Goats to the Rescue

The transformative and healing powers of the Philly Goat Project

The local origins of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Meet Philly's bug ambassador

Sustainable butcher goes pork only
BRING YOUR KID TO WORK

They’re gentle, they’re cute and they have four stomachs. But perhaps what’s most remarkable about the goats of the Philly Goat Project is how they bring people together.

In a clandestine corner of Germantown, 15-year-old baby Aruma was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. She’s one of the most charming of the 300 goats who hang out on the Philly Goat Project’s 1.5-acre plot in Germantown. They’re all part of a larger movement to bring goats to urban spaces. This movement has been gaining momentum in recent years, and the Philly Goat Project is leading the way.

Two years ago, social worker Karen Klieft and her daughter, Lily Sage, began developing the Philly Goat Project. Last year, the pair brought on Raymond, Debra, Teddy, Oliver, Annie, Robin, Ivy and Anthony as stable ambassadors.

The goats are more than just cute; they’re also hard workers. Each day, the goats help clear vegetation, control weeds and even produce milk. The milk is used to make cheese, which is then sold at local markets.

Despite the challenges of raising goats in an urban environment, the Philly Goat Project has thrived. The team is working hard to ensure the success of the project and to spread the word about the benefits of goat farming.

The project has also become a popular attraction for families in the area. Children can pet the goats and learn about their daily routines. Parents can relax and take in the beauty of the goats and their surroundings.

In conclusion, the Philly Goat Project is more than just a goat farm. It’s a community hub where people from all walks of life can come together and learn about the importance of urban agriculture. The goats are just the beginning of what’s to come in this vibrant community project.
Kid to Kid

Krivi was a former resource specialist and licensed clinician for people with special needs and a 30-year social worker in Philadelphia.

"I'm kind of famous for "The Art List," a resource guide for children's special needs community, she says. She brought her prior knowledge to the Philly Goat Project, where the goats are trained as therapy goats.

Every Tuesday, Penndel School for the Deaf (P/S) comes to the barn to work with the goats. Most of the high school-aged students are from the city, all are deaf or hard of hearing with additional needs, and have never worked with animals. The goats are learning to pay attention to signing, says Privateer, a Philadelphia school teacher and interpreter.

We go on another goat walk, this one more relaxed than the first, and Krivi is attentive to her students' relationships with the goats.

"For them to have somebody to take care of it has more needs than they do, when they're used to us caring for them in empowering," she explains.

The goats were teaching deaf children for years. The barn teens and goat walks provide creative ways for students to develop and hone life skills, like choosing the appropriate clothing for work and deciding when to cross the street.

Krivi expresses concern about some of the students once they graduate. For some, this is their only contact with nature; for others, their only form of exercise, which is why she tries to connect with them. During the walk, we stop periodically to wait for others, so we can clean up and poop. I notice Darryl, a student in a child-sized stroller, moving toward a goat who has a white ribbon on its ears. He says no warning and gives me a thumbs up, then he revives his head on her back. He's always connected with the goats, says Krivi.

After the walk, Krivi gathers the students and asks them the same question: "What do the goats do for them?"

"Mom, a deaf teaching assistant, signs back: "Exposure to the world of nature."

"Adele, a hearing-impaired, signs: "It helps the staff to see what the kids like," signs Adele. "We're used to dogs, but goats are great."

Tag Team Yoga

Not unlike your typical yoga class, goat yoga involves an instructor, main goat sparer.

The ambience, however, is a little different.

The sound of bleating and small of income are replaced with barking and farm animals and an occasional barking.

This yoga class meets at the historic Cheltenham Carriage House. The space is enclosed with folding tables, the yoga mats arranged on top of paintbrushes.

My impression was that goat yoga was merely yoga in the presence of goats. I was surprised to learn that the goats, at least the Philly Goat Project goats, are very involved. Before we even begin, the room erupts in laughter as they try to lay on one of the participants' backs. As yoga instructor Dawn "Tree" Vance leads us through the various poses, three volunteers lead the little around the room.

Having a 35- to 40-pound goat on your back is interesting. It's just the right amount of pressure, and their little hooves barely dig into your muscles. It's fun and funky—the goats sometimes miss their target, tumbling in the ground. "I think that's the funniest," says Vance. Every instructed move is modified with the phrase, "unless you have a goat on you."

"Move into downward dog, unless you have a goat on you," says Vance. "Then, please, don't move."

Laughter erupts again as two goats play on someone's mat. A volunteer scramble to get a broom and dustpan.

"We are lots of giddiness and tablecloth. It's easier for the goats to get on top of you," Vance explains.

"Vance says goat yoga makes people happy, combining elements of yoga wellness and petting zoo.

It decreases anxiety and depression, she says. It's certainly true that after an hour of exuberant giggling, you feel pretty buoyant. It's also easier to teach these poppy or friendly goats; they've already been trained.

To conclude the session, Vance encourages participants to take a moment of mindfulness.

"Thank you," she says, "for being with the goats."

Everyone does.
In warmer weather, the goats’ primary job is grazing, but this winter, they are focused on their holiday outing. On a chilly Saturday afternoon, I arrive to find the herd not just nibbling on pile needles, but voraciously devouring the old tree in the corner—a few goats pile over each other to reach each tree trunk.

"Douglas is their favorite," Krivic explains. "He’s big and has a funny walk with his head down." A nearby goat, Douglas, is a favorite among the children who regularly visit the farm. "They love playing with Douglas," says one of the farm’s volunteers.

"Do you want to hold one?" she asks me, placing the2-month-old Nigerian Dwarf in front of me. The goat is calm and curious, and I gently stroke its soft fur. The children behind me laugh and point at me, but I remain calm and patient. "It’s a great feeling," the volunteer says. "The goats are really friendly and they love interacting with people."

"What’s really magical about Philly Goat Project is it’s effective in all walks of life." —KAREN KRIVIC, Founder of Philly Goat Project

The goats are a constant source of joy and laughter for the children who visit the farm. They are gentle and playful, and the children seem to form an instant bond with them. The farm’s volunteers are always on hand to help and guide the visitors, making sure everyone has a great time.

The farm is open to the public on weekends, and visitors are welcome to come and see the goats and learn more about their daily routines. They provide a fun and educational experience for children of all ages, and a great way for families to spend time together in a beautiful, natural setting.

"It’s the kind of thing where you didn’t know you needed it," Krivic says. "It brings joy and happiness to everyone who comes here."

The goats are not just a source of joy for the children, but also for the volunteers who work at the farm. They are passionate about their work and love the opportunity to share their love of goats with others.

"It’s a great way to give back to the community," says one of the volunteers. "The goats bring so much joy and happiness to everyone who comes here."

The farm is a wonderful example of how animals can have a positive impact on the community. It’s a great way for people to learn more about goats and the important role they play in our environment.

"It’s a great way to connect with nature," Krivic says. "The goats are so lovely and they always put a smile on my face."

The Philly Goat Project is a wonderful example of how animals can have a positive impact on the community. It’s a great way for people to learn more about goats and the important role they play in our environment. It’s a great way to give back to the community and to bring joy to those who visit the farm. It’s truly a magical place.