



The Harmony Institute

Non-profit organization promotes human health through human-animal-nature interaction

Before there was Harmony, the new community in east Osceola County, there was The Harmony Institute, a non-profit charitable organization that provides Harmony with much of its vision and even spiritual direction.

The Harmony Institute was founded in 1996 by Martha Lentz, a former director of the Orlando Humane Society/SPCA of Central Florida and one of the founders of Harmony, an 11,000-acre, environmentally integrated community that will be home to more than 18,000 people when it is completed in about 15 years.

The organization promotes and develops programs aimed at finding ways to bring people into closer and more caring proximity with animals and with the natural environment. The Harmony Institute communicates its ideas through its philosophy of Environments for Life®.

To Martha Lentz, animals are much more than pets – they play a significant role and touch human lives in a number of important ways.

“We tend to think about humans influencing the behavior of animals, but the same principle works in reverse – animals influence the way humans behave in a number of important ways,” Martha Lentz said. “The Harmony Institute looks at the ways these important interactions improve the quality of life.”

The concept of a community designed to accommodate and encourage the beneficial relationships humans have with animals and nature is unique, and it is important to anyone concerned with the care of the earth and the creatures it supports.

The Institute, which is named after Martha Lentz’s mother, Margaret Harmony Eastman, will be one of the first entities to occupy space at Harmony, the exciting new community rising out of a pristine area of forests and wetlands in east Osceola County. Eventually, the Institute will occupy facilities within 100 acres of the Harmony community beginning with their headquarters in the Town Square.

Advisory Board

The Harmony Institute’s advisory board provides Harmony’s developers with advice on such areas as land use, urban wildlife and environmental issues. It will also assist in developing a variety of model service and educational programs that reach beyond Harmony’s borders.

While science confirms that our relationships with animals and nature are good for people, there is much more to learn. The Harmony Institute’s programs help interpret how those relationships

contribute to human health, development, growth and ethics. The Harmony Institute models demonstrate how those assets help create healthier, more sustainable communities; they seek to improve human health by making human communities welcoming and nurturing for non-human species.

The Harmony Institute programs include:

- **Pet Concierge™** - An innovative program designed to maximize the benefits of the human-animal bond and intervene in emergency situations that might result in animal relinquishment.
- **WildSide Walk™** - A blueprint for integrating natural habitat within communities.
- **Center for Community Health** - A collaborative and multi-disciplinary center to further human-animal and human-nature interactions as health enhancers.
- **Homeowner Documents** - These guidelines relating to animals, urban wildlife and the environment are a blueprint for maintaining Environments for Life®.
- **Petlife Home Environments** - Special design features that make your home more suitable for your animal companions and make caring for them easier.
- **Community Design** - Land design, pet parks, environmentally sensitive plantings and gardens, Dark Sky, Energy Star® and lake management.
- **Living in Harmony, A City for People and Animals** - A two-year documentary conceived by The Harmony Institute Campus Advisory Board (HICAB) member Dr. Jennifer Wolch in collaboration with filmmaker Michael Tobias and Fitzgerald Productions. HICAB is a group of leading professionals, scientists and educators developing replicable programs for practical application and study. Also, The Harmony Institute is advised by leading experts in special program development, and it is partnering with established organizations to provide them a setting from which they can offer expanded programs and services.

Partnerships are a hallmark of The Harmony Institute. Whether it is in scientific study, field studies, program development, education or the showcasing of existing programs operated by other non-profit organizations, The Harmony Institute serves as a center for sharing resources, experience and ideas.

Some of the partnerships The Harmony Institute has formed are with:

The Albert Schweitzer Institute

Design for The Harmony Institute's Albert Schweitzer Campus is for a multi-disciplinary, ecumenical site for studies related to the values and implementation of human interaction with animals and nature. The Albert Schweitzer Institute, based at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut, works with The Harmony Institute to reflect Dr. Schweitzer's philosophy of "Reverence for Life" in the design and operation of the planned facility.

Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge

Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge, which takes in over 2,000 injured and orphaned wild animals each year, will expand its present site in Orange County to additional acreage provided by The

Harmony Institute. The refuge has been instrumental in preserving Florida's wildlife and teaching wildlife conservation since 1980. The expansion will enable the refuge to create natural habitats for endangered or seriously injured wildlife.

PAWS with a Cause®

Based in Wayland, Michigan, PAWS with a Cause® trains assistance dogs for people with disabilities and provides lifetime team support which encourages independence. PAWS Assistance Dogs are trained to assist people who have been challenged by such disabilities as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injuries, epilepsy, hearing impairment and vision loss. The Harmony Institute is working with PAWS to enable them to build a second facility at Harmony. The planned 20,000-square foot facility will be similar to their national headquarters and training center with a simulation training apartment equipped with motion sensitive cameras, a canine evaluation center, state-of-the-art kennel facility with indoor/outdoor kennel runs, grooming room, vet room and open training and exercise areas.

Personal Ponies Limited

Personal Ponies Limited promotes the idea that children with disabilities are enriched by having a small pony to care for and enjoy. Personal Ponies Limited has developed a carefully selected breeding stock of United Kingdom Miniature Shetland ponies and places these tiny equines, free of charge, with children's homes and with therapeutic riding schools.

The Harmony Institute is helping Personal Ponies Limited create its first breeding farm at Harmony to help fill the need for more of these ponies, which are bred for good natures and kind temperaments as well as conformation and size compatibility with children's abilities.

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