

A peaceful corner of Wells County

A Union Township couple has ensured that 25 acres of their 'Peace Farm' will be preserved in its natural state

By **KAYLEEN REUSSER**

Jann Prince's ability and determination to devote much of her life to competing and training in the sport of powerlifting may have origins in her bloodlines.

Prince who lives outside of Zanesville, relates she shares genes with Max Schmeling, the German world heavyweight boxing champion who reigned from 1930 to 1932. "Schmeling is a third cousin on my father's side," she said.

In the 1980s, Prince, who lived in Fort Wayne at the time, became the first woman in Allen County to win a weightlifting title in the 114-pound weight class. "My best lifts were squat and deadlift at 300 pounds," she said. "My best bench press was 135 pounds at 116-pound and 122-pound weight classes."

Prince went on to win an ADEPA National Powerlifting title in 1987. She also served as a meet director and officiated at world weightlifting events. One element of all of the competitions Prince was involved with was that they be done without steroids or other chemicals. "I only wanted to work with drug-free athletes," she said.

That desire to get into shape and be strong and healthy was not always a part of Prince's life. After graduating in 1970 from New Haven High School, she smoked cigarettes, barely exercised and ate unhealthy foods. Through the encouragement of friends and family, she dropped bad health habits and began lifting weights at the YWCA on Wells Street

in Fort Wayne. As a single mother, she also worked as a dump truck driver.

In 1983, after winning a multitude of awards and titles, Prince quit the truck driving job and opened Jann's Power Gym on Brooklyn Avenue in Fort Wayne. Later, she passed the NSCA-CPT (National Strength and Conditioning Association-Certified Personal Trainer) Certification.

Today, Prince continues to coach at her drug-free gym while living on a 33-acre piece of land in northwestern Wells County with her husband, Wayne Close. The couple calls the property, which includes a horse barn and their log cabin home, "Peace Farm Nature Preserve."

Much of the woodland and prairie ecosystem is filled with trails Prince and others have cleared. "This same land was part of a treaty held by the Miami Indians," she said.

In 2014, Prince felt compelled to ensure the property would always remain in its natural state and donated 25 acres to ACRES. The ACRES organization is based in Allen County and acquires and owns various tracts of land with the purpose of preserving it to protect natural resources and minimize human impact.

Prince's donation was made as a reserved life estate. "My family will continue to use and enjoy the property privately for up to 75 years after my death," she said. (Her son and a grandson live in Fort Wayne).

After 75 years, ACRES gains full control of the property. ACRES never sells



Jann Prince of Zanesville lives on a 33-acre piece of land with her chocolate Labrador Cocoa and her husband, Wayne Close. The couple calls the parcel "Peace Farm Nature Preserve" and have donated 25 acres to ACRES Land Trust. (Photo by Kayleen Reusser)

nature preserves, so a land donation to ACRES permanently protects the land for future generations.

Prince continues to stay active by teaching fitness lessons, riding horses,

kayaking, biking and hiking with her chocolate Labrador, 'Cocoa'.

"I want to be an inspiration for people," she said. "I want to be a good example." ♦



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