

THE HIGH ROAD OR THE LOW ROAD

COME WALK WITH ME

By: Lana Hollenback

Had a good weekend and then Monday came. One phone call after the other started my day. It's a never ending fact of rescuing, but there is more to rescuing or running a sanctuary than taking in pet pigs and/or finding them homes. One thing some folks don't realize is that rescuing or running a sanctuary is a business, especially, but not limited to, those who have a non-profit and/or 501(c)3.

I have one of the best boards there can be. Most members have been around pigs for a very long time; most know how a business is run. When any organization is coming together and picking a board, most just look for people who have the same passion they have about rescuing a pig, but the reality of it is that it takes more than just loving the pet pig. It takes knowing how to run a business. Many newer folks have the desire but lack the business end of it. So that is what I want to talk about.

When I got started in pigs back in the 90's there were only AOL groups to go to for answers. Then slowly more groups were added. Then Yahoo started groups. More and more the numbers increased. More and more "pig fights" broke out. Everyone wanted to be the leader. What I noticed was that the real leaders sat back and didn't partake of the fighting. They moved on with their goals, and more and more rescues began along with more sanctuaries. Soon the business of rescue began to unfold, forming non-profits and electing or placing people on the board with a sense of business. The organization had a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and then board members. All the leaders pulled together. Sometimes it meant taking the high road just to pull together and to work together to accomplish their goals.

We saw organizations fall apart when they had no structure and guess what? It was the pigs who lost. Many sanctuaries were closed and many pigs gave their lives because of no structure. Many of us learned by watching all this take place over years. But then came newer social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. More people became involved. The fighting started all over again, just when we all thought and hoped that part was over.

This part never ceases to amaze me. Most of the fighting is outside the board room. It's all over the social media. Many travel on the low road of name calling and abusive language. Some stoop to deception to try and make their points. Maybe the pet pig needs to "union up" to be safe in the hands of certain people. Again, this is all on the low road and it's the pigs who take the hit.

On the high road, do you ever see organizations like the ASPCA or USHS or Best Friends fighting on the social media? I don't think so. Why? Because they are organizations that take the high road and do their business the way they should, either in the board room or leaders' offices. They don't need outsiders taking sides, name calling and fighting the organization's fight outside of the board room. They take the high road, which, let me state, doesn't mean it's always easy.

I was talking about all this with someone this morning and I shared an old story. For years I ran a Christian organization to help addicts and inmates getting out of prison. My vice-president was a very close friend who I loved dearly. I loved both him and his family. He was at our office every day, and then elected to begin a halfway house. I jumped on board and helped. We were so blessed to have it up and running for years before his health went downhill. After some years, he had to be removed for health reasons, and the place was closed. It broke my heart, yet we remained the closest of friends until he died. I still miss him. I'm sharing this to show that just because there is an upset within any organization, it's a business and not based on friendships and other close people. Things change but friends should remain in spite of all that goes down in the business. We need to take the high road, and deal with this within our individual organizations.

Within any organization, problems should be settled first and foremost in the boardroom or the office. Plastering problems all over social media is not the answer. The board runs the organization; not outsiders. Again, there are two roads; the high road or the low road. The problem is that when any organization argues their cause outside the board room, it looks bad on both sides. He said, but she said, but they say and so it goes on. Those people who quietly do their jobs to work out problems without plastering it, are on the high road. Only those who want or enjoy slinging mud keep going on the low road. Turn it around. Come on up to the high road. Build a bridge and cross it. It will work out when the road comes to an end. Pet pigs and other animals need us, but they need us working together.

We are much more effective when we concentrate on our common goals. Many organizations have come under fire recently because of the way their funds were handled. If you don't like an organization or how it is run then simply don't support it, as you may not know the facts; but if you watch it and it proves to be a good organization, then support it, but take the high road about it even you are merely an onlooker. If it's a good organization it will come out on top. If not, that will come out also. Again, it's either the high road or the low road. I choose to take the high road...COME WALK WITH ME.