

RUNNING OF AN ORGANIZATION

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After 20 plus years of experience doing rescues, working with clubs, rescue groups and sanctuaries, I would like to discuss some important information that I picked up along the way. In addition to running our own organization plus helping others, I would like to share some of the knowledge that is paramount in its importance in maintaining an organization's reputation.

At the core of any organization is their **system of value**. People working for the organization must have a good working value system and each board member must be held to those values---hence the code of ethics comes into play.

Not all organizations are remotely equal. You'll find some larger than others but size is not important in the running of a good organization. While some aren't as good as others, it may simply mean they haven't learned as much as those who've been at it a long time. There may be people running it who've been or are untruthful. Truth comes out in the most awkward of times. You should be careful in dealing with them. You don't need to rule them out, but do need to watch and beware of any illegal actions they may have done or are doing. It may impact you or your organization. The old saying "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer" is the best rule I've found when dealing with all people. We should never get into a verbal combat with them, especially in public and on social media. Everyone loses.

When you post anything, good or bad, on social media, it's out there for others to find and can never be taken back. However, it can come back to bite you on the butt when you least expect it. We have watched this play out on social media. It exposed a lot of people with lack of values and good judgment, and they indeed learned some things from it. They silently faded from the name calling and public arguing, and shielded themselves with a whole new name and organization, after vowing to the pig community they would gain back control. Now they have bowed out of the social media frenzy and returned all things that were obtained under questionable circumstances. The very ones they were working against kept quiet and worked with their board, then legally fought the battle and won.

Now why am I writing all this? It is vital for all organizations, especially rescue groups and sanctuaries to secure all things by doing the following. It takes more than just starting and running an organization. You have to have your value system in place. You have to know that each person working within your organization has the same values.

1. Know those you invite to sit on your board of directors and those who volunteer for you. They are a reflection of your organization.
2. Work with your directors and always utilize your code of regulations within your group. Be sure that you dot all the "i's" and cross those "t's". Your board values must be high to protect the organization above and beyond all others.
3. A good working board of directors (and executive board) will maintain a written and signed "code of ethics". All things should be kept private and within the board. Never air grievances on social media. Someone can be proven wrong.
4. The board of directors should work with and back your president in all things as long as they do not compromise their code and regulations. We're not saying they have to go along with everything, but matters can be called out and brought to a vote if they, the board of directors, believe it will do damage to the organization.
5. Both the executive board and the board of directors should work together to move the organization forward, taking care not to bring reproach to the organization. Again, all things should remain private within the executive board and the board of directors and never aired on social media or with outsiders unless approved by the Board of Directors.

6. The organization should be run as a business. Care should be taken to see that a paper trail is maintained. Equally important is to be very circumspect in your public postings, as what you carelessly post may come back to haunt you and your organization and make you vulnerable to lawsuit.

We have many good rescue and sanctuary organizations out there working every day to make a difference for the animals we all love. All have their own way of doing things and along the way some make changes as the need arises. Many organizations, especially in their early stages make a few mistakes but they learn from them and then go on to build a strong organization. There are so many good organizations out there. To name a few of the older ones, there was Pig Pals Sanctuary in Illinois whose owner passed away and which is now closed; Planet Pig Sanctuary in Missouri whose owner passed away and is now also closed. We'd be remiss if we didn't mention that both of these sanctuaries had exit plans in place, which provided for the care of the pigs in residence there. To these and others we give honor. Others include but are not limited to Ross Mill Farms in Pennsylvania, Rooterville Sanctuary in Florida, Happily Ever Esther Farm Sanctuary in Canada, Ironwood Sanctuary in Arizona; Shepherd's Green and NAPPA who works nationally. There are so many across the U.S. with whom we've worked with over the years.

There is one of which I've not been a member but I've watched it change over the years. I've been friends with a lot of folks who are members or run the organization. When it started years ago it was a breeders' organization. They gave it their best. They worked toward registration of the potbellied pig and promoted it over the years. Today NAPPA no longer promotes breeding, but works tirelessly to educate and to help pet pigs. It's always been a strong organization and continues to be strong today. They have made changes where necessary, even to the running of their board of directors and officers. They've worked hard to keep it a strong organization, even against those who've tried to tear it down over the years. They are getting a strong footing on the social media programs. I have had the privilege of helping them on occasion. I appreciate the trust they have in me and our organization, Forgotten Angels Rescue & Education Center Inc. We stand with them as they fight to continue their work in helping to educate in regard to pet pigs.

Finally to all organizations, and it doesn't matter if you're a rescue, sanctuary or educational organization---you can be a non-profit or 501(c)3 or a just a group; work to keep your name clean, and keep all written papers and reports. If you're working on social media, do the same. Copy anything you remotely believe you might need in the future. Remember to be courteous and treat all people like you would want to be treated. Don't make a public ruckus. Obey all the rules of your organization. How you behave within your organization and on social media will affect how people see you and your organization. Folks will look at your organization and see its core through the value system of each executive officer, board member and volunteer. What they do publicly reflects directly (and sometimes negatively) upon the organization of which they are a part. Communicating in the most civil of terms will encourage the observer to go away thinking that you are working together to be one of the best.