

Loma Vista

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"at least 10 times" she visited the farm while an Elsa Widenmann Elementary School student.

"I've been here a lot," Magee said. "I love the animals. I just love it here. Now I'm bringing my kids ... and two nephews."

Magee said the farm "is safe, kid-friendly, and fun for the kids who love animals. I know my kids do."

Magee's mother, Octavia, Phea, tagged along Friday and was equally effusive.

"It's beautiful," Phea said, surveying the sanctuary. "It means something pertaining to the Lord. It means life to me. It does. I'm glad it's here. It's something positive, something good for the children."

During the pandemic, it was only the animals, LeRoy, and the farm caretaker who lives on the property.

"It was very lonely. It felt like the farm was a ghost town," LeRoy said. "It felt very sad."

The animals knew something was asked, LeRoy believes.

"There was a lot less involvement with people and getting petted and interaction," she said. "I think they really missed the people."

LeRoy said she had a bit extra gallop in her own step heading to work when it opened at 10 a.m. Thursday.

"It was so nice to see families in here with children and walking around enjoying the beautiful

plants and adorable animals," LeRoy said. "It was wonderful. Everyone was really happy to be back."

Despite the shutdown, improvements were made on the farm that's recovered from the tragic killing of three alpacas and injuring of several sheep and goats in a 2019 dog attack.

"That was very traumatic. We're glad that's in the rear view mirror," LeRoy said.

Happily, "there's a lot of amazing improvements that have happened on the farm during the shutdown," she said.

Wheelchair accessible sidewalks, a retaining wall in the goat yard, several new fences, spruced up picnic tables, and a sheep and alpaca barn that's a few days from completion.

Also new: An access gate to cross Ranier Avenue to get a hands-on visit with the horses, sheep and alpacas during their usual mid-day exercise break.

"A really wonderful improvement," LeRoy said. "There's a lot of future improvements so it's just going to get better and better."

Word is apparently out. The three consecutive weeks of the farm's July summer program are already sold out.

And, undoubtedly, LeRoy will be there. Every day, she said, "I look forward to being with the animals and the children and to know that I have the opportunity to make the animals happy and healthy and keep the gardens going."

Though living seven minutes from the farm, LeRoy pondered which animal she would — if forced



BOB FREEMAN — TIMES-HERALD

Ashley Magee visited Loma Vista Farm many times as a child. Now she's taking her kids to the animal sanctuary.

to — live a week with. "I would stay with the pigs or alpacas," she said. "They have a nice, soft bed with lots of straws and they don't poop in their bed."

Loma Vista Farm is at 150 Ranier Ave., Vallejo, and is open free to the public Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The facility is closed holidays.

For more, call (707) 556-8765 or visit lomavista-farm.org.

Contact reporter Richard Freedman at 707-553-6820.