



Our Hen House

CHANGE THE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

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Interview with Paul Shapiro

By OUR HEN HOUSE

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*Following is a transcript of an interview with **PAUL SHAPIRO** conducted by **JASMIN SINGER** and **MARIANN SULLIVAN** of [Our Hen House](#), for the [Our Hen House podcast](#). The interview aired on Episode 217.*

JASMIN: Paul Shapiro, the vice president of farm animal protection for the Humane Society of the United States, has played an integral role in numerous successful legislative and corporate campaigns to improve the plight of farm animals. His work has helped enact farm animal protection laws in California, Arizona, Michigan, Maine, Colorado, Oregon, and Ohio. He founded Compassion Over Killing in 1995 and served as its campaign director until January 2005. While there, he worked as a farm animal cruelty investigator and led initiatives such as the successful effort to end the use of the misleading Animal Care Certified logo on battery cage egg cartons nationwide. Paul has been interviewed in hundreds of print, broadcast, and online news sources as an authority on farm animal welfare and animal advocacy. He has also published dozens of articles about animal welfare in publications ranging from daily newspapers to academic journals. Learn more at [humanesociety.org](#).

Welcome back to Our Hen House, Paul.

PAUL: Thanks so much, Jasmin and Mariann. It is an honor to be back.

JASMIN: It is just an honor to have you. We are so excited to talk to you again.

MARIANN: Yeah. Paul, you're one of our favorite people, and you always know exactly what's going on. You have a firm finger on the pulse of what's going on in the farmed animal industry. So, can you tell us just basically the bottom line? What is the story on current meat consumption in the US? We've heard it might be declining?

PAUL: You know what? You have heard correctly, I am proud to say. For many decades in the US, meat consumption was on the rise, and in fact not just on the rise because we had more and more people living in the country, but even on a per capita basis, people were just eating more and more meat. And that's generally been the trend with industrialized countries. The wealthier a country gets, the more meat per capita its citizens eat. But for the first time ever for any industrialized country, starting about 2008, meat consumption has started to fall off of a cliff, here in the United States and in much of Europe as well. In fact, now meat consumption on a per capita basis is 10% less than it was just six years ago.

MARIANN: That's unbelievable.

PAUL: It is. It really goes to show that Americans are changing our diets. And surprisingly it's not because people are becoming vegetarians. The rate of vegetarianism in the country has remained the same for the last couple decades. What's changed is that more and more people are reducing their meat consumption. They're eating more vegetarian meals, but they're not necessarily becoming vegetarian. They're doing things like participating in meatless Mondays. They're doing things like maybe similar to Mark Bittman's "Vegan Before 6" where you eat vegan the first two thirds of your day and the final part you don't have any rules in what you eat, or maybe they're doing something else. Maybe they're doing Tofu Tuesdays. Who knows? But the point is Americans are eating a lot less meat than we used to, and because of that far fewer animals are being raised and killed for food. You used to hear people talking, oh, well nearly 10 billion land animals are raised and killed for food every year in our country. Well, now that number's declined down to 9.0 billion. So it peaked about six years ago at 9.5 billion. Now it's at 9.0 billion.

And when you're talking about these astronomical figures, you think to yourself, nobody knows the difference between 9.5 or 9.0 billion, but keep in mind, that's half a billion fewer animals subjected to the miseries of factory farming and slaughter plants each year than we were seeing just six years ago. If we were to take every other animal exploitative industry and combined them -- the hunting industry, the animal experimentation industry, all the number of animals who are used for horse drawn carriages, for all the animals who are unfortunately euthanized in animal shelters -- if you combined all of them together, the fur industry and everything, that's less than half a billion. So this is really the greatest animal protection victory that we've ever had in our country, and our movement ought to be singing it from the rooftops. It's major progress that deserves for us to sit back, take stock. And no, we shouldn't rest on our laurels. We want to keep on striving for continuous improvement, but it's unbelievable to see the trends that we're now seeing in meat consumption in our country.

MARIANN: Yeah, it's really exciting news. And we were actually reading -- we talked about a while back an article that was talked about that people now think of veganism as a cuisine, you know? Oh, let's do Italian tonight. Oh no, let's do vegan tonight. So that's a real step in the right direction. It may only be a step, but it's a step definitely in the right direction. What about -- if these numbers are going down this much, it must also include -- when you say meat, you must be including chicken as well? And what's going on with milk and eggs?

PAUL: Sure, great question. So, first off, let me answer your question but then I want to make a comment about your last comment as well. But yes, this certainly includes poultry. The numbers -- the USDA doesn't keep stats on fish, so it's unclear the number of fish reduced. However, the so-called seafood industry has been reporting that fish consumption has also been plummeting. In fact, *Nation's Restaurant News*, a trade magazine for the restaurant industry, published a story within the last month or so about how demand for fish on menus has been just falling off of a cliff. Meanwhile, they're at the same time publishing stories about how demand for vegetarian entrees has been skyrocketing, talking about how this is one of the biggest changes in the restaurant industry is demand for more vegetarian food. So we are seeing declines in poultry consumption and fish consumption. On egg and dairy consumption, milk consumption has been declining for years. Egg consumption has declined somewhat, but it's about stable. But it is declining, but it's not precipitously declining yet, although some analysts predict that it will further decline for a variety of reasons in years to come.

You had made a point earlier though about how veganism is a cuisine. And I'll tell you, my parents, they moved to Florida. They now just passed 65, and so I think like in Leviticus, there's a line that says Jews, when they pass 65, they have to move to Florida. So they did that, right?

JASMIN: Oh yeah, that's what happens exactly.

PAUL: It's in there, trust me. Don't check. You don't need to check. So they moved in, they're living in West Palm Beach. And so I was down visiting them and my grandfather this past weekend, and the *Palm Beach Post* came and I'm looking at their local paper, and there was an entire section just on recipes for vegan green smoothies in the paper where my parents live. I could not believe my eyes. People like us were drinking green smoothies back in the '90s before people knew what they were. Now this is mainstream affair in regular newspapers in towns across America. It's really something to see how quickly this issue of vegan eating has moved from the margins into the mainstream.

JASMIN: It is so exciting. And you just made me think of my grandmother who had a place in Del Rey Beach, which is the next town over from West Palm Beach, and she obviously also got the memo. So she was there for a while, and the reason I bring her up -- she actually just passed away very recently, very sadly -- but she used to keep newspaper clippings for me whenever she would find anything on veganism. She'd be so excited to tell me about it and she would cut it out. And if that was any marker -- and of course that's where we get our signs from is our parents' and grandparents' newspaper clippings for us --

PAUL: Yeah. Well --

JASMIN: So if that was any sign, it is! It's in so many more places. Clearly there's something going on. But as we mentioned, it's obviously just beginning. What is HSUS's strategy for keeping this trend going?

PAUL: Ah. Great question. First, let me express my condolences about your grandmother. I'm very sorry. My grandfather himself, he's 95 years old; he's on his deathbed right now. And I know it's not easy to lose family members even when they are aged. Second, I imagine it must have been essentially a full time job --

JASMIN: Yeah.

PAUL: -- for your grandmother to keep up with all the vegan news clippings to give you because they are so voluminous.

So, the Humane Society of the United States is both working to ban the most inhumane factory farming by passing laws and getting corporate policies to ban these types of inhumane factory farming cruelties. At the same time, we're also working to reduce the total number of animals who are raised and killed for food. We have a team of experts who travel around the country led by the wonderful Kristie Middleton. They travel around the country. They meet with directors of dining at hospitals, colleges, universities, entire school districts K-12, and even prisons, anywhere where they are buying lots of animal products to serve in cafeterias. And we're working with them to implement meatless Monday or other meat reduction programs so these major animal product buyers buy fewer animal products. And it's working. Literally hundreds upon hundreds of schools have now implemented meat reduction policies because they've been working with this team of experts from the Humane

Society of the US. They're doing meatless Mondays. They're doing -- sometimes they're calling it maybe Wean and Green Mondays or maybe it's all throughout the entire week that they're doing it.

But these schools are actually tangibly cutting back, often slashing, their meat demands. Let me give you two quick examples. Compassion Over Killing, in the end of 2012, worked with the Los Angeles City Council to pass a resolution saying that the city council supports the concept of meatless Mondays. Symbolic, but still, it had a big effect because it enabled HSUS to go and meet with the LA city school district -- it's called LA Unified School District, the second biggest school district in the country. 650,000 students eat there every single day. And now because of that, every single one of those students on Mondays gets entirely meat-free fare, entirely vegetarian fare. So that's about 650,000 fewer meat-based meals every single week just because of this one policy. Similarly, we and a wonderful woman named Judy Ki, a San Diego animal advocate, worked with the San Diego Board of Education to help them to implement entirely meat-free Mondays for K-8 schools in San Diego. LA is K-12, San Diego K-8.

And the purpose of doing this is because it's just so efficient. Imagine how many leaflets you'd have to pass out to get the animal savings of 650,000 fewer meat-based meals per week. Now I'm all about passing out leaflets. I love doing it; I do it myself and support those who do. But this is a supplemental, very efficient tactic to try to implement these institutional meat reduction policies, to get the major buyers of animal products to buy fewer animal products. And that's what we're doing at HSUS. And it's having a really tangible impact, not only on meat purchases from these institutions, but also supplying them with point of purchase materials so that the students or other diners at the cafeterias are seeing the reasons why people would enjoy meat-free eating and so on, so it's a huge benefit.

MARIANN: That's really exciting to hear, and that's really heartening work and really the kind of work that really can only be done by an organization that really has the power that HSUS has, so I'm so glad it's getting done. And I understand you're also doing some investing with some of the companies that are really putting forward some of these great meat alternatives?

PAUL: Yeah, we are. So Beyond Meat is a company that Bill Gates is not the only investor in. He is a coinvestor with the Humane Society of the United States, we're proud to say. So we're pretty heavily invested in Beyond Meat. We've also invested in the great restaurant chain, Veggie Grill, which is one of my favorite places to eat.

JASMIN: Yes!

PAUL: As some of your listeners may know, since you've had the wonderful Josh Balk, my longtime friend and colleague here at the Humane Society of the US, he cofounded Hampton Creek Foods, the company that is working to compete with the egg industry with plant-based egg replacement products. So HSUS is pretty heavily involved in the world of plant-based business and we're hoping to continue growing these businesses because quite frankly while we're sitting here working to reduce meat consumption through our institutional meatless Monday program as one example, these companies can also help accomplish that mission through their own ways of helping people make animal-friendlier choices in their diet.

JASMIN: Well, there you go again giving me hope. I didn't know it was possible. But you are constantly bringing up these things that make me so --

PAUL: I love that you didn't know it was possible that I would be capable of giving you hope. That sounds great.

JASMIN: That's not how I meant it. But it's true. The focus of for-profit ventures to change the world for animals by creating alternatives to animal products is huge.

PAUL: Totally.

JASMIN: And it's something that has intrigued us from the beginning. In fact, way at the beginning of Our Hen House, Mariann came home one day and said, "Let's start a blog." And I was like, "okay, what about?" And she said, "About all of the for-profit opportunities for change-making." And that was what -- it initially started with that, and then lots of other branches grew. But ever since then, which was over four years ago now -- we're in our fifth year -- that really has become more like a forest.

PAUL: Wow great.

JASMIN: I mean, there's so many opportunities and it's so exciting to hear about that.

PAUL: I love it. I mean, the power for business to actually be a force for good is so immense. Now, look, nobody knows better than we that businesses often can have a very detrimental impact on the planet, on animals, and on humans as well. But businesses can also do an enormous amount of good. Just think about history. Whales were being decimated by the whaling industry for their oil, until -- what was it, humane sentiment that stopped most whaling in the world? Now, there's still some limited whaling that goes on, but not nearly like what it used to be. And it wasn't. It was that we developed alternative ways to provide lighting for ourselves that didn't involve whale oil. Horses used to be far more numerous in our streets in a form of bondage by being the primary source of transportation for people. And it wasn't humane sentiment that freed horses from slaving away in the streets the way that they'd used to back in the 1800s. It was the internal combustion engine. And of course there are other problems that are caused by that, but it just goes to show that businesses can have a type of constructive destruction, that they can destroy one type of industry in exchange for creating another type. And I see that with, let's say, companies like Beyond Meat or companies like Hampton Creek Foods that are aiming to produce products that are functionally equivalent to chicken meat or chicken eggs but are cheaper. And when you've got -- let's say you're a good manufacturer and you have something that tastes and has the same texture as one product, but it's cheaper than that product, what do you think they're gonna go for? So I have tremendous hope in the power of businesses to do good in the world as well.

JASMIN: Yeah, absolutely. What's going on, Paul, internationally? Are there any signs of hope that at least the meat consumption will slow? I keep hearing things coming out of China and other countries that does the opposite of gives me hope. Can you rectify that for me?

PAUL: Yeah. It's a sobering look to look at what's happening in the world. So first the good news is that in many parts of Europe meat consumption is declining. People are eating more and more vegetarian food. However, in developing countries like China and India,

meat consumption is on the increase. And the basic rule of thumb is that when countries go from the developing world into the developed world, they eat more meat. As soon as people have access to more resources they start adding meat to their diets. Everywhere, including in the United States, that's what happened. And like I said, for the first time ever, we're seeing industrialized countries actually starting to decline in their meat consumption.

But these countries are indeed moving in the wrong direction on their meat consumption. They're moving in the right direction in terms of getting themselves out of extreme poverty, but a side effect of that is increased meat consumption. And so it's imperative that countries that act as cultural exporters -- you know, the US exports our culture all around the world, both through the entertainment industry and through many other ways as well -- it's important that we set a good example because it's not enough for us to tell these countries like China and India, no, you shouldn't increase your meat consumption, when our meat consumption is still many times higher than what theirs are. Even though we're going in the right direction now, we still have vastly more per capita meat consumption than they do. And so they feel like it's a bit of cultural imperialism for us to say, no, you can't eat as much meat as we do. So we need to look at ourselves in the mirror and reduce our own meat consumption, and of course encourage them to do the same and to encourage them not to go down the same wrong path that we went down with factory farming and sky high rates of animal consumption.

MARIANN: Yeah, it's a tough issue, but you manage to provide a little hope even there. And I totally agree with you that this country has been the leader in going down the wrong road. We have to start getting on the right road and showing some leadership there. It does seem that, at least here in this country, the industry is starting to notice what's happening. And as we like to say on Our Hen House, anxieties are rising amongst industry spokespeople. Do you see this? Are they scared of the animal protection movement, and how can you tell?

PAUL: Oh, God, I'll tell you. One of my pastimes is reading meat, egg, and dairy industry trade journals.

MARIANN: Me too! It's so much fun!

PAUL: Oh, nice, so we'll have to exchange notes.

JASMIN: You could start a Meetup group.

PAUL: Meetup: Vegans who read meat industry trade publications. Yeah, we'll have a membership of two.

JASMIN: It'll be called Vegan Meatup, vegan *meat* up. Never mind.

PAUL: Oh!

JASMIN: Get it?

PAUL: That's great!

JASMIN: Anyway, go on.

PAUL: Oh, all right. That will exist by the time this podcast is run, I'm sure. Anyway, they're obsessed. They are totally obsessed. They regularly write about us. They regularly deride

us. They regularly impugn us. They regularly fight against us. But the one thing they can't do is regularly defeat us. They're losing time and time again. For example, last year, they introduced ag-gag bills in 11 states, these bills designed to criminalize whistleblowing at factory farms and try to shut down undercover investigations by groups like HSUS and Mercy for Animals and Compassion Over Killing. And guess what. Out of all 11 of those bills that they introduced, we defeated every single one of them. Lawmakers are realizing that these type of efforts that are put forth by the meat industry to cloak their industry in a veil of secrecy are not good policy. And so we're defeating their bills despite the fact they're increasingly obsessed with fighting us. And they're vociferous, they're vitriolic in their campaigns against us. I can't tell you how many times I see them just so derisively referring to us and writing about us in their trade publications. And what I think to myself is this is an industry that's grasping at straws. This is an industry that wants to have no rules on how it operates and it wants to have no light shining in onto their practices. But as more and more Americans are learning about the routine abuses that farm animals endure, the outrage is getting greater and greater. And that's exactly what we're going to continue seeing, because the only way that factory farming remains as the status quo is because people are so unfamiliar with how their food is produced. And it's up to us to familiarize people with that very fact.

JASMIN: Yeah. It's something that we see as such a good sign. The meaner they get, the better I feel, to be honest.

PAUL: Yeah, I definitely -- I get a good laugh. My favorite are when they compare us to either Hitler or Stalin. I'll take either; they've done both. But that said, they're definitely my favorite one.

JASMIN: Well, what do you think scares them the most?

PAUL: Well, I've found in my own day that the things they dislike the most are legislation, litigation, corporate campaigns, and undercover investigations. I think that they really, really can't stand any of those. By corporate campaigns, I mean campaigns where you're getting major retailers to demand that their suppliers change their practices, or even to reduce their use of animal products in the first place. So, litigation, legislation, corporate campaigns, and undercover investigations seem to be at the top of their list. However, lately I have noticed they've started talking about groups also like Vegan Outreach, which don't do any of those. They mainly engage in leafleting. And folks like Dan Murphy, who's the executive director of the Meat Industry Hall of Fame -- yes, it exists, the Meat Industry Hall of Fame -- he's written at least two columns lately about Vegan Outreach, so I might have to add to those four now that they're also concerned about literature distribution as well.

JASMIN: Wow, that's amazing. Now, we saw in industry blogs, speaking of industry blogs, talking about the recent Tyson move on gestation crates, labeling it a move on Tyson's part to placate the animal rights movement, especially HSUS. How would you respond to that?

PAUL: Well, many in the pork industry were extremely upset by what Tyson did recently. Tyson Foods announced that they're merely encouraging their pork suppliers to get rid of gestation crates in the future. There's no deadline, there's no mandate, there's just an encouragement. Now, keep in mind, considering that Tyson Foods has been the main defender of gestation crates for years on end, certainly it's good progress. It's a step in the right direction. And I'm always about applauding people for taking the first steps rather than

punishing them for not yet taking the last step. But we didn't come out and sing from the rooftops about Tyson. What we said is that it's a good step in the right direction, that they need to do more, and that we welcome what they're doing and it's time to make it mandatory on their suppliers so they stop using gestation crates. So I don't think that Tyson was doing it as a way to try to please HSUS and quite frankly I doubt that they even care to do that. I do think, though, that Tyson looked at this wide range of major pork retailers -- McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Safeway, Denny's, Carl's Jr., Hardy's and more -- and they're all demanding an end to gestation crates. And so it's tough to continue defending a practice when all the major buyers are saying they don't want that practice anymore. So I think probably Tyson is more concerned about the people who are buying their pork than they are about the Humane Society of the United States. But I would never believe that I could possibly speak for them, so I'm just going based on my own speculation.

JASMIN: Got it.

MARIANN: So how long do you think it'll be before the gestation crate is a thing of the past?

PAUL: That's a great question. Making predictions is very difficult, especially when it involves the future. And so I would be surprised if we still had gestation crates beyond 2022 in our country, so eight years from now. That would be really surprising to me. Many of the major pork producers have announced that they would be done with them by 2017, and others have said 2022. These are really long time frames, but I believe that this will happen because the major retailers are demanding it. Some of the retailers are demanding it by 2015. So I think that you're looking at probably around eight more years before the final gestation crate is relegated to the dustbin of history. But it could happen a lot faster than that. A month ago, I would've said that it was impossible that Tyson Foods would be encouraging its suppliers to stop using gestation crates so soon, and it happened. I think even 10 years ago, people were thinking to themselves that as far as farm animals are concerned, we're in a pre-regulation phase, and now look at all the states that are starting to regulate factory farming practices. Most people a few years ago would've thought that having people like Bill Clinton and Al Gore touting the benefits of vegan eating would've been impossible or Oprah devoting an entire episode to vegan eating. These are types of things that few people would've believed five or ten years ago and now they're the reality. So I find it hard to make these type of predictions, but I'm very optimistic.

JASMIN: Yeah. We've said this before on the show, but at the end of our talks, I would say everyone who talks to us afterwards or who asks a question during the Q&A has been vegan for less than two years.

PAUL: Hah, wow.

JASMIN: Yeah. It's fascinating, and so something is happening. And speaking of which, you probably have a lot of supporters at HSUS who are not vegan.

PAUL: Sure.

JASMIN: What would you say is the vision of people who care about animals but don't imagine themselves not eating them, I'll say yet, because I don't know if people can grasp onto that?

PAUL: The pre-vegans.

JASMIN: Right, yeah, the pre-vegans. What is their endgame for how this should all look?

PAUL: Sure. So, HSUS obviously is a very big tent organization. It's by far the biggest animal protection organization both in the country and in the world. And you're absolutely right. Most of its membership is not vegetarian, let alone vegan. And HSUS is doing an enormous amount on an enormous number of issues, whether it's spay and neuter or whether it's promoting adoption of pets from shelters or whether it's combating the fur trade or cracking down on dog and cockfighting, combating shark finning, horse slaughter, factory farming, you name it. It's a huge enterprise, and so people find a home within HSUS for a variety of reasons. However, we need to keep in mind that HSUS is, like I said, a big tent organization that welcomes people whether they're vegetarian or not, but we're always encouraging people to strive to do better. We're always encouraging people to look at how we can lead an animal-friendlier life. So for example, to that end, every issue of HSUS's member magazine has a feature on vegan eating and cooking. Every week we send a meatless Monday recipe out to a huge list of interested members of ours who want to get a vegan recipe once a week. That goes out by both email and text message. We have all types of resources at humanesociety.org/meatfree. We disseminate tens of thousands of our HSUS Guide to Meat-Free Meals every year. If you go to humanesociety.org/recipes, you can see our vast free vegan recipe library. So the organization is doing quite a lot to try to encourage people to reduce their meat consumption. We're also of course, as I said earlier, working institutionally to reduce meat consumption, but we know that our own members want to lead animal-friendly lives. We're trying to provide them with the resources that they can use to help them do just that.

JASMIN: What do you think are the most important trends right now for farmed animals? Is it faux meats, which we were discussing? Is it legislation, corporate campaigns, healthy eating? Is it something else?

PAUL: I think that the biggest trend right now is that a lot of people who are vegans -- I mean, look, I've been a vegan for over 20 years. And a lot of us have really realized that encouraging meat reduction is saving more animals than trying to ask people to go all or nothing, that many people are far more likely to do something like a meatless Monday than they are to just, let's say, become a vegan overnight. And as a result of that, you're seeing a lot of groups encouraging meat reduction as a way to help animals. For example, Vegan Outreach publishes literature called "Even If You Like Meat" you can help stop this cruelty, encouraging people to be vegetarian half the time. And whether it's Mark Bittman's Vegan Before 6 or whether it's meatless Monday, I think that this trend of meat reduction is probably one of the biggest trends that we're seeing. BBC just last week did a great feature called "Rise of the Part-Time Vegans," where it's people who are primarily vegan, but not all of the time.

And as we were talking about earlier, these people, the so-called flexitarians or the part-time vegetarians, they're the reason why half a billion fewer animals are being raised, tortured, and killed every single year. It's not because of an increase in vegans or vegetarians. It's because of this increase in these so-called flexitarians. And so I think groups like the Humane League and Vegan Outreach and others are focusing a lot of attention on trying to increase that population as well. Still, of course, these groups like the ones I just mentioned -- Vegan Outreach, the Humane League -- they're still saying that being vegan is a great thing to do, but they're also trying to be welcoming to people and

helping reach them where they are rather than trying to pull them to some place where they're not.

JASMIN: Well, and frequently many of those people realize that it's easy and accessible and delicious and doable and satisfying and good for them and good for the planet and good for the animals. And I know a lot of people who are vegan who started out by just lowering their consumption, so that gives me hope in terms of this type of campaign.

PAUL: Yeah, I know many people who fall into that same category.

JASMIN: Yeah. Well, Paul, you fall into many categories and they're all lovely and wonderful and we just are so grateful to you for all that you do. And you continue to inspire us and the work you do continues to inform not only the animal rights movement but just so many aspects of change-making worldwide. And so we're so grateful to you for joining us once again on Our Hen House, and I hope you'll stay in touch with us, 'cause we could keep talking to you and make this like an eight-hour episode, but...

PAUL: I'm in!

JASMIN: Yeah, let's do it! We could sponsor some kind of cross-country road trip, and we could just talk throughout the entire thing, but anyway...

PAUL: Jasmin, I know that you're into marathoning, and so am I, so we could do our own Our Hen House marathons that people can listen to during their actual marathon experience.

JASMIN: Yes! I thought you meant that we would actually be running the marathon while we were doing it, which, no.

PAUL: Oh!

JASMIN: They say that you're supposed to be able to keep up a conversation while you're running, and that's how you know you're running at a good pace. But I'm not sure I'm quite up to that.

PAUL: I did the Marine Corps Marathon this past October, and the only conversation I remember having was in my own head wondering why I was doing this.

JASMIN: Well, if you tell me that I have to run 26 miles and after the 26 miles I will reach a Veggie Grill, then I am completely in because I am ready for that to come to the East Coast, I have to tell you.

PAUL: I'm a huge Veggie Grill fan, and I would gladly run at least 26 miles for that.

JASMIN: Excellent. Well, Paul, thank you so much. Big hugs to you, and I just look forward to staying on top of all of these exciting developments.

PAUL: You guys rock. Thank you so much, Jasmin and Mariann.

JASMIN: Thanks.

That was Paul Shapiro. Learn more at humanesociety.org.