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Subject: FL: PHOTOS: Shy Wolf Sanctuary's new 20-acre site
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PHOTOS: Shy Wolf Sanctuary hopes to turn new 20-acre site into better home for its animals in need

- By [KELLY MERRITT](#)
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Nancy Smith, founder of the Shy Wolf Sanctuary, gives a kiss to Chocowa, a gray wolf who lives at the sanctuary, a two and a half acre piece of land off of White Boulevard. Former sanctuary volunteer Susan Cabot Rather died and left \$120,000 to the sanctuary. Sanctuary board of directors used the money in April to purchase 20-acres of land on Dove Tree Street in the Golden Gate Estates to be the future site of the sanctuary.

[Shy Wolf Sanctuary has new 20-acre site](#)





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1161 27th Street SW, Naples

Helping Shy Wolf

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NAPLES — The volunteers at Shy Wolf Sanctuary spend a lot of time these days planning. Planning and hoping that the community which has long supported them will continue to come to the aid of nearly 60 animals in their care.

Plans are underway to relocate most of the sanctuary from its current, cramped 21/2-acre quarters to a new 20-acre property the sanctuary was recently able to obtain. Susan Cabot Rather bequeathed the funds for the Sanctuary to purchase the new land, which will be named in memory of her. The full name will be the Shy Wolf Sanctuary Education and Experience Center in Memory of Susan Cabot Rather.

But first, the board of directors must obtain the funding required to make the move.

The Shy Wolf Sanctuary rescues, houses and cares for wolves, wolf-dog hybrids, panthers and a variety of other unwanted animals neglected or abandoned by previous owners. Its purpose is to provide a place for these animals to live out the rest of their often difficult lives. There are about 40 volunteers — and no paid employees — at Shy Wolf.

"As long as they have a good quality of life, we'll take care of them," said Mark Scarola, a volunteer and member of the board of directors. "We're the last resort for these incredible animals who would otherwise be put down."

The cost of rescue services, vet bills, and basic sanctuary upkeep is staggering, costing more than \$108,000 annually. One of the wolves named Timka came to the rescue from west of Gainesville. She had been used for breeding and left to die on an 8-by-10 foot slab of concrete. It took Shy Wolf volunteers three weeks to encourage Timka to stand on her own.

When the Sanctuary took in two wolf pups and Timka came to life. The pups gave Timka the purpose she needed to live.

Another wolf in the Sanctuary's care named Julie had been purchased for use in a television show. The man who purchased Julie tried to sell her. When he couldn't make money on Julie, he dumped her at a Brooksville rescue shelter that subsequently went out of business. Shy Wolf Sanctuary stepped in to rescue Julie, who is slowly recovering from her ordeal.

"Whatever happened to Julie scared her half to death and it was so deeply embedded in her psyche, and all this time, she has not been able to be anywhere near a man," said Shy Wolf Sanctuary board president Nancy Smith.

"We believe she was whipped or yanked or possibly beaten but she is making great strides to be rehabilitated."

The wolves live securely in enclosures with 8-foot fences and dig wire, which prevents them from tunneling out. Five foxes, five Florida panthers, six prairie dogs, a few tortoises and two rabbits also share space at the Sanctuary. These panthers were also born and raised in captivity, without learning hunting or protection skills, so they, too, cannot survive on their own in the wild.

Like wolves, big cats appear to have a close connection to nature.

"Kiowa, one of the big cats at the Sanctuary, reacted to Hurricane Charlie before it hit," said Smith. "She began pacing frantically and agitated, like she was trying to get away from something and then suddenly, she stopped pacing." Smith said she knew the storm wasn't going to hit Naples when Kiowa suddenly lay down and became instantly relaxed.

The wolves, however, are the main focus of the shelter's care. Some of them are nearing the end of their lives; others are recovering from horrific treatment at the hands of humans. The Sanctuary is also caring for several wolf puppies rescued from an accidental breeding incident in the Florida Panhandle.

"The owner separated the litter of nine pups from their mother too soon, which suppressed their immune system development and we took in four of those puppies," said Smith. "Vet bills for the pups have exceeded \$7,500 so far, and that's because they require such extensive care." Treatment for the pups has included blood transfusions, medication, and extended stays at the emergency vet clinic.

The addition of the pups to the Sanctuary brings the number of wolves there to 36. For the new facility the Sanctuary will need to raise \$2 million in donations and in-kind services.

"In addition to monetary contributions, we would love to receive in-kind donations to sponsor various projects that will be required to make the move a reality," said Scarola. "We're asking businesses who can help to please consider donating their services for things required to run the facility."

Some of those needs include contracting services that would help the Sanctuary navigate the process of working with the county for permitting purposes, fencing, staff housing, infrastructure improvements, labor for building enclosures and installing other building structures, electrical contracting and veterinary services. The list goes on.

Scarola says the Sanctuary will also need kitchen equipment, including freezers and refrigerators. The volunteers feed the animals four times a week, a massive undertaking that requires hours of messy manual labor.

Many of the volunteers, including Smith, must regularly cut up dozens of large containers of raw chicken and meat to prepare the more than 3,000 pounds of meat per month the animals consume. That does not include the greens volunteers procure for the turtles and other animals who require roughage in their diets.

Property maintenance is also a considerable expense for the sanctuary.

Something as simple as a donation of a lawn mower makes a big difference in the operating budget, Scarola says. He hopes someone will come forward to donate a new workshop, such as a prefab structure at the new property to store equipment and supplies. Partners and donors will be able to sponsor enclosures and individual wolves among other opportunities to give. The sanctuary is a 501(c)3 organization.

Smith says she hopes that, with help from local universities and contractors, the new Shy Wolf facility can be entirely green. Solar power is an option the group is exploring.

The move cannot come fast enough for the staff and animals that have outgrown the current space. The new facility will enable the Sanctuary to rescue more unwanted animals and increase the common space, among other needs.

With the sheer number of volunteer hours and the cost to run the sanctuary, it's tempting to ask a question that ruffles feathers among animal lovers: Is all of this worth it to save wolves?

Smith has an answer.

"Responsibility means the ability to respond, and when we acquire an animal, we're supposed to be making a promise to care for that animal until the end of its life," she said.

Too often, people who buy exotic animals for pets do not keep that promise, Smith continued. Irresponsible breeders sell wild animals that should never become pets. Buyers ignorant of the work required to care for these animals eventually abandon or mistreat them.

Places like Shy Wolf Sanctuary provide the chain of commitment that should exist. Smith says the Sanctuary's mission is to provide a home for those animals that have been treated like garbage. Volunteers are quick to point out that animals don't come as the "good" or "bad" creatures that fairy tales make them out to be.

"Wolves have gotten a bad rap in literature — Three Little Pigs and Red Riding Hood stories — but they really are amazing and have this strong connection with nature," said Tom Hornyal, a recent volunteer at the sanctuary. "I am astonished at how much this organization can accomplish with so few people - you really can make an immediate impact."

Smith imparted some of her hard-earned wisdom to her volunteers as they prepared the rest of the feed on this particular day.

"I do not want this message of saving these animals to die with me," said Smith, who is also a great grandmother. "If just one person gets it and keeps the dream alive, we'll have done our job."

As if on cue, just as Smith completed cutting up her last bucket of raw chicken, one of the wolves began to howl. One by one the rest of the wolves joined in for a haunting chorus of baying as if they too, know a change is coming

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2010/jul/17/shy-wolf-sanctuary-new-20-acre-site-home-animals/>