

To Marne, With Love...

Majical Miniatures Names New Educational Center for Marne Weiss of Animals by Nature

With the September closing of Animals by Nature/Tree of Life Club, owned by Marne Weiss of Sarasota, most animal lovers in the area will agree that there now is an immeasurable void in our local pet community.

For the past three years, Marne has given us not only a unique and colorful place to shop for all of our pets' needs, but, even more importantly, she has provided a welcoming gathering place for the many seminars, meetings, classes, play dates, fund-raisers and other community events she tirelessly organized.

While Animals by Nature's closing has undeniably affected us all, its impact has been hardest on the many area animal groups that have always been beneficiaries of Marne's generosity. During her three years in business, she has donated thousands of dollars in supplies and in funds raised to support rescue efforts in our community.

Majical Miniatures of Parrish is one of those groups.

"A place where second chances are born," Majical Miniatures is a 501 (c) (3) animal rescue and rehabilitation sanctuary owned by Ariyana Saint Jennings, who started the nonprofit organization nearly seven years ago on five-and-a-half acres of property in Myakka City.

Unlike other area animal groups, Majical Miniatures rarely takes in dogs and cats, but focuses instead on farm animals,

wildlife and exotics that have been orphaned, abandoned, injured or neglected.

There are turkeys and turtles, horses, donkeys and deer, birds and bunnies, wallabies and even kangaroos. All kinds of exotic animals and wildlife also are taken in, named and given a home.

The mission at Majical Miniatures is to provide a nurturing environment, along with necessary medical care, when needed. The emphasis is on "repairing bodies" without diminishing the bird or animal's spirit, so that each creature, when ready, can be released back into the wild.

Those that cannot be rehabilitated will spend their final years in loving surroundings at the sanctuary.

About three years ago, Ariyana purchased a larger parcel of property and moved Majical Miniatures to Parrish.

For both Ariyana and Jan Doherty, who serves as Majical Miniatures' vice president, their work with the animals at Majical Miniatures is supposedly part-time,

although it demands long and often exhausting hours. They both hold other jobs to pay personal bills and expenses, but their true passion is helping animals.

And like other rescue groups in our community,



Pictured above, Marne Weiss of Animals by Nature and her daughter, Bre. Photo by April Stout

Majical Miniatures must rely on fund-raisers, in-kind donations and grants to meet the medical and nutritional needs of the animals in its care.

It is because of the overwhelming generosity of a local bank in Parrish that Majical Miniatures is now able to realize its vision of establishing an on-site educational center.

According to Jan, "We have always wanted to have a building that could be used as educational center and a place to host seminars. Although we do conduct tours of the property, we never have had a meeting place where adults and/or children could gather."

To the rescue: First Manatee Bank of Parrish, who had a commercial modular building that the bank had used as a temporary structure while its new branch was under construction.

"The building originally was leased to someone else, but the deal fell through," Jan says. "Members of the board at the bank knew that we were looking for a building, so the bank has leased it to us.

"First Manatee Bank has been very, very good to us," Jan adds. "They have provided all of the awnings, the PVC and fencing, as well as the 1,950 square-foot



At left, the building that temporarily housed First Manatee Bank of Parrish is now The Marne Weiss Animals by Nature Care & Education Center. Photo courtesy of Majical Miniatures

building that was built to withstand winds of 130 miles per hour.”

Moving the structure to Majical Miniatures’ property in Parrish this past summer was not without its challenges and frustrations. In addition to the exorbitant expenses involved, there were permit tie-ups, problems compacting the dirt on the property and other issues.

After months of arduous work, the building is finally in place on the property.

But donations are desperately needed to help Majical Miniatures realize its vision.

“The building eventually will house offices, a gift shop and a meeting area where we can hold a variety of seminars, classes, meetings and programs,” Jan says. “We want to be able to teach people of all ages about caring for exotic animals and wildlife. We especially want to help educate children about caring for wildlife, so that they can go home and share what they have learned with their parents.”

The plans for the new education center also include conducting walking tours behind the building, where, one day, with the skill of a master gardener, there will be beautiful butterfly gardens.

When it came time to choose a name for the new education center, there was no question whom Majical Miniatures wished to honor.

“Ariyana first met Marne Weiss when Animals by Nature was located on the cor-

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ner of 12th Street and Tuttle Avenue,” Jan says. “Since then, she has given us food and supplies for our horses, ferrets and exotics, never asking anything in return.

“Marne has been so good to everybody,” Jan adds. “She is so giving; her heart has always been in the right place.”

This summer, when Marne was diagnosed with cancer and made the heart-breaking decision to close Animals by Nature, the first thought among the staff and volunteers at Majical Miniatures was, “What can we do to support Marne?”

And so, the decision unanimously was made to name the new building “The Marne Weiss Animals by Nature Care & Education Center.”

“We all agreed that this was the perfect thing to do in Marne’s honor,” Jan adds. “Our new center, which will become a valuable information and educational resource within the local animal community, epitomizes all that Marne has

selflessly offered within the past three years.”

Marne recently visited Majical Miniatures for the first time with her daughter, Bre.

“Marne is so good with animals,” Jan comments.

“As she toured the property, the animals were just drawn to her.

“We hope that when Marne is feeling up to it that she will spend time here at Majical Miniatures and work with us in the educational center,” Jan adds. “She is welcome to hold all of the seminars, classes and workshops that she previously hosted at the store here. We want Majical Miniatures to be her home away from home.”

If you are interested in making a donation to The Marne Weiss Animals by Nature Care & Education Center in honor of all that Marne has given—and continues to give—to the community, please send a check to Majical Miniatures, 16502 Golf Course Road, Parrish, FL 34219. ❀ —CTB