

### **Saving Two Birds with a Stone**

by Avery Posner

As a filmmaker, I do my best everyday to remind others to be more perceptive and sensitive towards both the Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and especially animals. Some of you may want to know why I classify the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing together with animals. It's comparatively simple. At birth, I was diagnosed with profound and permanent deafness in both ears, a hereditary attribute that resulted in the inability to neither hear my own voice nor others' for the rest of my life. Yes, deafness is a disability in the mainstream society I live in, yet, I am privileged to have integrated Deaf Culture into my soul and I am a native user of American Sign Language, a language used by millions of hearing, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing peers throughout the country and Canada. American Sign language has enabled me to express my feelings and thoughts to others. But what about the countless people not familiar with American Sign Language? I am sure you can understand the difficulties I confront daily—but what about animals? Do we, as humans, understand what animals are trying to communicate? Do we "hear" animals speaking about their afflictions or discomfort? In fact, I strongly empathize with animals for being incapable of clearly expressing illness, happiness, frustration, hunger and especially pain. It is in this area that all our "voices" about our feelings fall upon deaf ears.



Therefore, my company partner Gilda, who has also been Deaf since birth and I, used our professional and personal experiences to create a pair of educational films and DVDs that would teach millions of viewers to be sensitive towards people and animals. The films integrate and highlight concepts of multi-language communication, animal rights, alternative healthy diets and exercise. We created the video at a very special place, The Farm Sanctuary of New York. The Farm Sanctuary nurtures over 700 rescued farm animals living in the 175-acre property in Watkins Glen, New York. These animals were neglected, abused and victimized prior to being rescued. Here, we met nine of our "adopted" barnyard animal friends, produced a two-day long veganized "cook" show, conducted various down-to-earth interviews with respectable professionals and even played nifty softball game using animal-free sporting equipment. Numerous vegan food brands were also displayed, identified and sampled in the breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack, special occasion-related and dessert categories. Several other co-presenters, who traveled to showcase their remarkable work producing vegan foods, made the show even more of an intriguing experience for all viewers.

*For instance, Luna Roth, owner of the Pure Fun confectionary company in Toronto, Canada that produces organic and vegan candies derived from all natural and organic ingredients, flew into the country and drove hours to the filming site. Although she shipped the packages filled with candies directly to the sanctuary she brought two luggage. Guess what they contained? They were filled with thousands of more pieces of lollipops, fruit pinwheels, fruit rocks, chocolate meltdowns and countless other animal product-free candies for her presentation at the show, a sure delight for children and people of all ages—well, who doesn't like a root beer flavored cotton candy with juicy strawberries?*

At end of the production, the remaining thousands of food items were immediately donated to the Farm Sanctuary staff, interns, their families and animal friends (dogs, horses, cats, etc.) and to our crew and co-presenters.

*Avery Posner is a vegan Deaf educator and filmmaker from an all-Deaf family. He and his partner, Gilda Ganezer, are animal rights supporters using American Sign Language to convey ideas, visual arts, and education in teaching people of all cultures the importance of being kind to animals. Visit their websites [www.everydayASL.com](http://www.everydayASL.com) and [www.vegonthego.com](http://www.vegonthego.com).*