

Lions, Tigers & Donors

Planned Giving provides for the future of Octagon's exotic animals



Lauri Caron, Ladonna Cody, Margaret Raizik and Raizik's 'adopted' tiger Frankie.

When Margaret Raizik visited Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary on a community field trip nearly two decades ago, it was a fledgling haven for abused exotic animals run by father and son Omar and Peter O. Caron, and Lauri Caron, who had just married into the non-profit herd. Her Fort Myers neighbors weren't particularly impressed by the south Charlotte County retirement home for discarded exotic pets and former performing animals, many of them mistreated and malnourished.

But Raizik saw a diamond in the rough.

"I was so impressed they were doing all this on their own and trying to help these misused animals," she says. "It stuck in my mind."

She remembered the sanctuary a few years later while planning her estate, and wanted to

help. Her attorney, Ladonna Cody, suggested Raizik plan her charitable giving through the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, which is dedicated to helping philanthropists find the right fit and exploring new giving opportunities.

"The Community Foundation is great in finding out what clients need to know," says Cody. "It has the expertise and reference materials my clients may not be able to find anywhere else."

Community Foundation staff at the time knew nothing about Octagon, but their research and visits to the sanctuary — and Raizik's insistence — led to a lasting partnership.

"The executive director visited and took quite an interest in Octagon," says Raizik.

Generosity runs Octagon. Lauri Caron, who now operates the sanctuary solo (Omar passed away in 1983 and her husband Peter passed away in 2005), relies heavily on a core of 30 volunteers, pro bono services provided by local veterinarians, food donations and financial contributions. Regular donations like Raizik's help defray its \$8,300 monthly expenses.



Frankie

Today, Octagon welcomes 30,000 visitors annually and is the beneficiary of other endowments; Raizik has introduced several friends to the sanctuary's mission and needs. "They hadn't planned any giving so I told them about Octagon," she says. "They went out, met Lauri and have provided for her in their estates. It's so important Lauri knows this money is coming in on a regular basis."

Raizik has left a legacy for Octagon's animals. "It's not just a one-time disbursement," she says. "The contribution goes on and on. These are the things that make a person feel good."

"People like Margaret are how we survive," says Caron. "Once we started the endowment fund, one thing led to another. The Community Foundation is great, it helped me out with a grant when I had a fire. It was a savior. I thank God for the people who have heard about us through the Community Foundation. People feel more comfortable donating through the Foundation because they know it's safe. We've set up a trust and the money we receive at the end of the year really helps." —OC