

## **Community Purpose : *Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation***

*Southwest Oasis Sanctuary (SOS)*

*Officer Amanda Swinehart*

The Southwest Oasis Sanctuary (SOS) is located in Queen Creek, Arizona just north of the Gila River Indian Reservation where police officer, Amanda Swinehart, has worked for the last 10 years of her law enforcement career. Ofc. Swinehart has been in law enforcement since 2004 initially working with the Eagar Police Department where she frequently experienced herding cattle and horses off rural roads and highways then continued her career with the Pinal County Sheriff's Office, before settling in with the Gila River Tribal Police Department. She was hired at Gila River as a Tribal Police Ranger where she was responsible for enforcing Tribal, State, and Federal laws affecting people and wildlife. Duties included checking rural desert areas and historical sites to prevent illegal acts, conducting classes, giving informative tours describing different types of plants, historical sites and wildlife, carrying out restorative projects in desert areas, controlling the movement of wildlife (wild horse and burro populations) protect the bald eagle population, and ensure wildlife had access to water throughout the dry season (solar-well project).

During this assignment, she was forced to "dispatch" (law enforcement terminology for euthanize on site) many animals. Some, where she argued, still had a chance at medical recovery. Sharing pictures of the injuries with her daughter, Maryanna, a Veterinary Assistant who also went to a specialized Agribusiness and Equine High School, they discussed what they could have done for these animals. The Gila River Indian Community has animal control but does not have a facility to deal with the domestic horses people were abandoning on the reservation with the

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thought they would “join up” with the wild horse population. These horses were abandoned and starving to death, being attacked by the local reservation wildlife with no herd for protection.

Another sad situation is all the wandering, homeless reservation dogs. One evening, Ofc. Swinehart was blacked out in her unit watching a house under construction (due to theft of materials) and she heard an animal whimpering. She looked out her window and down on the ground was a tiny, skinny, starving puppy. She looked around for the mother, opened the door, still expecting an angry mother dog to jump out from somewhere, still nothing. She reached down, and the puppy practically jumped in her arms. The rest of her shift, the puppy stuck like Velcro to Ofc. Swinehart’s neck, even when responding to a nearby Domestic call, to back up officers, the puppy would not let go of her neck. As Ofc. Swinehart pulled up to the house with the Domestic disturbance, another officer walked up to Ofc. Swinehart’s window to advise her everything was code 4, only then did the puppy remove itself from Ofc. Swinehart’s neck to jump at the officer and bark as if it were being protective. This shocked both the officers, but was of course adorable at the same time coming from such a tiny puppy. The officers enjoyed a moment over the tiny pup and then Ofc. Swinehart left the scene to head to the nearest town to purchase puppy food and water. The puppy ate 4 bowls of food and drank an entire bowl of water until she was engorged.

Now typical protocol in a found dog situation would be to have dispatch call out animal control to come pick up the animal, it would then sit in their facility for three days waiting to be

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claimed, and if not, than euthanized. Ofc. Swinehart had a decision to make now that it was end of shift. Wait for animal control to come pick up this tiny puppy that would then go sit in a cold kennel and risk euthanasia, or just take her home to a warm bed and a loving family. Her name is now Izabella, Izzy for short, 3years old and **always** at Ofc. Swinehart's side when home.

Since that day, Ofc. Swinehart and her family have taken in horses, mini donkeys, goats, chicken, ducks and dogs in an effort to provide a safe haven where they may retire and spend their remaining years. Some are horses who can no longer be ridden due to leg or back injuries, some families could just no longer afford to keep.

Many of the farm animals rescued are brought to the Gila River Indian Community Police Department's Annual Halloween Carnival where Ofc. Swinehart sets up a "petting zoo" area for children, adults and the elderly to come and touch, visit with, and play with the animals that love the attention. The Great Pyrenees/ Maremma mix livestock protection dog is always a big hit purely because of his huge size and loveable temperament. The goats are loved by the elderly who like to share their stories of raising goats as a necessity for milk and food on the reservation when they were young. Rabbits, mini horses, chickens, and ducks, are all brought to the event. Wilbur the pig was a huge hit last year, but he recently found a loving home and was adopted out, which does happen at the Sanctuary when the right circumstances fit. There have been discussions of doing additional events throughout the seven districts throughout the year

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but that would take additional renting of trailers and the need for staff/volunteers. The Sanctuary will have to look into future funding/planning for those events.

The most recent rescue was the result of a Pinal County Sheriff's Office call to a dead body. An elderly woman had passed away and left behind her pets which her elderly sister had no idea how to care for. There was only enough food to last three more days and the elderly sister of the deceased did not have money to purchase additional food for the animals. Ofc. Swinehart immediately rented a trailer, grabbed her family and friends, and picked up the three mini donkeys and one mini stallion horse, ensuring the elderly sister that they were going to a loving sanctuary where she can visit anytime.

The rescue itself was a crazy affair, all four animals had never been out of their pen (there was no entrance, had to dismantle the fencing), never handled, hooves never trimmed, and were all being over fed sweet feed, so all three had huge fat deposits hanging from their necks. Even if their owner hadn't passed away, these animals were in need of rescue and in great need of medical attention! The mini stallion could not walk normal on his one back hoof due to the hoof over growth causing a club hoof, in turn shortening his tendons so he could not extend his leg out straight. He's in need of gelding but having his leg and hoof looked at by a veterinarian and farrier at the same time under x-ray has turned into a medical priority now. Until Ofc. Swinehart can afford to do so, he must be kept separated from the herd, in a stall with extra soft bedding.

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The oldest of the three mini donkeys' hooves were also so over grown they were curled up at the toe like elf shoes. The farrier had to use a wood saw to cut them off just to begin trimming Lucy's feet down. It was painful for her to walk before and still will be for awhile according to the farrier. When a horse's/donkey's hooves are not trimmed properly, it affects every part of their body. It's extremely important to keep their hooves trimmed every 8 weeks to keep them out of pain, especially the older ones. The Sanctuary currently has 15 horses/donkeys so the farrier must come over every other weekend to keep up with trimmings.

The Sanctuary's farrier had been Maryanna's mentor/teacher so she could keep up with the trimmings to save on costs, but the Sanctuary recently lost Maryanna to a military move. She was not only the Sanctuary's farrier apprentice but also the Vet Assistant, Horse Trainer and Barn Manager. Her move has been a huge loss for the Sanctuary. She has four horses of her own which the military would not pay for a newly enlisted soldier to take to a military base in Hawaii, so the Sanctuary cares for her horses until the military brings the family back home in three years.

These are just some of the stories of our residents at Ofc. Swinehart's Southwest Oasis Sanctuary (SOS). Ofc. Swinehart fully funds the sanctuary herself paying for the rental of the 14 acre facility, along with all feed and farrier bills. There are medical needs as well as the need for a trailer since Ofc. Swinehart must rent a trailer every time she facilitates a rescue as well as every October when she takes her petting zoo friendly animals to the Halloween Carnival at the

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Police Department. She has spoken to an attorney about incorporating into a 501c Non-Profit and has been quoted \$3000 in attorney fees.

If she was to be awarded the 1<sup>st</sup> place prize, it would be spent first on **medical needs for the mini stallion** then the remaining to incorporate as a Non-Profit 501c.

**Budget Narrative:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Veterinarian Services	Medical care of Dusty	1	\$1900
Farrier Services	Specialty hoof care – Dusty	1	\$100
Attorney Fees	To Incorporate as 501c Non-Profit	1	\$3000