



VALLEY OF THE KINGS
SANCTUARY AND RETREAT

The Pug Mark

VALLEY OF THE KINGS

Winter 2025-2026



President's Corner

It's hard to believe Fall is already here. The months fly by so very fast, it's difficult to keep up with the rush of each day.

We have been busy putting up fencing and readying a new large pasture for the emus and a new larger stall in our old hay barn that is insulated, walls of ¾" treated plywood and electricity. A new Catio is being built for street kittens that come in vetted, spayed or neutered, but are too small to release. The area renovated for the kittens, as well as another area for ferals, will have air conditioning during the hot summers and heating for warmth in the sometimes brutally cold Winters here in Wisconsin.

We are in the process of removing old enclosures and building new enclosures, however lack of funding has prevented us from moving forward with much needed renovations. So, we are slowly making progress utilizing workdays the 2nd Saturday of each month until November. All are welcome to help, member or not. Workday hours are 9am until ? We will provide a variety of sandwiches, chips, sodas, bottled spring water and coffee, Treats will also be available. Please come and help us if you can.

Recently purchased treated lumber alone cost us \$3000.00+. The cost of all building supplies has skyrocketed in price with the tariffs now imposed. We purchase shavings locally and now available only in small amounts

because they come from Canada. We use 100 bales of shavings every month. The cost of cement for ongoing building projects is over \$30,000.00. We are making payments as quickly as possible. Note: If anyone would like to sponsor any of our building projects for a \$5000.00 tax-deductible donation, a plaque will be put up in your honor. We have one semi-trailer full of hay and another full of straw to last through the winter months we have yet to pay for; fortunately, our supplier is local and sympathetic to our cause and saves a supply for us each year. Alas, the cost of this too is increasing every year. This coming year our cost will be above \$8000.00.

Operating the Sanctuary is extremely expensive: \$20,000 per month must cover paid staff for animal care, grain, shavings, hay, canned and dry cat and dog food, insurance, electricity, propane, veterinary bills, prescription diets for our senior animals and special feed mixes, diesel fuel and gasoline, landfill fees, our CDL driver, etc. The cost of all these items keeps rising every year. We are very concerned about the future of The Sanctuary with funding down for all non-human animal rescues. Many are closing their doors due to lack of needed funding to operate. To put it bluntly, the cost for everything is increasing and income is barely keeping up.

In Memory of our Beautiful Tiger Tia



June 24, 2025, our sweet, beautiful tiger Tia crossed the Rainbow Bridge. Tia arrived at the Sanctuary at 1½ years of age. She passed at 19 years, having suffered from renal failure. The heartbreak of her loss has greatly affected us all and the void left from her passing is felt as we walk past her now empty enclosure each day. Tia came from Georgia, where, as a cub, she posed with anyone for the almighty dollar to support her then owner. Then, when she became too large and a liability, she would be sent to whomever would take her (in some cases, sent off to an anonymous highest bidder). Luckily for Tia, she wound up at a sanctuary in the area: at least for a while. The sanctuary fell on hard times when the 2008 economy crashed, so they contacted us and asked if we could take two of their tigers if we had room. We drove down with our rescue trailer and picked up not only Tia, but a white tiger we would come to call Oxsana, who sadly, would pass from cancer a few years later. Tia was paired with our golden tabby tiger Assam. Love at first sight. They became inseparable. Later in life, Assam would need multiple surgeries by Dr. Rudawski to remove cancerous growths from his cheek. Months later, he finally lost his battle with cancer. Assam was from the Naples Zoo in Florida. They've sent us a few large cats throughout the years. When Assam died, Tia struggled and had a very hard time adjusting. She began pacing. Anxiety medications did not help, and we did not have another cat we could pair her with at the time, so we decided to move her to another enclosure which settled her anxiety and seemed to be the solution for her well-being. Tracy Haymaker sponsored Tia for many years: she was sponsored by Dr. Firdaus Hashim and Aref Khwaja the last few years of her life.

In Memory of our Beloved Boo Bear

Boo bear passed suddenly, Wednesday, July 30. He is missed beyond measure as his death was a shock to us all. It's a good way to pass, suddenly, be it animal or human. Boo was an older bear, in his late teens or early twenties. Most of his claws were deformed, turned upward or sideways or curled like a pig's tail. We're not quite sure if his previous owner tried to declaw him or if some other horrible malady caused it. Boo was so very sweet. His sponsor, Mary Kay Miekina, visited him quite often as she sat on the bench in memory of her late husband Tom Miekina. This June Mary lost her beloved son, Michael, to heart failure. Such sad times for animals and humans. We picked up Boo with other bears from Banks, Alabama in 2017. He spent his life with Pooh bear in a tiny space with 2 wooden boxes, 4ft. x 3ft. each, their source for drinking water being a small PVC pipe with a pig nipple on the end. Their "pool" was a circular concrete dimple in the ground, 3ft. in diameter with 3 inches of algae-covered water in the bottom. After having loaded Boo and Pooh bear and getting ready to leave, the grizzly bears there were hanging onto their enclosure with broken boards absolutely crying for us to take them too. We agreed to take the remaining bears very soon. After we returned, we raised funds for constructing their pens: a 4ft. deep foundation wall surrounding the enclosure and 10ft. high chain link panel walls and roof, built and installed by Lemke Fence in Jefferson, Wisconsin in record time. Large, insulated houses were added with a total cost of \$120,000.00 plus. After the new pens were completed, we then drove back to Alabama to pick up the 4 grizzlies. Now, all the bear friends have a great life at The Sanctuary. We are extremely grateful for generous donors and workers for being able to save all six bears from a brutal, depressing environment.



Are you looking for a way to help the sanctuary financially, but don't know how? PayPal is a secure internet-based way to send and receive money. All you need is an email address and a credit card/Checking account. Anyone can use PayPal to buy gift shop items, buy or renew memberships, or donate money to the sanctuary. To use PayPal, simply log onto www.paypal.com. You will have to set up your own personal PayPal account (it's free), then click on "send money". Enter our email address info@votk.org for general contributions to VOTK. If you send us a donation, please indicate whether it is for our general fund or a specific project. Enter the amount you wish to send. The sanctuary will then get an email, informing them of your donation. It's a quick and easy way to make a difference to the sanctuary, even if you can't make it up to see us every weekend!! If you write us a check for a donation, please note on the check whether it is for something specific or for general fund. Help us to give the animals all they deserve and more by creating a safe haven and true Sanctuary for all eternity.

In Memory of Dario



Dario, one of our beautiful alpacas, was humanely put to sleep August 30th. He became ill the week before and did not respond with aggressive treatment. He had meningeal worms in his brain, which is common in deer, pigs, bears, alpacas and the type of worm Robert Kennedy Jr. had in his brain. It's very rare and lethal. Our remaining alpacas were all treated for it and appear normal. This has been a heartbreaking year. Dario will be dearly missed. He was a beautiful light brown. We are having all the alpaca fibers that were shaved milled into yarn and dryer balls to prevent lint buildup and will be for sale in our gift shop.

In Memory of Dilbert and Lifetime Members

On July 24th, we lost one of our beloved goats to kidney failure. Dilbert was a Boer Breed and a favorite with everyone who met him. Elkhorn Veterinary Services Vet, Dr. Tucker went through heroics for 3 days to give him more time. Sadly, it wasn't meant to be. Volunteers Stephanie and Anthony saved him from certain death as a youngster. Dilbert had a great life here with his goat friends and being spoiled by volunteers.



Sadly, many of our Lifetime Members have passed this year: Michael Miekina, Sue Bond, Bobbie Meredith, Bernice Snyder, Pat Berquist, and Al Lange.

...Please Consider The Sanctuary

Please consider estate planning in your Estate Planning, so the Sanctuary can continue well after you've passed. Our financial advisor, Jack Simpson, with RAYMOND JAMES in Milwaukee: Jack.Simpson@RaymondJames.com or 414.935.4190, will gladly help you with the arrangements. We have information concerning Legacy Giving on our website WWW.VOTK.Org.

Needs, Needs, Needs

The Sanctuary needs canned and dry cat and dog food, clumpable cat litter, 9" dia. paper plates, paper towels as an endless supply of all the above for our huge feral cat population, foxes, bears and wolves. We can also use outdated human food for the bears, frozen venison, beef, chicken, turkey and rabbit (for Ti-Ler and some small exotic cats. We do not feed pork, seasoned or cooked meats. Please check your freezers for outdated meat. Volunteers are sorely needed seven days a week to help care for all the animals...we were extremely short-staffed during Covid and have never truly recovered and now due to the present economy and higher prices at the stores we're playing catch-up. If you're interested in volunteering, please text Jill at: 262-206-1401.

The bears need fresh fruits and veggies daily. On Saturdays, a local food bank donates leftover produce and other food items. We are always in search of local grocery stores to donate food for the bears too. Hansen's Market in Elkhorn donated two large totes of watermelon!

We are extremely grateful to everyone who helps keep the Sanctuary going. We have been saving multiple species for fifty-two years and our work will continue with all our wonderful members, volunteers and staff, who give a voice to those who had none. Unwanted misfits find their way here and are given a second chance at life daily to feel the comfort of peace, food and care by "humane" beings.

Cancer

Cancer is appearing in human and non-human animals at a record pace. Could it be that all our food is contaminated with herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers and chemicals? Why are nano-particles being found in our brains and blood. We previously lost animals to old age, heart or kidney issues, but now the major killer is cancer. Our big beautiful male Maine Coon housecat Dembai, was humanely put to sleep by Dr. Rudawski. Dembai could barely breathe from having a fast-growing mass on his upper palate, almost completely blocking his trachea. Dr. Rudawski tried to debulk the mass, but it was just too large and deep to save him. It seems that no matter what food brand, natural, organic or whatever, it is contaminated with cancer-causing agents. Kya, our fox recently had a malignant mass removed from her leg. Duffy, our Great Pyrenees, also had a malignant mass removed. It doesn't seem to matter what we feed or eat, the water we drink, the items we use daily, cancer will rear its ugly head! Both canned and dry pet food are cooked down. The animals that have been euthanized: dogs cats, cows, horses and pigs go into pet food. The euthanizing solution does not leave the body as it is absorbed into tissue and is the number one cause cancer. Processed packaged big cat food has all been laced with charcoal or green slime to guarantee humans do not eat it! It is expensive, gross and kills cats big and small.

VOTK in the News

Recently, there was a documentary done on the Sanctuary that was released and produced by 'Your Every Day Heroes'. You may find it at: <https://youreverydayheroes.com/video/jill-carnegie-taking-in-tigers/>

Please be sure to share and share again. There is another video that was done last year by Leroy Koetz :

<https://vimeo.com/780169877>

Please share both videos with your friends, family and those you think would like to see them. We are very grateful these wonderful people highlighted the Sanctuary.

Ivy Shirt Fundraiser

We have Ivy T-Shirts available in our gift shop, and available to be shipped. They are \$20 and shipping is an additional \$3.25 each. We currently have an ample supply of Medium, Large, and Extra Large in stock. Please order via PayPal and note size, and shipping address.



We are in need of canned and dry cat food any brands [but prefer friskies] for our rescued feral cat colonies. We go through a skid of each, every month.



What We Do and Do Not Do

We do educate the public about animal abuse and bring awareness to public schools, university's and special groups.

We do feed our animals 365 days a year, we do not believe in fasting them.

We do educational programs with videos and educational materials.

We do not believe in taking any of our animals to programs or fund raisers.

We do not sell our mailing list or share it with other organizations. We do not believe in professional fundraisers. They take 90% to 98% of funds raised from organizations.

We do believe in raising funds the traditional way, through members' help and local fundraising events.

Unfortunately we do not receive any State or Federal funding. The Sanctuary is funded 100% through tax deductible donations from our dedicated members.

Our Smaller Souls

All our feral cats are spayed, neutered, tested, vaccinated and microchipped. There are few rescues where feral cats can live out their days. We have many seniors, some 20 years of age and older. The incredible thing about feral cats is once you've gained their trust and they allow you to stroke and pet their fur, then care for them, you've gained a friend for life. They are beyond grateful for getting some attention, care and love for the remainder of their lives. Many have gone to indoor homes and do not wish to be outside ever again. Feral cats, turned friendly, are the best cats ever! Small cats, like large cats, have similar personalities. So much so that your domesticated house cat shares 95.6 % of tiger DNA! Both live for love and attention. Large cats, like their smaller house cat cousins, love to play with and climb into cardboard boxes. Cats are crazy for boxes...and toys, small, large and very large. Big cats love Boomer Balls; small cats love fuzzy balls, balls that make noise and balls with treats in them. Both cats stalk their "prey", chase and play. Think of your house cat as a tiger, only in a smaller package!

The Big Cat Safety Act was signed into law in 2021 that prevents public contact, cub petting, private ownership and any exploitation of big cats. The Act also prohibits private breeding and transfer across state lines, except to zoos and sanctuaries like Valley of the Kings. The passage of this act has been a blessing virtually closing the big cat industry in the United States. Unfortunately, Mexico, our neighbor to the south with whom we share a border, has seen an explosion in big cat private breeding and ownership. Drug cartels seem to be the worst abusers, starving and abusing big cats causing horrible deaths to these sentient beings. The star of the "Tiger King" debacle is currently serving a long prison sentence, which he justly deserves. However, his partner, Jeff Lowe, who served a shorter prison sentence, is residing in Mexico...on a thirty-five-acre ranch teeming with big cats! It's beyond heartbreaking that the abuse continues in Mexico, with no laws or safety net to save any of these cats! No words can describe the sadness of knowing the fate of those cats. Please take the time to send a letter, an e-mail or even a text asking the Mexican Government to enact laws to protect big cats and others and strictly enforce them. One voice can make a difference!

Contact:

Chamber of Senators, Paseo de La Reforma 135, esq, I Colonia Tabacalera, Delagacion Cuau, Ciudad de Mexico, C.P. 06030 Mexico

Thank you so very much, from all the creatures at Valley of the Kings Sanctuary and Retreat.

Workdays/Projects Volunteer Help

We are in the process of preparing animal enclosures, and the animals, for the onset of colder weather. Workdays are the 2nd Saturday of the month, 9 a.m. until ?, and are open to anyone who wishes to come and help. Sandwiches, treats, soda and water is provided. We also have campfires in the colder months. If you wish to commit to help, please contact Shirley Combes:

AdmVOTK1021@gmail.com. It's been wonderful meeting people, making new friends and moving forward with much needed projects.

Photos



Sleepy Grizzlies,



Ollie



Nutmeg



Kabokey

Happy furry friends!



Boo



Peaches

Wishlist

Below are our most needed wishlist items

- Wet and Dry Cat Food (any brand)
- Clumping Cat Litter (any brand)
- Wet Dog Food (any brand)
- Wheelbarrow Trays Heavy Duty 6 Cubic Feet, plastic (trays only)
- Gift Cards (Fleet Farm, Farm&Fleet, Tractor Supply Co, Menards, Walmart, Chewy)
- Cat Trees (big and small)
- Igloo Dog Houses (medium/large)
- Heated Water Hoses (any length)
- Heated 2.5 Gal and 5 Gal buckets
- Outdoor Heated Cat Houses
- Heavy Duty Extension Cords (any length)
- Paper Plates 9" (any brand)
- Blankets and towels (clean gently used)
- Heavy Duty Utility Ice Sleds for winter chores

Valley of the Kings Sanctuary and Retreat

Yes

I want to give a VOTK membership to a very special friend. I am enclosing \$ _____ for:

- _____ 6-month Membership(s) @ \$75 each
- _____ 6-month Family Membership(s) \$100
- _____ 1-year Membership(s) @ \$150 each
- _____ 1-year Family Membership(s) \$200
- _____ 6-month Senior Membership(s) @ \$37.50 each
- _____ 1-year Senior Membership(s) @ \$75 each

Please send a note card to announce my gift. YES NO
Senior Membership fees also apply to Military Veterans.

Send this form, along with your check to:
Valley of the Kings Sanctuary and Retreat
W7593 Town Hall Rd.
Sharon, WI 53585-9728

Website: www.votk.org Facebook:
facebook.com/votkbigcats



Gift to: _____ **Name:** _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Gift from: _____ **Name:** _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Calendars



VOTK 18-month Calendars (Jan 2026-June 2027) with photos of many of our animal residents. The photos were taken by our dedicated volunteer Carol. \$15 plus \$3.25 Shipping each. Featuring gorgeous photos to be recycled into framed photos, and used for other crafts to be cherished well after June 2027.

Our on site Gift Shop has many items for your loved ones both two and four legged. Members, be sure to stop in for a peek and maybe leave with a little something special during your next tour. We are extremely grateful for your support.



We here at Valley of the Kings wish you all a Wonderful Holiday Season and a Great Happy New Year. May the angels wrap their golden wings of love and protection around each one of you and keep you safe and healthy this year and the new year to come. Please keep all of us here in your thoughts and prayers too. Thank you!

Love and Extra Big Holiday Hugs,

Jill, Jim and Animal Friends