

GEE, what a farm!

Gee family shares their animals through Great Educational Experience

By Eileen Mozinski Schmidt
Special to The Freeman

MUKWONAGO — Kathy Gee has loved animals since she was at least 8 years old. “My dad got me chipmunks for my birthday,” said Gee, explaining the start of her long-held affection for animals, an inclination now supported by her husband.

“Kathy has a passion for animals, always has,” said David Gee. “People say, ‘David, you must love animals and my answer is, ‘Well, I love Kathy, and she loves animals.’”

If not harboring quite the same level of devotion, David Gee seems to enjoy animals as well. On a recent spring day on their farm near Mukwonago, David and his wife tended to Abish, their two-toed sloth, bringing her snacks and discussing whether to bring her along on a tractor ride tour of the property.

In 2009, Kathy and David launched their local business, GEE Funny Farm, or Great Educational Experiences LLC, to share their family of animals with others.

Kathy Gee combined a degree and varied experience in education with business coursework completed at Waukesha County Technical College to bring the needed skills to run their property as a business. The result is an interactive experience for people and the 20 species of animals on the Gee farm.

“So the business is to justify the animals she loves to have and (is) sharing them and educating people,” said David Gee, who retired from corporate America two

years ago to work with Kathy on the business for a while.

The pair, who grew up in Flagstaff, Arizona, came to Wisconsin by way of Virginia and Missouri and have been here for 30 years.

Their 44-acre farm now houses about 60 animals. They range in size from Porthos, a Peruvian cross horse, to Lydia, a flying squirrel who weighs about 3 ounces.

Many of the smaller animals live inside the couple’s home, including a snake, tortoise, lizard, parrots, hedgehog, chinchilla, two rabbits, and others. Abish the sloth also lives in the house because she needs temperature and humidity control, and in the winter the family’s indoor-outdoor pig also makes himself at home inside.

The larger animals reside outside, in a series of fenced-off areas including shelters and roaming space in the rolling hills of the farm.

The business operates by appointment, including visits to the farm and travel within a 60-mile radius to various sites. The Gees have a conditional use permit to operate on the property, and Kathy Gee is licensed through the United States Department of Agriculture.

Traveling appointments incorporate some of the smaller animals from the farm. David Gee said they have attended events at schools, parties, businesses, libraries and others throughout the greater Milwaukee area, and aim to make the process easy for hosts.

“We have tarps and we’ll leave no trace as far as coming and going,” he said.



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Kathy and David Gee and Abish the sloth at their farm near Mukwonago. Their business, GEE Funny Farm, Great Educational Experiences LLC., is focused on education and interaction with animals.



A view of the farm owned by Kathy and David Gee near Mukwonago. Their farm houses 60 animals and is home to their business, GEE Funny Farm, Great Educational Experiences LLC., is focused on education and interaction with animals both at their farm and at area events.

Whether at home or on the road, Kathy Gee said she works to customize the experience to each person or group, selecting animals appropriate for the age and setting.

David Gee said the price of booking an event either at the farm or at another location varies by customer because of Kathy’s customization of services.

There is a minimum fee of

\$100 to visit the farm on a weekday, and \$120 on Saturdays, to cover the costs of setup. At larger events, the Gees will include handlers to assist with the animals.

‘Joy and surprise’

The reactions of people is one of the best parts of running the business, according to both Gees.

One event involved bringing Abish to a woman’s birthday party. She “broke into tears because it’s her favorite animal and she never thought she’d see one,” Kathy Gee said.

David Gee said he likes meeting people through their operation.

“I like the exclamations of joy and surprise of the kids, and even adults sometimes when they see an animal,” he said.

The instruction goes both ways, according to David Gee.

“We get some great questions that challenge us,” he said. “We’re always learning.”