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Clinic For Injured Wildlife Opens Noah's Ark Gets New Home In Broadneck

Ted and Velvet Kitzmiller might not have a partridge in a pear tree or even three French hens, but they do have about 60 other wild animals for the holiday season.

The owners of Noah's Ark Wildlife Center are looking after the menagerie in their new home on the Broadneck Peninsula, which celebrated its formal opening yesterday.

"It's excellent," said Mr. Kitzmiller, while guarding a door to a room where several easily stressed animals had been placed away from the roughly two dozen visitors.

A peek inside another room revealed some of the success stories the Kitzmillers produce.

A small chipmunk scampered about his cage, recovering from a cat bite on the head, while a couple of squirrels chattered from their tree-trunk roots.

The Kitzmillers hope to release them all back into the wild once they're healed.

Mrs. Kitzmiller said the center has a 50 percent success rate, with adults faring much better than newborns. The latter suffer about a 90 percent mortality rate.

"Wildlife is not like a cat or a dog," Mrs. Kitzmiller said. "Car rides are not a normal thing for them. There is a high risk of dying from stress. But we're here now and we're able to continue doing what we're doing."

The couple ran the non-profit Noah's Ark out of their rented home in Pasadena from 1995 until last August, after their landlord wanted the property back to rent to a niece.

Thus began a furious hunt for a suitable location to house the Kitzmillers, their dogs and all the animals they'd begun caring for.

Anne Arundel County offered the farmhouse and about 3 of the 14 acres, which it has bought in 1998 for \$500,000. The rest of the site has been set aside for a planned equestrian center.

The Kitzmillers, who rely on donations to keep going, signed an \$850-a-month, three-year lease for the property and began moving their menagerie in – with a lot of help. They opened in August 2001.

Koch Homes donated about \$45,000 worth of labor and materials to turn a 1,200 square foot garage into six rooms where two veterinarians volunteer to perform exams, surgery and follow-up care. Other volunteers perform administrative and custodial work.

Yesterday, the clinic was dedicated to Dave Davidson, whose company D&G Containers, Inc., donated 50,000 boxes and trucks to help the Kitzmillers move from Pasadena to Arnold.

Mr. Davidson died shortly before the Kitzmillers moved.

County Executive Janet S. Owens, who attended yesterday's ribbon-cutting, said her administration is committed to keeping the Kitzmillers on the land, despite initial grumblings from some who argued the county broke its contract with the farm's former owner, Elizabeth Ann Gleaves.

The 1998 sale agreement called for the county to use the farm as equestrian space and for the expansion of Broadneck Park.

Citizens for the Andy Smith Equestrian Center opposed Ms. Owens' plans to build a ballpark on the property.