

Diggie Paradise

By Susan Bushu



Clients from Florida, Illinois, California; private limousines from New York; nails clipped, cleaned and polished; skin and hair conditioning; eye and ear rejuvenation; oil and moisturizing treatments; full body massage - sound like bipeds spending thousands at Canyon Ranch or The Golden Door? Not. Rather, it is The Piggy Resort and Spa at Ross Mill Farm - "the ultimate in indulgence for the pampered pig!"

The brochure promises that here a pig can find "true inner and outer beauty, renew their natural centered calm and be treated to an experience of pure delight." It sounded good enough for people, so we had to see for ourselves.

Down a long, Bucks County, country lane with Little Neshaminy Creek on one side, sun-dappled woods on the other, and adjacent to a private, nature reserve, Ross Mill's thirty acres boasted a Thanksgiving weekend popu-



lation of 135 pork bellied pigs and piglets of as many colors, ages and sizes as there were personalities.

That pigs have been on my radar at all I owe to "Wilber," (Charlotte's Web), and "Babë," (movie of the same name). Since in both cases these congenial, domestic porkers captured my heart, it seemed a small jump to potbellies "Priscilla" and "Ziggy," whose non-biological parents, Jackie and Warren Silverman were kind enough to share their visiting time and a lot of pertinent pig information with us. This family of four is in the midst of a move and with all the accompanying traffic in and out of their North Wales home, they opted for the piggie part of the family to board at The Farm for a few weeks. While boarders account for a substantial portion of the population, rescues, adoptables, newborns, and pigs-in-permanent residence make up the rest.

Since potbellied pigs have a twenty year life span, live in family groups in the wild, are sensitive and said to have intelligence akin to that of a dolphin, adopting one is a commitment that Susan and Richard Magidson, owners of Ross Mill Farm, do not take lightly. The comprehensive interview process they have designed for their non-profit Pig Placement Network, qualifies each adoptive family as well as the prospective environment before



any potty-trained potbelly leaves the Farm. This is important, for instance, since these pigs have sensitive skin, no sweat glands, a body temperature of 101 degrees and must be spayed or neutered to be considered pets and not livestock in most Townships.

To dispel the myth that they're obsessive eaters, pigs are vegetarians and for the potbelly to reach his or her optimal weight of 120 to 160 pounds, a cup of pig food and some grazing each day means the pot roast, the kitchen trash and your favorite slippers are left to the indiscriminate cravings of your resident retriever. No surprise, however, that a number of pigs have been relegated to The Spa to lose piggy pounds. Weight reduction therapy consists simply of a minimal diet and a lot of supervised, daily walking.

In addition to the 3,000 square foot "resort" complete with radiant heat, central air and "the spa," there is a large barn, a "village" area with "cabins" where outdoor pigs burrow in their blankets or straw, and The Cottage, a rustic people place which sleeps 8-10 for those interested in hanging out with the pigs for more than an afternoon.

So we left this no-kill facility feeling that the 135 piggies in residence had the right idea and knowing without a doubt that pampering for pigs and people is a very good thing indeed. A bounty of additional information is available at www.rossmillfarm.com.