I'm told it's Volunteer Appreciation Week (actually, I was told several days ago, but I was too busy being a volunteer to write anything). My response? To be honest, it doesn't really matter much to me.

"***WHAAAATT!?!?,***" you might be asking. "***SERIOUSLY??***"

Yes, seriously. Why? **Because in my eyes every day is Volunteer Appreciation Day.** Every single day! Every single day we appreciate our volunteers more than we will ever adequately be able to express. We shouldn't need a week to remind us to tell you and I hope we don't. Because, it's really awful to only appreciate someone only one week a year, mixed amongst, "Nurses Appreciation," "Teachers Appreciation Week," "Accountant Appreciation Week," etc. Look it up and it goes on and on.

I write our volunteers a fair amount, and attempt all the time to thank you for all you are doing. That "**Thank you!!!**" at the end of every email you get, every reply you get in Facebook or Messenger, or text, is genuine. It's not something I (or whoever writes to you) do just because I/we think "Sincerely Yours," is silly and outdated and we can't think of anything else to say. We say it because we mean it. And we really mean it!

But, it's also awful to miss it completely. Any opportunity to appreciate you should be noted. A bit over 100 wonderful folks donate their time and money to Wild Care. I won't say "us" because it's not really to us. It's to wildlife. Once I year I calculate who does how many hours and its mind-blowing. And, the numbers we get are far less than what is really happening, too, because so many of us (myself included) forget to log our volunteer hours, because, well, we are too busy volunteering.

Our Board of Directors is all volunteer. We logged over 5,700 hours of volunteer time in 2022. That is the equivalent of 2 full time staff members! And we know this is a serious under-count. It also doesn't include the unpaid overtime our staff does on a regular basis (especially in the summer), or the interns we get. It's frightening to think of how many animals we would have to turn away without the help of our volunteers.

I have the unique perspective of being both. I am paid a bit at Wild Care, but the vast majority of what I do is volunteer (educational programs, rehab shifts, etc.). I know what it looks like on the inside of Wild Care because I have a small staff role, so I know what life would be like without the volunteers, and it isn't pretty.

So, let us take the opportunity to tell you all that you are appreciated beyond measure. You keep our doors open. You provide enough respite from the clinic tasks that we can take tiny babies home and feed them overnight, and get all the medical procedures done that we need to make our patients lives as good as they can be while recovering

from illnesses, injuries and trauma. You provide community outreach. You build cages and roofs, and fix steps and install timers on lights. You feed youngsters and clean up their poop. You collect enrichment items, and caging items, and staff fundraisers. You direct traffic. You make donations. You save lives, literally, though you don't always see it.

With a bit under 2000 animals on the staff we have, if we took away our volunteers, we'd probably not be able to exceed a few hundred. Let's say 500 (I think that might be tough). That means 1,500 animals owe their lives directly to you. We certainly owe our sanity to you.

So, **a huge thank you** (virtual balloons and confetti here cuz real ones aren't environmentally friendly!) to all of you. Every single week, every single day.

Amy (and the staff at Wild Care)

Amy Sanders, Volunteer Coordinator, Wild Care, Inc.