And Kim, you are Cody's other half and the also other half of the parenting team of little Bo. So, how old is Bo?

KIM: Bo just turned one two days ago.

JASMIN: And happy birthday, Bo. So what's it like raising a vegan kid?

KIM: I mean, right now she's being breastfed, by me, so -- and she eats vegetables. I don't know, I don't really feel like she's missing out on anything.

JASMIN: Where are you from originally, Belgium?

KIM: Belgium, yup.

JASMIN: So, would you say that the animal rights movement there, how would you say it stacks up against the animal rights movement here?

KIM: That's a hard question because I started being vegetarian in New York, so I was not even -- I didn't live in Belgium anymore. But there's one really big one named GAIA and those people are -- he's actually in the government, the leader of GAIA, and he's changing a lot actually. But I don't know, compared to here, that's a hard question. I think Cody can answer that better actually.

JASMIN: What do you think, Cody? You've spent some time now in Belgium and here, what do you think?

CODY: Well, GAIA does really great activism, and they work with -- there's a lot of trans-European organizations that are really doing great work. There's also, I was really surprised to see, a lot of good vegetarian restaurants in Antwerp, where we were living. There was a raw food restaurant right down the street from us. But it was interesting to see, there's not so much -- every grocery store has tons of vegetarian meats and things like that, but they all

have eggs or whey or something like that. Vegan is not as popular there, which is, yeah, interesting to see.

JASMIN: So, not to be incredibly cliché here, but allow me to be incredibly cliché for just a moment. Do you have any hopes for Bo's generation that -- things that you want to see change in the world that you have hope that will change? Because I have to say, as a person who's not a parent, but has like a toddler-aged niece, I'm scared shitless for her. I'm not sure -- I want to know why you would put in a person in the world when things look so shitty. And you've seen the worst of the worst, Cody.

CODY: Sure. Well, I feel like, on a material level, things are as bad as they've been and might be getting worse, but the new generations are getting better. I feel like kids are growing up much more progressive, much more exposed to multiculturalism. And, you know, they're used to two mommies, two daddies, all that stuff. Veganism and eco-consciousness is just part of the cultural fabric, where even just five years ago, when I was getting turned onto this stuff, that was, all this stuff was really weird and foreign. And that's just been half a decade, so I have some hope.

JASMIN: Do you have PTSD, speaking of hope?

CODY: I don't know. You'll have to ask Kim, I think.

JASMIN: Kim?

KIM: I didn't know him before, so I actually met him when he just came out of it, right?

CODY: Yeah, yeah.

KIM: You know what? You don't really talk about it too much. And I don't ask too many questions about it 'cause I feel like it has to come naturally. But no, I'm sure you have, like, something, like, still stuck in, like.

JASMIN: It must change who you are.

CODY: Well, yeah, I think so. I mean, you know, I--

JASMIN: I like to put people on the spot.

CODY: Yeah. Well, I'm trying to give the right answer, but you know, it's -- we can live -- we can be, like, succumb to misery in this world, or like, what's the point? There is so much misery. I think you have to have a good attitude and be pos-y, you know? And just decide that if you're gonna fight for social justice, you just have to put a smile on your face and enjoy the fact that you're doing something meaningful with your life instead of hating everybody and thinking about how miserable things are. It's a waste of time. Yeah, and you're not gonna reach out to anyone.

JASMIN: What was that?

KIM: It didn't make you completely negative, maybe more pragmatic in finding a good solution, but definitely not depressed and -- no.

MARIANN: I think that one of the things that I've seen you talk about, Cody, that really gives me hope and maybe just mitigates some of the horrors that you've seen is that you've seen people who work in these industries, and the way you tell it, they're not all evil. It's something else going on.

CODY: Mm-hm. Yeah. Well, I mean, 90% of the people I've worked with are good people. You know, they voice concern for the welfare of these animals, and they care about their families. And one of them at this battery egg farm rescued dogs and considered himself an animal lover. But they live in economically depressed areas and they take work where they can get it. And over time, over months and years, I think, as they told me, they just kind of got used to it. They'd lose weight from getting sick, they'd have nightmares and lose sleep. But ultimately they're stuck in this situation. And it's not, I think, a matter of good people versus bad people. It's a matter of an entrenched system, and a system that's just not being reigned in because some people are making a lot of money and the rest of us are just learning how to stand up to it right now.

MARIANN: I think that really gives me hope because if people can get used to one thing they can get used to another. And I think that gives enormous potential for change.

JASMIN: Also, what Cody's saying reminds me of Jo-Anne McArthur and what she says. Jo-Anne's actually here this weekend. Hopefully we'll get to chat with her too. She has also seen horrific things and has gone undercover in a much different way, as a photojournalist. And she has hope and she says this is a beautiful world. So, you know, I guess we're all just putting one foot in front of the other and trying to change things as best we can, don't you think?

KIM: It's the only way to be productive, I think. You still have to have a good view on the world. Otherwise you're just gonna be depressed and never leave your house again, which is also possible, I guess.

JASMIN: Well, it's rejuvenating to be here. I'm sure you're looking forward to spending time with some animals who actually get to live with dignity, imagine that.

CODY: Absolutely.

KIM: Yeah.

JASMIN: Thank you both so much for talking to us.

CODY: Glad to see you.

JASMIN: So, of course a very big reason -- for some, the main reason -- that they attend the Hoe Down is because they have the opportunities to mingle with some of the farm animal residents who make Farm Sanctuary the special thing it is, the special place it is. And it really is a very special place. We've been lucky enough to visit so many incredible sanctuaries, and we're visiting a couple more coming up and they're all incredibly special.

And I particularly love that at Farm Sanctuary's Watkins Glen shelter, you have the rolling hills every which way you turn. It's like a postcard. And it just happened to be the most glorious weather of the year, so the sky was this deep turquoise, and the green of the lush forest and hills were especially bright, and the clouds were white and fluffy. It felt like I was in a Crayola ad the whole time. And we went up the hill to see the farm animals, and we were lucky enough to be able to go on Susie Coston's tour, Susie, of course, being the national shelter director and one of our heroes.

MARIANN: Yeah, that was a real privilege. I have to say that that's the reason -- I think the reason I was mostly emotional at Farm Sanctuary is because I love being around the animals. It's not something you get to do in your regular life. And you kind of spend your whole life thinking about and dwelling upon issues relating to these particular species, not these specific animals, but the species they belong to, and you so seldom have a chance to see members of these species. As I've said, a lot of the times I've gone to Farm Sanctuary, it hasn't been at the Hoe Down. I've just kind of been on my own, and I think for me that's a better experience. I have to say, I don't seem to relate to the animals in the intimate way that a lot of people do. I like to see them, I like to observe them, and I like it if they interact with me a little bit. But it's not like -- I hardly -- you know, I'm just not one of those people who gets down and rolls around on the ground with them or really feels like I'm forming a special connection. I don't feel like that, I admit it. And yet being around them and seeing them and experiencing -- just, I like to watch chickens. I don't have to have them interact with me. I like to watch them interact with each other. I just enjoy seeing them. And so, I guess I don't have quite the intense emotional experience that so many people seem to, which is great -- I mean that can be really transformative. But still in all, it's really, really important to me. I guess that's the way I am with people too. It's a little more standoffish, but still meaningful.

JASMIN: Well, I think that the fact that you were emotional means there was just a lot going on for you. And I'm glad you're talking about that fact that you don't necessarily have the urge to roll around with the pigs and play with the chickens because I think that maybe that's true for a lot of people. You have to remember that you and I are lucky enough to be able to visit these places with some degree of frequency, and we also know a lot of vegans and animal rights activists, whereas a lot of the people who come to the Hoe Down, I think that this is it. This is like their taste of -- maybe for the whole year, they go to just the Hoe Down. And this is the time that they're around rescued animals, this is the time they're around vegans. And so it might all become part of the same experience for them, whereas for you, you can separate that. You're able to reconnect with animals and humans throughout the year.

MARIANN: Yeah, I don't know what the difference is, or else it's just different people relate in different ways. It kinda doesn't matter. I mean, everybody has their own experience. The fact that to me some people's experience seems a little bit more intense than mine doesn't diminish mine for me. And I just think any way that people can connect with these animals and see these animals as real and see them as creatures who matter and see them as individuals, it's all important and that's what the sanctuary does. And the fact that it does it for different people in different ways is great, 'cause it does it. I mean, you know, film's great and I think that -- I hope to see more and more sanctuaries doing more and more video and making them really accessible to people and helping to reach people. But there's just

nothing like being there and watching animals in person. There's just nothing like it. It really makes it real because, let's face it, they're real.

JASMIN: So, we're gonna talk to Susie Coston now because Susie is just kind of among the best of the best when it comes to shelter director world and being a kind ambassador for these animal ambassadors. She's just the greatest.

MARIANN: And as you pointed out, another incredibly beautiful person.

JASMIN: With a great voice! She has this, like, raspy, sexy -- well, I'm gonna stop; you're just gonna hear from Susie directly.

It's funny to say to Susie Coston, "Welcome to Our Hen House, Susie," but I'm going to anyway. Welcome to Our Hen House as we stand in yours, kind of.

SUSIE: Yes, welcome, to *my* hen house -- or pig house.

JASMIN: So, Susie, what do you think the role is that the sanctuary movement plays in animal rights activism?

SUSIE: Well, I think, because there are 10 billion animals killed a year that obviously it's not to rescue all the animals. But what it is to do is, you know, every time you do a rescue, you publicize, you teach. Everything has to be a teaching moment. People come on the farm, you tell the animal's story, you let them connect to that animal because that bond that they make, they take home. And like, if you just listen, like with the people here, you'll hear all these people say, "oh, this is the animal that made me go vegan" or "this is the animal that made me go veg" or "this is the whole reason I stopped eating meat." They do something that we can't do, because you can talk and talk and talk and talk and talk, but once you make that connection, it's impossible to lose that.

JASMIN: Do you find that this kind of setting gives you hope or despair, or both?

SUSIE: The setting of the sanctuary?

JASMIN: Yeah, just being at a sanctuary, 'cause I could see it having both effects on me. I think it's incredibly hopeful to be around these animals who are actually having a chance at actually living their life naturally and with dignity. But it's also really sad because of what you just said, that there's like -- it's a needle in a haystack.

SUSIE: It's a needle in a haystack, but I think by allowing people to make that connection you create more vegans. By creating more vegans, you lessen the number of those animals that are in the industry. And I think it's impossible -- we can't, we're not gonna change people overnight. But I see this. This is what changed me, so I see the sanctuaries and meeting the animals and making that connection, the one thing that will actually stick. It's not a fad. It's an actual connection, so you've met someone. You have an individual and a personality. I want people to see them as individuals, and so here they can.

MARIANN: Yeah, and I think even when you do feel that despair, that's part of the process, that it's a way -- by meeting an individual, you are reminded of all of their brothers and sisters, but in a way that somehow people can digest.

JASMIN: So, Susie, it's the end of the day, you've finished your long work day, you get home. I don't know what time it is, 11 o'clock at night. What goes through your mind at the end of the day?

SUSIE: That you never have enough time because there's always more you could have done. I think that's the hardest part about this job is it's never done. And again, you can't rescue them all. But some of them are sick and you don't want to leave. And when you start to leave and you see somebody that doesn't feel well, you're like changing all these things and you just -- there's just never enough time to do everything. And there's never enough time when people are on the farm to introduce them to the animals. There's just -- it's such an important thing that we're doing. It's such an important thing to all of these animals that I just feel like, yeah, it's hard to go home at night.

JASMIN: What would you want to see happen next for animals, let's say -- in a realistic world. Of course, we want a vegan world, but let's talk about in the next five years because I've known you for probably about six or seven years now. So, let's say, okay, six or seven years from now, what do you want things to look like in a way that you think we can reach?

SUSIE: I think, to be realistic, the thing that we can reach is to knock down consumption. And I think it is starting to happen. I think more people know what vegan is and they're starting to see vegan options everywhere. I think people are becoming more health conscious. I really do think we can knock down the numbers and start getting industrial farming wiped out. I don't think it will happen in five years, but I do think there's gonna be a definite push to get it to knock down. The concern though is it just moves somewhere else. So, it's trying to -- that's why you have to make a connection that's lifelong, because it's very easy to get people to connect for a minute. You just have to keep going with it. And now that they have more options, I think it will start to happen. And it is going down, very slowly.

JASMIN: Let's talk about the adoption program here at Farm Sanctuary. What is the criteria? What do you look for when someone says, "I want one of these chickens for myself"?

SUSIE: Well, we have -- it's like adopting a child here. Because you can't save -- like, I can't go out and save 20,000 chickens, I can't, I want to make sure that each one that I save has a perfect home, they'll never end up being used for anything. So, we screen every adopter, we take every chicken to every home. We've never, ever just had somebody come here and pick up birds, I won't do it. I want people to -- I want to see where they're going and I want to feel that it's okay and I want to feel out the person. And we have this really insane adoption application. If you ever go online, you can see it. But we also teach them how to take care of them. We don't want anything to be left to chance, and they all have to come back here. We have a -- our adoption agreement is really binding. It's an agreement where, if any of those things happen, we can take the animals back. And so, again, like, you can't rescue them all, and I want to be able to keep up with them. I want to be able to know that

they're okay. I don't want to, like, let them go and never think about them again, because we're saying they're individuals, so I think we need to treat them like that.

JASMIN: So many of us, who fight for animal rights and who write letters to the editor and who are passionate vegans, have that experience. We're at the grocery store and we pass the meat counter and it's a funeral to us.

SUSIE: It is.

JASMIN: And we see that and we want to go up to people who have these carcasses in their cart and say, "There is a dead animal in front of you!" Do you think that for you, that kind of immediacy and anger and despair is more heightened, or do you think the opposite? Do you think that maybe you're also exposed to all of the good in the world and all of the ways that people are capable of changing, or again is it both?

SUSIE: It's both. But I do think -- and it's one of the things I try to tell activists, it's -- especially with social media there's so much anger and angst and depression and fear and just an emotional -- like, it's almost like mass people now in this emotional state. Here, you do see really horrible things, but then you see them get better. So, you have a balance, and it does, it allows you to never just be depressed. And you can just go outside. Like, when I get depressed I go in the sheep barn. That's my favorite barn. So I can just go in there and let the sheep come up and then I remember when they came in. I remember they were sad, and they're not sad anymore. So there is hope, so you have to just -- and again, I think this is the way to reach people. So in my mind, when people are coming, all I want them to do is see what I see. And if they see what I see, they can't eat them anymore. And then they spread that, and it goes and it goes and it goes. So, I have hope.

MARIANN: I'm inspired by that and I'm so inspired by the idea that people can find solace in coming to the sanctuary. I think you're absolutely right. But of course Farm Sanctuary is here and there's millions of people out there. Do you think the sanctuary movement is growing and do you think that's part of the growth of the animal rights movement and that it's going to make changes everywhere around the country?

SUSIE: Yeah, I think the sanctuary movement is growing. I also think every part of the movement is growing. I think that every single thing that we do in this movement is part -- you can't skip investigations; you can't not do radical things. Everybody plays a role in this movement, 'cause I think everybody's reached very differently. I think there are certain people that have to meet the animals, I think there's certain people that have to see a video, I think there's certain people that have to read about it. So, everybody comes to their thing a different way and together, as a group, we can change the whole world. We just need to all work together, yeah, because every single thing makes somebody else be motivated.

JASMIN: Susie, you're such a role model to us. Thank you so much for just everything you do, truly. You move us beyond words, and what you're doing is -- it's making such a huge difference for animals, literally, but also in a larger sense.

MARIANN: Yeah, I totally agree. And I think one thing that's so important to point out when we're here is that the animals speak to people, but so often they speak to people because

Susie's translating. You know, when you see an animal with Susie, you know so much more about that animal and that really reaches people in a very deep way.

SUSIE: Yeah, I'm very glad. And they do all have stories, and I think if we could just get people to hear that story, that it's gonna change.

JASMIN: Thanks, Susie.

SUSIE: You're welcome.

JASMIN: I'm not sure this is gonna actually give our listeners a taste of what it's like to go on a tour by Susie Coston. But she always has these great anecdotes about the animals, all of whom she knows, and I will remind you that there are many interns that she doesn't know their names, and yet all of the animals, she definitely knows. So, here's just a glimpse into one chicken's story that Susie told us in her most notorious, charming way.

SUSIE: He was a hatching project in Tribeca. And one of the school kids is a vegan, and she wanted to save the chickens, so she went up after the thing and said, "Where are these chicks going?" And they said, "We're taking them back to the farm, they're gonna be slaughtered." So, she got all of them out, and they were all roosters.

JASMIN: And what's this one's name?

SUSIE: His name is McLovin'.

JASMIN: And why is that?

SUSIE: Because he's loving, and 'cause we had a *Grey's Anatomy* fan on the staff, or whatever show that was from. What was it from? Superbad is McLovin'. That's right, 'cause we had a McDreamy and a McLovin', so it's two different shows. But yes, he's McLovin'. And if you say it he'll say his name. McLovin'!

MCLOVIN': McLovin'. McLovin'!

MARIANN: Susie really brings the animals to life, there's just nothing like doing a tour with her. She makes them -- she just interprets for them.

JASMIN: Yeah. She interprets for them, and they clearly love her. Whenever you walk into a different animal house, she completely dominates and they just all flock to her and they love her so much. And it's actually kind of the same thing with people too. They also flock to her, understandably so.

While we were there we got to talk to a couple kids. I have to say, I don't understand exactly why this is, but even though I was talking to some of my heroes from animal rights I was so nervous talking to these kids. I think I'm just really nervous when I'm interviewing children.

MARIANN: Yeah 'cause children aren't gonna fake it. You know, if you act like an idiot, they're gonna let you know.

JASMIN: Well, thank you. So these interviews, I think, are my favorite on the whole episode. First we got to talk to a little boy named Jay, who I think might have a career ahead of him as a pundit because Jay is nothing short of fantastic.

Hi, Jay.

JAY: Hi.

JASMIN: It's good to talk to you.

JAY: Thanks.

JASMIN: How old are you?

JAY: I'm 12.

JASMIN: And where do you live?

JAY: I live in Hamilton, Ontario. That's in Canada.

JASMIN: Is this your first time to Farm Sanctuary?

JAY: No, I've been here two years ago. I came here two years ago. That was my first time; this is my second time.

JASMIN: And who are you here with today?

JAY: I'm with my two older cousins and some of his friends.

JASMIN: So, why did your family come to the Hoe Down?

JAY: Well, we came to, you know, celebrate veganism, all that, you know...

JASMIN: To see the animals have a good time?

JAY: Yeah, to see the animals have a good time, try to learn a bit more about veganism. Well, my cousins are vegan, but I'm a vegetarian. But for the past two weeks I've been vegan 'cause I've been staying at my cousins' house, so...

JASMIN: That's awesome! How do you feel as a vegan the last couple weeks?

JAY: I feel good. I feel normal. Like, it's not that hard for me because, you know, it's not much different becoming vegetarian to a vegan 'cause all I do is have milk, but if I just don't have milk I'm pretty much vegan. I don't even have eggs, so...

JASMIN: So, why are your cousins vegan?

JAY: Well, they researched about it, and they learned all about the stuff, how the animals are getting treated, the diseases. It's also partially religion wise, 'cause we're Jain and that's all about nonviolence, and well, this is a good way to be nonviolent to any form of beings.

JASMIN: That is really well said. You just hit the nail on the head. What has it been like to meet some of the rescued animals here this weekend at Farm Sanctuary?

JAY: It's hard. Like, I kind of feel bad for them 'cause all they've been through, but I'm also happy for them 'cause they've found a better place. And it's also nice to meet them, especially the sheep. They're so fluffy.

JASMIN: And they're really friendly, don't you think?

JAY: Yeah, they are.

JASMIN: Have you gotten to meet some cows as well?

JAY: Yup.

JASMIN: Yeah. I remember I was really surprised. I was vegetarian before I was vegan also, and when I learned about what happens with dairy cows I was really blown away, and so it was kind of easy for me to make that transition.

MARIANN: I'm wondering, Jay, do you have friends who are vegan or vegetarian? Are there other kids in your school?

JAY: Well, I have only one friend who's vegetarian, but because he's a Hindu. Well, I'm half Jain, half Hindu. And well, so he's a vegetarian, but he eats egg. And other than that, no, all my friends eat meat. And it's kind of hard at times 'cause, see, they joke -- like, I don't get it. They joke that if you care about animals so much, why are you eating their food? But I don't get it 'cause, you know, I'm not trying to be rude to them, but they're kind of worse 'cause they're eating animals *and* they're eating their food, so I kind of -- but it's all right too, you know, because they were raised this way. They were raised by eating meat, so that's the normal for them. And every time I try to tell -- like, I don't want to force them 'cause I know it's not easy just to transition so quickly. But I try to talk to them a little bit, and I say. But they always tell me to stop 'cause they don't want to hear about it, so it's always a bit hard.

JASMIN: But you seem like you're a really good example of how you can be a totally normal and happy and healthy kid and not eat animals, right?

JAY: Well, I try to be a good example, but because I'm a little bit shorter than them, they think, you know, it's not good to be vegetarian or vegan. But I don't -- for me, it's just genetics 'cause my mom and dad are short, so it's just...

MARIANN: That could be it.

JASMIN: Yeah, that could be it. I feel like you should be a speaker at the Hoe Down. Maybe one day, what do you think?

MARIANN: Seriously.

JAY: Well, I plan to be a volunteer one day when I get older. Actually, when I grow up I'm gonna definitely be vegan, but right now for -- well, what my parents say is that for now, be vegetarian, through my growing years, which I don't get 'cause soy milk is healthier than normal milk. But you know, I've just gotta bear with it for now, and once I get older and have my own freedom, I'm gonna be vegan.

JASMIN: You are an inspiration to me, Jay. Thank you so much for talking to us today. I hope you continue to be vocal about how you feel about animals and about veganism, 'cause I think you can really change the world.

MARIANN: Yeah.

JAY: Thank you.

JASMIN: I especially loved it when Jay said that, "It's genetics!" which is the reason he's short. It's genetics!

MARIANN: Yeah. Duh, it's so obvious. But of course people will find anything to say about veganism. And anyway being short, as we've established -- and Susie was talking about this, vis-à-vis animals -- being short is better than being tall, it's healthier.

JASMIN: I hope that if his parents are listening, you will help Jay to be a vegan, even now, rather than waiting until he's a grown up, because he wants to do that and it *is* the best way for him to be.

So, we also got to speak with a girl, Meara, who is not only a lifelong vegan at 11 years old, but is also the daughter of Amie Hamlin, who has been on our podcast and is the force behind the Coalition for Healthy School Food. So here's Meara.

Hi, Meara.

MEARA: Hi.

JASMIN: How old are you?

MEARA: 11.

JASMIN: And how long have you been vegan?

MEARA: Since I was born.

JASMIN: So you're a lifelong vegan, that's kinda cool.

MEARA: Yeah.

JASMIN: Are you the only vegan in your circle of friends, or do you have any other friends who are vegan?

MEARA: Well, in my school there's like six other vegan kids, so actually a lot of my friends are vegan.

JASMIN: That's great! And your mom is Amie Hamlin, right?

MEARA: Yup.

JASMIN: Do you know what your mom does for a living?

MEARA: Yeah.

JASMIN: Can you tell us?

MEARA: She tries to get healthier food in schools.

JASMIN: That's great. And how about you, what do you bring to -- do you bring your school lunch with you, or do you buy it there?

MEARA: Well, I go to a Montessori school, so everyone brings their own lunch.

JASMIN: And what kind of things do you like for your favorite lunches?

MEARA: Well, soy yogurt, stuff with tofu in it. I like tofu.

JASMIN: I like tofu also. How many times have you been to Farm Sanctuary?

MEARA: I don't know, a lot.

JASMIN: 'Cause you don't live too far away right?

MEARA: No, I've come here many times.

JASMIN: So, I have a question for you. I have a niece who's a lot younger than you. She's only three, so she's just a toddler. And my brother takes her to the zoo, and I always feel kind of icky about that, 'cause, you know, the animals are kind of confined and they're sort of in cages. And you see these animals here and they're rescued and they are living their lives in peace and happiness. Do you think that there's something better about going to a sanctuary as opposed to a zoo?

MEARA: Well, yeah. I think zoos are mean because they take animals that don't have special needs and that could be in the wild away from the wild and stuff, and they don't have a choice, whereas a sanctuary takes, like, animals that can't live in the wild and that need help and helps them.

JASMIN: Yeah, that's really well said. Yeah. What do you want to be when you grow up? Do you know? Any ideas?

MEARA: Well, I like art. But I think I would want to be an architect. I like building.

JASMIN: It sounds like you're building a whole new future here. And it sounds like you're really a change maker of tomorrow. I think it's great to meet a lifelong vegan, isn't it cool?

MARIANN: Yeah, and it's gonna be a long life. And I think you're gonna do amazing things, Meara.

JASMIN: Thanks so much for talking to us.

Ah, from the mouths of babes.

MARIANN: I thought those were both terrific interviews. They're both really bright kids and I think they have a lot of important insights.

JASMIN: Kids do have important insights.

And so do people who are behind art, and there was a lot of art going on at the Hoe Down, not only in the kids area where there was some lovely art going on. But coloring a bit more outside of the lines were artists like Jo-Anne McArthur, the incredible photojournalist, and Liz Marshall, the amazing filmmaker who made the film *The Ghosts in Our Machine*. You've heard both of them on our podcast in the past. Well, *The Ghosts in Our Machine* has been released in Canada, and it is on its way to a U.S. release. And we talked to Liz and Jo-Anne a little bit about social justice and the role of art and the role that film and photography play in changing the world for animals. These are two of our favorite people, and being at the Hoe Down was particularly special to us because we were able to connect with Jo-Anne and Liz live and in person as opposed to through Facebook, Twitter, or email. It's so wonderful to be able to spend time with such inspiring, artistic, creative souls who, like you, are trying with everything they can to create a new world for animals.

Welcome back to Our Hen House, Liz and Jo-Anne.

LIZ: Hi, so nice to be back.

JO-ANNE: Happiest day ever, yay!

JASMIN: Best day ever! I love talking to you guys when I can actually look at you and when there's, like, beautiful creatures in the background, by whom I mean Mariann! Yeah. So, first of all, let's get up to speed on what's going on with *The Ghosts in Our Machine*. Liz, can you tell us what's happening with that?

LIZ: Well, here we are at the beautiful Hoe Down and it was such a thrill last night to present a sneak preview for -- I don't know, was it 250, 300 people? It was so beautiful to be here in this environment with Fanny and Sonny and Julia up the hill, and with all these lovely people, to be giving them that little peek into the movie. And part of the message last night is that we're preparing for our US release and it will be this fall. We don't have dates yet; we will soon. As soon as we have them, we'll let you know. And we want to conduct an Oscar-qualifying theatrical release, and in doing so, we will generate national media and attract a broad demographic, which is always the goal for this film, and so that's always the mark we're trying to hit. And it's been three years that we've been at this. Our Canadian release

has gone very well; we've generated a lot of media. And we're excited for the US because our social media metrics tell us that the US is our number one fan, and the US is also the most competitive, most exciting film market in the world, and we want to do our best. We need support to do that, so we've got an Indiegogo campaign happening right now and people can click on it from our website, which is theghostsinourmachine.com, and so you can really help us bring the film here.

JASMIN: Well, as you said last night, film can really change the world, and *The Ghosts in Our Machine* is a perfect example of that. It's already changing the world.

Jo-Anne, I want to start by saying, what's it like being a movie star?

JO-ANNE: I'm not a movie star.

LIZ: Yes, you are.

JASMIN: Okay, well, you are to me, and you are to a lot of people who have fallen in love with you through the lens of *The Ghosts in Our Machine*. Tell us about your new book, *We Animals*.

JO-ANNE: Sure. The book is featured -- the making of the book is featured in the film *Ghosts in Our Machine* and I'm writing it here in one of these cabins right behind me. And so, the book. The book, the book, the book is done pretty much. It's being copyedited right now. It's 208 pages, hardcover, and it's nice that *The Ghosts* film ties in with the farm and the book, and me here, because it's the farm sanctuary that turned me into a vegan activist over ten years ago. And then, I get to honor that by including a lot of images that I've shot here at Farm Sanctuary in the "Mercy" section of the book, sharing those stories, and as Susie says in the film, giving a face and a name to the animals. So, that's what I'm doing as well.

MARIANN: And exactly when will the book be coming out, and how can people get a copy?

JO-ANNE: They can preorder it at this point through Lantern Books, lanternbooks.com. And the latest it'll come out is December 1st. We're trying for sooner.

JASMIN: You talked about bringing a face and a name to what's going on for animals. Tell us about one face and one name that particularly touched you who is going to be featured in *We Animals*.

JO-ANNE: That would be Zoop, and Zoop is a goat. People don't know anything about goats, and they don't know that they can have friendships and relationships with these complex animals. And Zoop is a goat that came in. She could barely walk, she was really injured, really sick. They worked on her for months and eventually had to amputate her front left leg. But far from being a scarred individual, she thrived. She thrived here, she made friends, and she really loved humans. And I think that also speaks to the forgiveness that animals have with us, it's just beautiful. But the fun thing with Zoop was that she liked to pretend to rear up and attack and barrel down on you with her horns. So, she would kick her legs and she'd back up and she'd wind up and then she'd get up on her back legs and just

come down on you really, really softly. This was her little joke. And so the photo that's in *We Animals* is of her on her hind legs about to barrel down on me but she always did it softly.

MARIANN: It is an amazing photo. It just -- the photo tells the entire story. You know, I think Jo-Anne, you're able to speak almost better than anybody about the importance of sanctuary because you've said that you suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder because of the things you've seen. And I think a lot of people in the movement, even though they haven't seen them firsthand, they've seen your photographs and they've seen them secondhand and so they also have trauma just from that. And tell us how sanctuaries work to help in healing that.

JO-ANNE: Well, yeah, they're not just healing places for animals. They're healing places for humans, and especially activists. We care so much about what's going on, we really feel the suffering of animals. And yeah, I did have PTSD, and in some ways I think that's actually a very natural response to bearing witness and understanding and seeing what happens to animals, so we need to look after ourselves. And in a way we're exposed to this all the time, and it's a low grade irritant in our lives. Whether we're thinking about animal rights and suffering or not, it's there. You know, it's part of what we're fighting against, and so that's gonna have some long-term effects on us, and so we really, really need to look after ourselves in many ways. There's a great book called *Aftershock* by Patrice Jones, and that's a great book on advising us how to look after ourselves. But also, if you can get to a sanctuary, it's a great place to come and detox and see the good. And if you can't go to a sanctuary, you can read about sanctuary stories and focus on those and learn about the individuals who are here and gain some positivity from that.

JASMIN: Liz, I know that you come from a background of social justice and animal activism, and animal rights is actually one of the new evolutions of that. Can you talk about how your background working in social justice really informed your new animal activist career?

LIZ: Sure. Well, I have to say I understand the blinders and the resistance because I was vegetarian for the longest time and wasn't making the full connection, and maybe didn't want to, I guess. I thought I was doing my part because I wasn't eating dead flesh, animals, and that was that, and I was focused on human rights and environmental rights. But in focusing for the last three years on this subject of animal sentience and animal use and just how staggering it is and the intersection and how it's actually all connected, I've had my own consciousness raising experience and journey over the last three years. And I became vegan over the course of it, through actually meeting and getting to know Fanny and Sonny, who live here. They were rescued from the dairy industry, and so, putting a face and a name to that and then really understanding the impact and the cruelty of the dairy industry shifted things for me enormously. So, I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't see all these different social justice issues as compartmentalized pieces. I see them as a circle, as a whole. And I didn't have that awareness before like I do now, and so I would just hope that part of what *The Ghosts in Our Machine* is capable of doing is reaching out beyond the choir and people that already care to extend the message of sentience to a very broad demographic. That is the goal of this project, always has been. It's the goal of *We Animals* as well. And that was the inspiration actually is Jo-Anne's pictures because her images allow you to reflect and allow you the possibility of seeing animals as individuals. And her images do that in a way that are not didactic, and as a filmmaker I'm not didactic either. So, that is the offering that we have through this project.

JASMIN: And I think it works. I do, I think it works. And it speaks to the evolution of oneself and how different social justice issues and different world issues seep into us at different times and we are constantly becoming more conscious. And sometimes it's harrowing and sometimes it's liberating, and I think that art has the power of bringing that all together in a way that makes sense and is impossible to articulate in words. And the two of you do that so well.

LIZ: One very tangible example would be that I think something that was a real deficit in my last film, *Water on the Table*, which is about water justice issues, is the lack of focus on factory farming and how factory farming greatly impacts our water. And so now because *The Ghosts in Our Machine* is very focused on the industrialization of animal industries, or the globalized animal industries at large, something that I think I will start doing is having an arsenal of facts in my pocket as a way of bridging from *Water on the Table* to *The Ghosts in Our Machine*, just to give people some facts, right? So, that, it's all connected.

JASMIN: It's all connected. Isn't it inspiring when artists actually can go back to their original pieces and say "ooh, I didn't see the whole picture here, I need to redo"?

MARIANN: Oh, factory farming is the great hidden monstrosity of our world. Until you see it, you don't see it at all, and then when you see it, it's behind everything. It's causing harm in every possible area of our world, and I'm just so glad that you are both bringing a light to it, and bringing a light to the individuals who are caught up in it. That's what's so important. And I have to say, I met Sonny and Fanny yesterday and it was wonderful, but they weren't different to me than the other cows. And then I saw the piece from the film and you know, Sonny and Fanny just became so real to me. It's the power of art. I mean, we were talking before about how Susie interprets the animals for people and makes them even more real -- 'cause she knows them and she knows their story and when she talks about them they become more real to people. Watching the film makes them more real.

JASMIN: Can we just say again your websites so that people could find you?

JO-ANNE: Weanimals.org.

JASMIN: And?

LIZ: Theghostsinourmachine.com.

JASMIN: Thank you both. You're such role models to us. It's such a joy and a pleasure and a privilege to be speaking with you right now.

JO-ANNE: Thanks, lovelies.

JASMIN: Thank you.

LIZ: Love you guys, thanks.

JASMIN: Love you too.

LIZ: Love Our Hen House!

JASMIN: Love you!

MARIANN: Love you!

JASMIN: Big love fest.

MARIANN: Love, love, love, love, love, love.

JASMIN: And now, what we came to the Hoe Down for: Kumbaya, my lord, kumbaya!

LIZ: No.

JASMIN: Thank you.

MARIANN: One of the things I liked about this event was that it was very activism focused. Specifically, there's a lot of people there who have been several times, but a lot of people at the Hoe Down are really first timers and they're people who have become vegan relatively recently. And I loved the idea that a number of the speakers were introducing them to activism and various ways that they can spread the word about animals and about veganism. And one of those speakers who does a great job at that, particularly when it comes to restaurant outreach and other issues around food, is Erica Meier from Compassion Over Killing.

JASMIN: Welcome to Our Hen House, Erica.

ERICA: Thank you so much for having me!

JASMIN: I was just telling Erica that we've decided to officially change the name of Our Hen House to Erica's Hen House.

MARIANN: I think it's a great idea. It's gonna be all Erica, all the time.

JASMIN: I'm down with that. Erica, you spoke twice at the Hoe Down today. Can you tell us what your two talks were?

ERICA: Yeah, so I had the honor of speaking at the annual Hoe Down and I focused on vegetarian eating, how we're shifting from the margins to the mainstream. And the concept behind that is we're seeing this reduction in meat consumption in the US, and those are stats coming from the government. We're seeing a reduction in the amount of milk that we're drinking, and on a generational basis every year we're drinking less and less milk and we're eating less eggs. And we're seeing all of those changes translate into fewer animals being raised and killed in the US. It's the first time we're seeing this drop in the number of animals being raised and killed, so it's really encouraging news. And if we're seeing all of this, how did we get there? So I tried talking a little bit about some of the campaigns that are having an impact, bringing that shift about, including campaigns such as Meatless Mondays and how the Los Angeles school district recently embraced Meatless Mondays and so now all 650,000 meals they serve on Mondays to students will be 100% meat-free, and that's

having a significant impact, and also talking about companies like Chipotle and Subway introducing, testing out vegan options, companies like Boca Foods taking eggs completely out of their products, and the rise of Beyond Meat, Beyond Eggs, companies that are producing vegan, plant-based options.

MARIANN: You know, so many people -- it's so exciting, what's going on. I really think it's amazing what's going on. Every month it becomes a bigger story. But I think for a lot of us in the movement, we saw it as people going vegan, 'cause that's what we do, we went vegan. And a lot of what's going on is people shifting away from eating meat. How do vegans formulate campaigns that target people who are just shifting away from eating meat?

ERICA: Yeah, that's a very important aspect. In fact, the rise of vegetarian eaters is largely coming from people known as "flexitarians," people who are simply reducing their meat. They're not committing yet to being 100% vegetarian or vegan; they're reducing the amount of meat that they're eating. And I think that's something really to celebrate because the more that they shift away from it, the more likely they're gonna continue that shift, and we need to encourage people to start reducing their consumption of animal products. If they're not ready to go vegan, that's okay. They need to start their journey. Transitions take time, and so if we can encourage individuals to make those choices. And we're seeing a growing number of people making those choices. It's going to shift into the marketplace. The marketplace is going to respond to that growing demand. And as we can get more vegan options available in the mainstream marketplace, I think we're just gonna see sort of like a spiraling effect of more people seeing it, more people trying it, and stores wanting to offer more, and it's just going to continue happening. And we need to be there to keep that momentum going; it's not just gonna happen on its own. We need to speak up and let companies know that these are options in demand.

MARIANN: Yeah, absolutely. And it is happening faster and faster. Can you tell us specifically about some of the specific campaigns that Compassion Over Killing has been working on to help corporations? And I know that with some of these corporations, even with them, it's not a matter of getting them to even produce a particular vegan product, but get their products closer to vegan and it becomes a process. Can you tell us how that works?

ERICA: Yeah, so a lot of these major companies like Morningstar Farms, Boca Foods, Lightlife, Quorn -- now we're seeing Subway starting to embrace this a little bit more -- it's a matter of asking and that's the most important thing is asking. So, in a lot of these cases, we as an organization approach them saying this is really an important issue to a growing number of consumers, have you thought about this? And in most cases the companies have some level of responsiveness, but it doesn't necessarily translate into action until they hear from their consumer base. They need to know that the people who will be buying their products want this, and so it's so vital. Like, our campaign, welovesubway.com, the whole focus of the campaign is to get consumers to reach out to the company so they know this is a widespread issue that is important to meat eaters, vegetarians, and vegans alike, that everyone wants to see these options on the menu. And in the case of Subway, it did prompt them to do a test menu in the DC market, and the vegan options were so popular, they thought it would be months and months of a product that they shipped out to these stores and it lasted about a week. It was so popular among their current customers as well as

people who were hearing about this, vegans who wanted to go try it. So, it really is a matter of asking. It's so, so vital for people. If they want change to happen they have to help make that happen.

JASMIN: I saw right behind you when you were giving your talk just now, it said -- and I'm going to botch it, but it said something like, "you can make immediate change and it can be lasting." What exactly was the saying?

ERICA: Yeah, the focus was that each one of us has the ability to make meaningful and lasting changes for animals. We just each need to ask.

JASMIN: Yeah, I like that you had the word "immediate" up there because when you're doing this work it can feel so painstakingly slow sometimes and it can get really overwhelming and it can get really sad. But because of campaigns such as what COK heads up, you really are seeing immediate change. We get emails sometimes from people who are somewhat put off by campaigns like the Meatless Mondays campaign. They think that's not enough and I think that in your eyes you would probably agree on some level, that's -- you want them to be vegan. You want it to be Meatless Mondays, and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, you know, and on and on. So what would you say to vegans who might be somewhat critical of campaigns such as Meatless Monday because it's not doing enough?

ERICA: Yeah, I think there's a couple important aspects behind that. And Nick Cooney spoke this weekend as well, and he focused a little bit on those types of campaigns and how vital a campaign like Meatless Monday can be for our movement. It encourages people to make a single step, a pretty simple one, something that growing number of people are participating in. And it's sort of a foot in the door method where, if they're willing to go meatless on Monday, chances are good that if we continue to encourage them to embrace these changes, they're gonna continue down that path. But it makes it a very tangible, like, oh yeah, I *can* go meatless one day a week. And then as they try the new foods, as they learn more about the issues, as they're exposed to it in the marketplace, it's going to ring that bell. Like, they're already familiar with the concept, so they can continue pushing that forward.

MARIANN: I think that Meatless Mondays, if you have any question about whether it can have an effect and whether it can lead people to further changes, you just have to look at some of the meat industry publications. And in our segment that we like to call "Rising Anxieties," their anxieties are definitely rising. They *hate* Meatless Mondays. And they don't hate it just because they're losing one day. They're terrified of what Meatless Mondays can do.

JASMIN: Yeah. Whatever they hate, we should do more of.

MARIANN: I think that's a good rule in life, yeah.

JASMIN: That's how you formulate your campaigns for COK, right?

ERICA: No comment.

JASMIN: Well, COK is doing such extraordinary work and we're such a big fan. We've been such a big fan for so long. Do you want to just give us the nutshell version of some of the projects you're currently working on and maybe how our listeners who want to change the world for animals can get involved with your efforts?

ERICA: Sure. Well, one thing that's coming up pretty soon in the DC area is the DC VegFest, which is a really fun celebration. We're expecting about 10,000 people. It's an all vegan event, and we have several folks working on that, a team of volunteers putting together a really fantastic event. So, if you live in the DC area, dcvegfest.com, check it out, it's September 28th. If you don't live there, you travel! Check it out, come visit us, it's really fun.

We're also working on a number of projects. Ag-gag has been a big issue that a lot of people have been learning about, how the industry is really trying to stop undercover investigations from happening because of the impact that they're having. And so we have been working on that issue a lot, as well as focusing a little bit more on whistleblower protection, so hopefully we'll be announcing some efforts soon that I will immediately share with you guys. But that's an exciting area of really trying to continue getting the word out there to the public and it's -- ag-gag, thankfully this year no bills passed, and I think that the media really took this story and ran with it in a way that exposed so many people to these issues, and we're hoping to continue pushing that forward.

JASMIN: Well that's great. We will definitely stay on top of those efforts. Thank you so much for speaking to us today.

ERICA: I am so honored to be on Erica's Hen House!

JASMIN: Erica, thank you for allowing us to speak with the goddess of Erica's Hen House.

MARIANN: You know, one of the things I love about this event and about Farm Sanctuary in general is that it's really bridging the past of the animal rights movement to the future. And that was something I felt really strongly this weekend, that so many of the things that we were doing -- and this was a place that's so familiar to me from the past and when the animal rights movement was so tiny and growing, and it's still growing, of course, but all of a sudden it's growing exponentially. And a lot of the topics that the speakers brought up were things that really haven't been on the radar before, like what we'll be talking in news more about, things like *in vitro* meat, and just the fact that vegans are, the whole vegan movement is exploding, to some extent in ways that we didn't anticipate, as Erica was talking about, the flexitarian movement, which a lot of us have had uneasy feelings about since we want people to go vegan, yet it's starting to have an enormous impact. And the future is -- so much money is being put into meat alternatives. And really, people are waking up to the environmental disasters. There's so much going on. It's such a huge time, and to be at this event seeing where we've come from and how we're really poised to go big time, I found it to be really, really inspiring, the bridging of the past to the future. And I think that that bridge is so important because it is the moment, the moment is here, where things are really going to start changing. And Farm Sanctuary has been laying that groundwork for a long time.

JASMIN: And it's great also to see the way the sanctuary movement has really taken off as a result of Farm Sanctuary. As I said earlier, we have had the privilege of being able to visit many sanctuaries throughout the country, and there are a lot popping up, and this is because Farm Sanctuary has kind of been like the parent to all of these other sanctuaries. And it really does change each year as new people come in. The passion grows and what folks are talking about also grows.