

THE POLK COUNTY PULSE

THE COUNTY'S FREE NEWSPAPER

MAY 7, 2008

INTERESTING NEWS, CONTRASTING VIEWS, AND COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Area Zoo Offers Memorial Bricks

By Michael Reisig

Ken Sunderman's love of nature has led him to the positions of handyman, promoter, and



Ken and Lois Sunderman are pictured with a memorial brick.

PR executive for The Arkansas Native Plant and Wildlife Center on Rich Mountain. He admits his love of the outdoors was given to him by his father.

"He was an avid hunter, and although I never enjoyed hunting, I love walking in the woods and have found that a camera gives me a good reason to be in nature without intruding on it," Sunderman explained. "I've had a

number of interesting jobs in my life, from commercial fisherman, an airplane caterer, and at one point I even piloted a 76 foot yacht that had belonged to President Warren Harding up the coast to San Francisco. Most of the interesting things have revolved around nature in some respect."

Ken is retired now, but he has found a second calling with The Arkansas Native Plant and Wildlife Center, at the base of Rich Mountain. In the process he has become a carpenter, and a jack of all trades for the new zoo that is being built by naturalist and animal rehabber Tommy Young.

"My wife Lois, and I met Tommy at his zoo in Queen Wilhelmina State Park Zoo about five years ago," he recalled. "I was so impressed with what he was doing I offered to assist in any fashion I could. When Tommy started this new zoo project across from The Rich Mountain Store, I began donating time in construction and some finances. I have been working on the re-construction of the building that will be our gift shop, and working on the lion cage. It's exciting to see

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it coming together and I hope the community will join us in supporting this zoo."

Sunderman said he feels like he's found a niche at the Wildlife Center.

"I feel like what we are doing is important and that the rehabilitation of injured animals will help us all," he added. We've come a long way but there is still much to be done and we need financial help most of all. We have designed a walkway which will contain memorial bricks donated by supporters, and I am proud that one of those bricks will be mine and my wife's."

Sunderman said he felt the memorial brick idea would be a perfect way to fund some of this important project.

"We will have individuals purchase a brick in the name of a loved one (and this can be a pet as well - which is in keeping with the theme of the zoo) and the bricks will be embedded in the path itself. The bricks cost \$100.

"This is a great way to support and recognize the value of nature," he added. "What would the world be like without songbirds or turtles or fireflies - we're losing important segments of these species and other wildlife in Arkansas and around the country. It's only through people like Tommy Young that some of the unique wildlife is being preserved, but he can't shoulder the whole burden - we have to help."

If you would like to be a part of this, contact the Arkansas Native Plant and Wildlife Center to order a brick at 437-3750, or you can order a brick at various locations in town, from Mena Tire or A&B Tire, to Union Bank, First National Bank, and *The Polk County Pulse*.