

## Las Vegas Family Church: Shine City Project at Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary

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On May 18th, 2019, Shine City Project returned for a service project at Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary! Founded by Bill Gilcrease in 1979, Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary is a place for animals to be cared for while providing educational and recreational opportunities for the general public. Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary is home to more than 500 animals including parrots, chickens, goats, pigs, and other animals.

On this morning, Shine City Project helped to build a new sulcata tortoise habitat for Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary! Also known as African spurred tortoises, sulcata tortoises are the third-largest species of tortoises in the world. Easily growing to lengths of 24 to 30 inches and upwards and weighing 80 to 110 pounds and more, sulcatas are not to be confused with their much smaller desert tortoise counterparts. Like other turtles and tortoises, sulcatas often live to at least 70 years old and will often outlive their owners. Because of their large size and long lifespans, it is highly discouraged to own sulcatas as pets.

For the new sulcata tortoise habitat, our group was given the task of building a fence to mark the new enclosure. Led by Bonnie, the sanctuary director of Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary, our group placed metal posts in the ground, attached wire fencing to the posts, and reinforced the structure with lumber and dirt. To prevent a strong tortoise species from escaping, we had to ensure that our structure was capable of withstanding powerful forces while being safe for the animal.

In the beginning, our group was met with challenges. While putting in our first fence post into the ground, we unfortunately bent the fence post with the post driver. There was difficulty in removing the bent fence post from the ground, but with our combined efforts, we were able to eventually remove it. We attempted to try again putting in a new fence post carefully, but we once again bent the fence post. With teamwork, we again tried to remove the bent post. We were able to remove a majority of the defective post, but a portion of it still remained in the ground. As a new strategy, we switched to stronger, steel stakes, and as a

result, the project was able to flow smoothly afterwards.

During the difficulty, it was nice seeing everyone working together to figure out how to best resolve the problem. Although it took a while for us to remove the bent fence posts, we were able to persevere and remove them. It was satisfying to see our efforts come together and have the first fence post finally pop out from the ground.

Eight volunteers from Shine City Project helped to create the new sulcata tortoise habitat. Out of our eight volunteers, we had one volunteer who was joining us for the first time. Two of our volunteers share their experiences below.



"I was very excited to know that the service project would be at Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary because I used to go there as a child and pick the fruits off the trees! This past Saturday, our service project was to build a habitat for an African sulcata tortoise—a large one! It was hard work, but seeing the habitat built, the finished result, was incredible! All of us worked together to create a beautiful habitat for a wonderful tortoise! I was happy to have been a part of it!" (Kinesha)

"The experience I had with Shine City Project last Saturday was refreshing after final exams week. We came back to Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary to build a fence enclosure next to some adorable desert tortoises. Even though the service project was only a few hours long, we had a lot of fun working on it. I felt that we were making a contribution to the community. This contribution gives more meaning to simple volunteer work, and I would love to join a refreshing activity like this again soon." (Tin)

We hope to return to Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary and see Newman, a sulcata tortoise who is fifteen years old and weighs thirty-five pounds, enjoy his new home.