

# Maui Weekly

Serving South Maui since 1986 | AUGUST 23-29, 2007 • VOL XI No 34



Blanchard cradles one of her cherished chickens.

## A Happy Ending to a Fowl Tale

*Local realtor helps homeless chickens find a new roost.*

### Sarah Ruppenthal

On a hazy evening in May 2007, Laurelee Blanchard armed herself with a flashlight and a cat carrier, and wandered around the abandoned Makawao egg farm searching for chickens. The Coldwell Banker realtor had been showing a property to a client earlier that afternoon, and on her way home, she glanced out of her passenger-side window at the recently deserted egg farm. Following a nagging instinct, she turned into the driveway, and asked the lone groundskeeper if all of the chickens had been vacated from the farm. To her surprise, the groundskeeper revealed that there were a few remaining hens on the property, and they had been roaming the dusty, desolate farm alone for several weeks, and without food or water.

Without any hesitation, Blanchard hatched an idea, called her friends and ruffled some feathers.

Arriving later that evening, the determined and impassioned rescue team discovered 46 hens tucked away in once-packed chicken coops and loaded them into cat carriers, whisking them away

from their former workplace. To some, an animal rescue mission under cover of the night may sound a bit dramatic, but Blanchard explained, "It was easier to pick them up after dark, because they were sleeping, and that way, we didn't startle them or chase them."

The Makawao egg farm, Maui Fresh Eggs Incorporated, closed down in late March 2007 as a result of more stringent federal regulations. While the farm managed

chard. Within hours of the nighttime rescue, she had arranged adoptions with three island families, who graciously welcomed several of the refugee chickens into their homes, outfitting them with sheltered perches and comfortable roosting quarters. Falling in love with the friendly animals, Blanchard brought several of the hens to her eight-acre Upcountry farm, where they have since become an important part of her family.

Seated beneath the



A green replacement for an alarm clock, they can give you an early morning wake-up call... free of charge.



to sell and auction off the bulk of their working hens, the closure left many without a place to call home—until Laurelee Blanchard showed up.

Where did these homeless chickens go?

"There are a lot of compassionate people here on Maui," said Blan-

shade of an enormous palm tree, Blanchard is surrounded by the young, sprightly chickens she calls "peeps," recounting their successful transitions from the Makawao farm to the safety of their new homes. In the weeks following the rescue, each of the adoptive families



Makawao's egg farm produced Maui Fresh Eggs until it closed down in March 2007, leaving many hens without a nest to call home.

reported that the chickens felt right at home, enjoying their newfound freedom by basking in the sunlight and taking luxurious "dust baths." Even Blanchard was pleasantly surprised to find that her longtime resident roosters and hens, such as "Laverne" and "Shirley," accepted the new chickens and "coexisted beautifully."

On any given day, Blanchard's farm thrives with clucking hens and crooning roosters, and the lively creatures trail behind her as if she were the Pied Piper. Gently stroking the soft, shiny plumes of a hen she named Sweetie-Bird, Blanchard said that she has discovered chickens to be intelligent, docile, and even cuddly, pets. And while some may cringe at the thought of a rooster crowing at 5 a.m. each morning, Blanchard has grown accustomed to the pre-dawn ritual, and has found it to be the perfect substitute for the mechanical shriek of an alarm clock.

A vigilant vegan and a



These hens flew the coop, but now they feel right at home on Blanchard's Upcountry farm.

passionate animal rights advocate, soft-spoken Blanchard has not only rescued the Makawao chickens, but has also opened her home to 13 cats, five goats and two donkeys. And listening to the harrowing rescue stories of these animals, it becomes clear that her home has become a sanctuary for animals that may have otherwise suffered from neglect, starvation or abuse.

Calling her farm "a place for happy endings," Blanchard is hopeful that other island residents will open their hearts and their homes to animals in need, or call the Maui Humane Society for assistance.

She has extended her personal crusade into her professional life by pledging 20 percent of her real estate sales to any non-profit animal rights organization of her clients' choice.

When asked how she felt about being a hero, she blushed and said modestly, "I did what I had to do... these animals deserve a good life, and I wanted to make sure that they had that opportunity."

For more information about how you can protect Maui's animals, email Blanchard at Laurelee@mauireidences.com. ✿