Name: _____

Saving the Thanksgiving Turkey

MICHEL MARTIN: Now, we know that a lot of you are hitting the grocery stores today, getting all the necessities to pull together a Thanksgiving feast next week. For most Americans, the centerpiece of the meal is, of course, the Thanksgiving turkey. But not for vegetarians and vegans, who prefer to go meatless for the holiday. NPR's Lakshmi Singh met some of them at an unusual feast where humans and animals enjoy a meal together.

LAKSHMI SINGH: Thanksgiving's come early in Poolesville, Md.

(SOUND OF PIG SNORTING)

SINGH: But instead of humans dining on animals this day, they're dining with them.

(SOUND OF TURKEY GOBBLING)

SINGH: Perry is a star at Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary. The turkey flares his tail feathers and struts. He stares down a hungry crowd - nothing to worry about because the diners are only interested in vegan fare.

RUTH DAVIS: This is not your typical potluck. I mean, people really haul out everything they have to come up with great meals here. So I was anxious for it, but no, the turkeys and the chickens, all of them should come first. Absolutely.

SINGH: Ruth Davis is among the hundreds of people who gather here every year to forego the traditional dinner with turkey or pork roast and are instead eating vegan or vegetarian dishes while the chickens, pigs and sheep roam about.

TERRI CUMMINGS: We've been doing the Thanksgiving with the turkeys - this is our 18th year, I think.

SINGH: Terri Cummings and her husband Dave came up with the idea of this Thanksgiving shindig with one goal in mind - to save farm animals from slaughter. And that idea, she says, has really caught on.

CUMMINGS: More people are more aware of the issues now. They're more concerned about farm animals. They realize that there's a need to have sanctuaries like this one.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name: _____

SINGH: So with help from charitable donations, Cummings works full time now to take care of roughly 200 animals. And she's definitely got her favorites.

CUMMINGS: Evie the three-legged goat. She lost her leg because her owners did not take her to the vet when an emu stepped on her and she got a broken leg. They were going to shoot her, and the veterinarians called us and asked us to take her. And we've had her ever since. And she's absolutely one of my favorites.

SINGH: So as a family, Cummings and several hundred of her friends from all over the region have pulled out all the stops to put on a Thanksgiving party where the animals get to eat before the humans.

(SOUND OF ROOSTER CROWING)

SINGH: Chunks of watermelon, vegetables and worms are quickly plucked and scattered across the white serving panels on the grass.

RICARDO TRAVINO: This is great.

NICOLE TRAVINO: This is great, yeah.

R TRAVINO: Great. This is great, to see like-minded people here.

SINGH: Ricardo Travino and his wife Nicole drove two and a half hours to get here. And he certainly showed up in style, with a Butterball hat on his head that reads tofurky. That's tofu instead of the meat, in case you didn't know. He stuffs his face with vegan delights. Not to be outdone, a couple tables down Ruth Davis gets in there.

DAVIS: (Laugher) Yeah, well, I just came back from the dessert table. So I went the first time, I decide - my plate is back on the table. And I did pick up a couple little squares of something that I wouldn't normally go for, but we're going to give it a shot.

SINGH: Guess that's where the luck from potluck comes from. When you're dining with the animals, you never know what you're going to get.

(SOUND OF TURKEY GOBBLING)

SINGH: Happy Thanksgiving, everyone. I'm Lakshmi Singh, NPR News.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name: _____

Listening Comprehension Questions

1. Describe the sights and sounds of this dinner.

2. How many years has this Thanksgiving feast been served?

3. What was the goal of the Thanksgiving feast at the sanctuary?

4. Why do you think so many people attend this dinner?

5. Why do you think they say, “There’s a need for sanctuaries like this one”?

Classroom Discussion Themes

6. Would you enjoy Thanksgiving dinner at this sanctuary? Why or why not?

7. In your opinion, is food with or without meat more appealing? Provide details for your answer.

LIVEWORKSHEETS