



***Fellow Mortals™ Animal Hospital***

**“Active – Not Activists”**

Tuesday, April 6, 2004 was just an average day for most of us two-legged creatures in Wisconsin. However, for some of our four-legged friends it was a monumental day. Governor Doyle literally saved their lives when he signed SB503/AB916 (“Judith’s Law”) into law while Senator Kedzie, Representative Lothian and other supporters sighed with relief as countless hours of work resulted in this significant moment.

Just over an hour away in a rural country setting, a family of deer known as ‘Judith and her fawns’ were now granted a safe place to live at *Fellow Mortals Inc.*, a not-for-profit wildlife rehabilitation center where “*In healing, we are healed*” ® is a way of life.

This type of commitment inspires and actually takes over the lives of people like Yvonne Wallace Blane, Steve Blane, and other dedicated souls known as ‘rehabbers’. Yvonne and Steve are the co-founders of *Fellow Mortals*, which was founded on the belief that “a compassionate act on behalf of another living creature is one of the noblest deeds that can be performed by a human - reflecting something fine and rare that is the very essence of the human spirit.”

“People are surprised to learn that we ended up doing this as a result of my running over a nest of baby bunnies,” says Yvonne. Working in a legal office at the time, wildlife rehabilitation was not a lifelong dream but more the result of that “defining moment”. Saving the tiny bunnies affected the course of Yvonne and Steve’s lives and thousands of creatures since then.

Karen McKenzie came from Scotland to be a part of the team and is the only other permanent staff member. Three interns are carefully selected each summer to assist with daily operations.

The mission statement of *Fellow Mortals* states they are “committed to ethical, compassionate and professional wildlife rehabilitation”, and further states that this is “more than a place; it is a living philosophy based on the belief that encouraging compassion in humans toward all life brings out the finest aspects of humanity.”

Established in 1985 and incorporated in 1991, *Fellow Mortals* is one of the largest wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Wisconsin. The hospital admitted approximately 1,700 wild creatures in 2003, and released 50% of them back to the wild. All critical care is done on-site, with the generous support of several local veterinarian offices.

*Fellow Mortals* is especially proud of their average annual release rate of between 50 and 60%. Their release rate varies from year to year, depending on the age, species, and condition of the

animals admitted, but far exceeds the national average of 34% (reported in 1994 by the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association).

*Fellow Mortals, Inc.* is a charitable corporation organized under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. (This means your financial support is tax-deductible as a charitable contribution.) The staff provides care seven days a week, 365 days per year. Injured and orphaned animals have no holidays. *Fellow Mortals* does not receive funding from the any government agency, or tax dollars. Donations are the life-blood of the facility. *Fellow Mortals* is licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to care for native mammals from Wisconsin, and by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to care for migratory birds from Wisconsin and Illinois.

Their annual fundraising event is coming soon. The event sold out last year, so get your tickets early. The 'Fall Migration 2004' Dinner and Benefit Auction will be held on Sunday, November 7 at the renowned Riviera Ballroom on Lake Geneva's lakefront. Doors open at 4:00 and close at 9:00 p.m. Admission is \$45 per person or \$320 per table of eight. Children 12 and under receive a reduced rate of \$10 each. Tickets are available through the web site or Linda Christian at (262) 728-8180. All proceeds will go directly to support the activities of *Fellow Mortals Wildlife Hospital*.

What do those activities include? In the case of 'Judith and her fawns' mentioned earlier, the entire community was involved in saving the lives of these endangered deer. Due to the risk of CWD (Chronic Wasting Disease) most deer in captivity in Southern Wisconsin were to be euthanized.

"I'm just grateful the deer are alive," Yvonne told us. "It was never about politics for us, and never will be. We made a promise to these deer and we had to keep it. I'm grateful to everyone involved, especially Steve for making it happen."

Now that the paperwork has been signed, a huge amount of labor follows. Construction of the required larger habitat with strict fencing requirements is under way. The perimeter fence must prevent wild deer from contacting the small herd within, and the interior pens must include enough area to support regrowth of vegetation after browsing. Also, as the young bucks mature, it's important to have them separated during the rut season when they tend to become aggressive.

These immediate needs require hard work and generous financial support. Donations are now being sought for the estimated cost of almost \$50,000 to complete the required updates. Sam Bradt, Chairman of *Fellow Mortals Wildlife Foundation* will answer any questions you may have in regards to becoming a sponsor of this permanent habitat. Sam may be reached at (262) 966-7691.

In the event that a live test is eventually approved by the WDNR, the fawns may yet be released to the wild one day. In any event, this habitat will provide a permanent home for Judith and a safe enclosure for many species of animals that are rehabilitated daily at the facility.

"What are the other animals at *Fellow Mortals*?" you may ask. You name it! From squirrels, bunnies, and opossums to baby songbirds and full sized waterfowl and birds of prey, *Fellow*

*Mortals* receives injured and orphaned creatures of all shapes and sizes. At *Fellow Mortals* all creatures are treated with equal compassion, regardless of species. Animals brought in by the public remain on-site and under their watchful eyes from the time they are admitted until the time they are released.

Only Yvonne, Steve, Karen and the interns are allowed to work with the animals. The word 'Hospital' has recently been added to the name to reflect that this facility is unlike other animal shelter facilities. The wild creatures on site are injured or sick and must be treated just as any other patients in a hospital.

Yvonne, a kindhearted soul with soft teal eyes appeals to us all when she says "I hope people understand that it's for the safety of our patients that we must keep the habitats quiet and sanitary. We are caring for creatures in delicate condition, who we hope will eventually return to the wild. Though we'd like to interact with visitors, we need to focus on our patients and their environments. We can't accept visitors or interruptions without appointments any more than any other professional service facility can."

If you think you've found an orphaned baby animal, please follow the rule of 'Observe First - Act Second'. Mothers often leave their young for extended periods. It's always best to call your local Wildlife Rehabilitator before touching any animal. Keeping baby animals warm, safe and quiet is the best thing we can do until professional help is available.

You may be surprised to learn that one of the most major threats to baby wild animals is domestic cats. Contrary to popular belief, even the kindest most well-fed house cat will hurt wildlife. It's in their nature. They can't help it. We can. Please keep your pet cats indoors.

There is an unfathomable amount of work which goes into operating this or any wildlife hospital. Unlike other shelters which care for domestic animals who need human interaction, this type of facility can not take advantage of many volunteers. Wild animals can only be handled by specially trained professionals, since the ultimate goal is to release them back into their natural environments.

One secret to the success of *Fellow Mortals* is the ability to network with other wildlife rehabilitators throughout Wisconsin and Illinois, to strengthen all of the combined resources. "Networking for the good of the wild creatures in our care is one of the guiding principles of the wildlife rehabilitation profession," states Yvonne. "For example, we receive birds from all over the country, while we don't handle any raccoons or skunks and refer them to other specialists."

There are ways that volunteers can help, and we've included some in the sidebar. *Fellow Mortals* is grateful for donations such as medical supplies, building products, vehicles for safe transport and others. "Unfortunately what we need most is money," Yvonne sighed. "With \$300,000 we could complete all of our long term goals, but we take it one dollar at a time."

Due to the high demand on the few staff members available, *Fellow Mortals* is not open to the public without an appointment. They are located at W4632 Palmer Road in

Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; the telephone number is (262) 248-5055. A wealth of information can be found on the organization's comprehensive web site at: [www.fellowmortals.org](http://www.fellowmortals.org)

***SIDEBAR:***

**How can you help Fellow Mortals?**

- Choose *Fellow Mortals* (organization #226000) as one of your favorite charities for the local Pick 'n Save "We Care" program. This program automatically contributes a percentage of your grocery purchases to the facility at no additional cost to you.
- *Wall Street Journals* are needed for cage papering. Please drop off used WSJ's near the gate on any dry day.
- Contact *Fellow Mortals* if your organization is looking for a service project and would be willing to take on the responsibility of managing the collection of *Wall Street Journals*
- Purchase raffle tickets for the November 7 fundraiser. Mail your check (\$2 each or 6/\$10) payable to Fellow Mortals and they will mail your tickets prior to the drawing.
- Donate an LCD projector for presentations to the elderly and other groups.
- Build squirrel boxes according to the simple plans provided by *Fellow Mortals*. Or help climb into trees and install the boxes on release days.
- Sew cage pads and pillows, or donate faux fur to keep wildlife patients warm and comfortable.
- Send *Fellow Mortals* a gift card for a local grocery or retail store to help them purchase necessary supplies.