

# BARREFOOTVEGAN

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Vegan

Community

Crowdfunding

Growing Food  
& Friendships

# Brenda Sanders




What drives her social justice work, her best advice on running effective community outreach programmes, and how to avoid burnout.

+ RECIPES FROM THE ¡SALUD! VEGAN MEXICAN COOKBOOK & THE BEST RECIPES FROM THE BLOGOSPHERE FOR MEALS WITH FRIENDS









# Killing one animal to save another?

Shelters and rescues going veg

By Midge Raymond

If you're an animal advocate, you may have found yourself at a fundraising event that serves animals such as pigs and cows in order to raise money to save dogs and cats.

For many rescue organisations, there's a difference between the animals they save and the animals they eat. However, many shelters and rescue groups are seeing that serving meat doesn't align with their missions of caring for animals. In a recent study by the Californian sanctuary Animal Place, 85% of those surveyed believe it is ethically inconsistent for a shelter that rescues dogs, cats, rabbits, and other animals to sell or serve animal products at fundraising events.

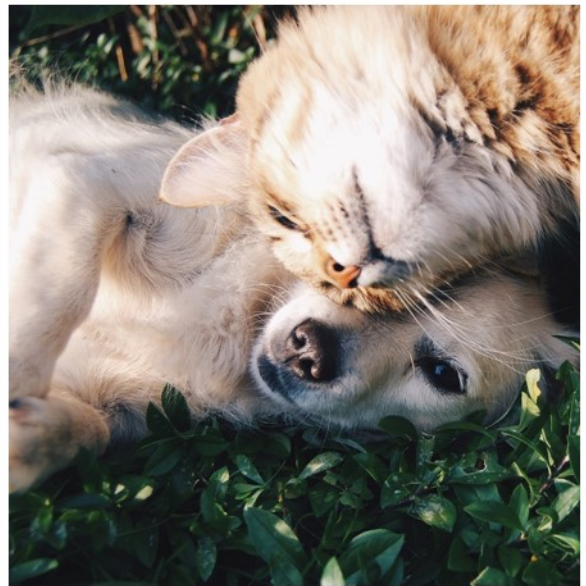
Many organisations, from the Humane Society of the United States to the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, have had vegan policies in effect for years; others are new to adopting formal, board-approved policies. "If an organization has an informal policy, we encourage adopting a board-approved, animal-friendly menu policy," says Barbara Troyer, the Wildlife, Environmental, and Northwest Regional Coordinator for Animal Place's [Food for Thought Campaign](#). "We give them tools and resources to talk with the board."

The [Washington Federation of Animal Care & Control Agencies](#) in Washington, D.C., has long offered vegetarian and vegan food at events, and in 2016 the board felt it was time to create a formal policy. "Many of our member organizations care for farmed animals—including goats, chickens, and pigs—and we wanted to align ourselves with their no-meat policies," says board president Hilary Hager. "Our goal was inclusivity, while also making sure that the language in our policy was judgment-free."

Indeed, taking a stand without making donors feel judged is one of the main challenges for organisations in making a formal policy shift to vegetarian and vegan events. "The biggest concern I hear is the fear of losing members and donors, which I don't think happens as often as anticipated," says Troyer. "We try to address the fear by turning it on its head—what about the members and donors you are losing because you're not spending donor dollars on saving animals? What are the net animal lives saved in doing that BBQ event? We expect animal protection organizations to set the bar when it comes to humane standards."

Heather Cammisa, President and CEO of [St. Hubert's](#) >

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[Animal Welfare Center](#) in New Jersey, feels that connecting with other shelters is an important part of the process. “It’s so important that shelters talk to other shelters. I’ve had people from other shelters call me and say, ‘I’m brand new and we just had an event, and we were protested by farm animal advocates. What do I do?’”

Cammisa, who herself has been vegan for more than two decades, realised when she joined St. Hubert’s in 2010 that the organisation needed not only to protect companion animals but to be active in stopping abusive practices against all animals. “We are vegetarian, moving toward vegan,” she says, and she is making an effort to encourage other rescue organisations to do the same. “Whenever I talk about this, I compare farmed animals to puppy mills, which we so passionately advocate against. I ask them how we’d feel if a farm-animal rescue auctioned off a puppy at one of their fundraisers. If we have a pig roast or have burgers and hot dogs at an event, imagine how indifferent to suffering that looks. It’s the same as the way we learned to communicate to people what a puppy mill is—it’s about educating the community.”

Karen Windsor, executive director of [Foster Parrots](#), a parrot rescue and sanctuary in Hope Valley, Rhode Island, agrees that rescue groups should respect all animals’ lives. “All along,” she says, “we’ve been shocked at how many animal welfare organizations do events to help animals and serve animals for dinner.”

Foster Parrots adopted its vegetarian policy in 2000. “It just felt right to make this statement,” Windsor says. “If you love animals, you should love all animals. We are not

preachy, and we feel that any baby step, even if it’s not eating meat one day a week, is a step in the right direction. People should think when they’re putting on an event—whether it’s to save parrots, or horses, or whatever—all animals matter.”

And it’s not only animal advocacy groups but environmental organisations that are embracing plants. “You have to walk the walk in the environmental movement,” says Louis Psihoyos, executive director of [Oceanic Preservation Society](#) in the California Bay Area. OPS, which aims to preserve and protect the oceans through film, photography, social media, and collaboration, adopted an all-vegan policy in 2011. Under OPS’s policy, no animal products are allowed in the building—not even milk for coffee.

“Being an environmental organization means being vegan,” says Psihoyos. “I don’t believe in gray areas on this issue. The raising of meat for human consumption causes more greenhouse gases than all transportation combined. People are starting to understand that the best way to make changes for the environment is to change what’s on your plate.”

And, most organisations report, the results of going vegetarian or vegan are overwhelmingly positive, though there can also be a bit of resistance, especially in the beginning.

“I won’t say it was easy,” says Jill Robinson, founder and CEO of [Animals Asia](#), which works toward ending animal cruelty throughout Asia, from eliminating the

consumption of dogs and cats in China to rescuing bears from bile farms in China and Vietnam. “In China, there were concerns about protein intake, our team working long hours outside in the elements, and fearing they wouldn’t have proper nutrition,” Robinson says. “Concerns gradually alleviated with postings on noticeboards—especially featuring vegan Olympic athletes and Chinese vegan heroes. Today, as a vegan myself, I’m really proud of all in the team, especially our translators and management staff who arranged for the local vegetarian restaurant to come along and teach our canteen chefs to cook more recipes. It feels hugely satisfying to tell visitors that both canteens in China and Vietnam are vegan—and why.”

Karen Winsor says that delicious food goes a long way. “We do a big annual onsite event in the fall, and we have a large vegetarian and vegan buffet. It’s funny how many people grumble about how there won’t be meat on the table, but when you see the spread—it’s incredible, and no one can possibly miss the meat.”

Explaining the *why* is just as important as great food in getting supporters to embrace veg events. “We’ve had great receptivity,” Cammisa says of St. Hubert’s policy. “People are enjoying the food. Sometimes they don’t want to be told what to eat, but we invite them to hear the reasons. If people know and understand, they are willing to come on board. People don’t like cruelty.”

Troyer agrees. “If the policy is presented in a way that explains why they are doing it—to save more animals or to align with donor expectations—it tends to make sense.”

If you would like to see your own local organisations go veg, see the sidebar and visit [Food for Thought](#) and download an [Advocate Toolkit](#). And, to see where your favorite animal and wildlife organisations stand, check out this [report card](#). **BV**



*Midge Raymond is the author of My Last Continent, a novel about two (vegan) penguin researchers whose lives change forever when a ship hits ice in the Southern Ocean. My Last Continent was published in the UK by Text Publishing and Mon Dernier Continent was published in France by Editions Stock. Midge is also co-founder of the boutique environmental publisher Ashland Creek Press. Learn more at [www.MidgeRaymond.com](http://www.MidgeRaymond.com).*

## 5 tips for helping your organization -or one that you support - go plant-based



### 1 Approach the board with plenty of good information.

Have statistics, anecdotes, and a list of other veg organisations like yours available, to show exactly how many lives are being saved and that this is an important, emerging trend in the animal protection movement.



### 2 Present evidence that members want compassionate food choices.

Download [this postcard from Animal Place](#) to help encourage donors and members to express how they’d like to see the organisation evolve.



### 3 Show that there is support available.

Food for Thought is [awarding up to \\$25,000](#) to organisations that make the transition to plant-based menu policies.



### 4 Give it a try! In the spirit of Meatless Mondays, try having one all-veg event and see how much people enjoy the food.

Chances are they’ll find vegan offerings delicious, and they’ll appreciate that plant-based foods are less expensive, more environmentally friendly, and don’t contribute to animal cruelty.



### 5 Be patient. Even if the goal is to become a vegan organisation, it may be more feasible to start with a vegetarian policy, get members and donors on board, and then gradually move toward veganism than to aim for a vegan policy right away.

Every decision can help reduce suffering and pave the way toward becoming a truly animal-friendly organisation.