



Cadillac News

LAKE CITY HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM FULFILL DREAM TO BUILD EXOTIC WILDLIFE RESCUE



By: Joshua Roose - June 22, 2020

Zebras, kangaroos, lemurs, and baboons — no, I'm not talking about the Detroit Zoo. I'm talking about Cicchelli Second Chance Rescue and Exotics, started by Ryan and April Cicchelli.

Originally it started small. April would take in wounded animals — like raccoons, chipmunks, and opossums — and nurse them back to health. "My wife's been doing it ever since I've known her," Ryan said. "She would always be taking in animals all the time." Ryan said that with time, people started to get to know who they were, and things really started to change when they got the phone call to adopt Rocco, a ring-tailed lemur.

"Rocco was from an elderly lady. She had him as a companion," Ryan said. Rocco's elderly owner did not realize how aggressive lemurs can become, and she felt that she could not care for him properly anymore. "April said, 'Man, I really want to get this lemur,'" Ryan said. "I said, 'If you really want to do it, I'll support you.' So, she took on our very first rehome."

Ryan said that their rescue has continued to grow organically since adopting Rocco. "Ninety-five percent of all these

animals are rehomes and rescues. We don't purchase all the animals," Ryan said. "We have a rule that we don't turn down any animal, so we've got some crazy ones here."

The Cicchellis currently have around 50 animals, including kinkajous, a water buffalo, emus, a coatimundi, alligators, macaques, and alpacas. They even plan to add tigers, lions, and cheetahs this summer from zoos that have recently closed. "We started out just working with local rescues, and now we've been doing this almost six full years," Ryan said. "We've grown from just this little mom and pop rescue shop to where we're a full-fledged facility now."

Although the Cicchellis have not opened their rescue to the public yet, they're hoping to open their doors by mid-July. "We're working with the USDA to get licensed for exhibits, so you'll be able to come in and see the rescues we take in," Ryan said. "Once we get the green light from the USDA, we will apply for our license, and we'll be in pre-licensing. It takes about two to three weeks. So, we're hoping for mid-July."

Ryan said that he does not expect to make any money on the rescue soon, but he isn't letting that stop him. "We've been very blessed with the careers that we have," Ryan said. Ryan owns multiple businesses in the area, although his

main profession is in investments, and April works in health and life insurance. "We're so in love with it, and we've been blessed financially," Ryan said. "We're not going to stop."

With so much going on, Ryan said that juggling full-time jobs and the wildlife rescue takes a lot of time management. "Every day, I get up at seven. From seven to ten, it's all my investment stuff," Ryan said. "We're out here from ten to one. Then I go back to the office to make sure everything's going good and answer client calls. Then we're normally back out here until nine at night every day. It doesn't stop."

Even so, Ryan said that he could never do it without the support of his staff and volunteers. "We're growing every single day. We've got an amazing staff out here working with us — amazing volunteers out here," he said. "The volunteers have been phenomenal. That's a big help for us to get ready."

"I never thought I'd be to this point having this many exotics. Obviously it's always been my dream," April said. "I always said I wanted to own a zoo, and we're halfway there." Ryan said that he is looking forward to opening their doors next month as they continue to grow. "We're definitely excited to let the public know," he said. "Things are definitely rockin' and rollin' out here."

Ryan Cicchelli, founder of Generations Insurance & Financial Services, is committed to providing clients with financial security through a personalized, friendly approach. Ryan's top concern is helping clients make informed decisions about all things related to healthcare and retirement.



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