



Unlikely Heroes Help Save Historic Maryland Farm

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AQUASCO, Md. (WUSA) - *Villa de Alpacas* is one of the oldest farms in all of Maryland. In fact, it's one of only four bicentennial farms in the entire state. The land was bought back in 1802 and has been in the same family ever since.

"This was a very old tobacco farm and the property here and the home were built by my great-great grandparents," said the farm's proprietor, Angel Forbes-Simmons. "So I wanted to maintain this place and I didn't want it to be sold to developers."

Forbes-Simmons is an only child. When her father was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 1996, she quit her IT job in Seattle to save the family farm.

"My transition here was very scary," remembers Forbes-Simmons. "The main problem I had was that I'm not a farm girl. I was born and raised on Miami Beach. I had a lot to learn."

The key was finding a crop she could grow or an animal she could raise on her own. So Forbes-Simmons turned this old tobacco farm into the largest alpaca farm in southern Maryland. *Villa de Alpacas* is now home to ninety of these animals, and Forbes-Simmons knows every one of them by name.

"This is little Carmalita. She was born 24-hours ago. Here is Sadie, Admiral Helmsley, and Grey Bob," said Forbes-Simmons. "These alpacas are a fantastic animal because as a woman on my own, I can handle and manage them all by myself. They're not very big, I don't need fancy equipment, fancy barns, fancy anything to truly care for them properly."

The best part about these alpacas is that they've helped Forbes-Simmons to turn a profit.

"My true heroes are the alpacas because they have enabled me to keep this farm and to make it self-sustainable again after all these years."

Angel's main profits come from buying and selling her alpacas. However, in the past two years she's also

started selling alpaca fleece blankets. If you would like to learn more about the blankets or the farm, go to www.marylandalpaca.com.

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