**Wolf Connection**

**CEO Report - November 20th, 2016**

**OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE YEAR TO DATE:**

2016 has been and still is a big transitioning year. We started the year with nothing at the new ranch but the dream to move the pack by the spring. We worked very hard from January until May to build the new compound and we successfully moved the pack on May 7, it was an unforgettable day! ... after that we finished tearing down the old ranch and turned it over to the landlord on June 15th. Moving was a huge achievement. Personally, it felt like putting down a gigantic bag of rocks I was carrying across a burning bridge ... finally being able to breathe.

The move stretched the team and the organization very thin and we have been working day and night since then through some growing pains, financial and otherwise, and to truly make the new ranch our home.

The new operation demands a lot more from each and every one of us. It requires a bigger team, more thorough maintenance, and security checks not only around the wolf compound but around the property, especially during hunting season. It demands that I become a better planner and executioner, better administrator, more aggressive and intentional fundraiser, and a better manager ... and for all of us be become stronger community and team leaders, and stewards of this vision and dream.

And this is just the beginning!

To meet this challenge, we took some time to re-group over the summer, and create better systems and strategies that will take us to the next level. In the midst of that, we also went through a huge scare in late June/early July when the Sand Fire came close to destroying what we worked so hard to build and spent our last cent on. It could have literally been the end of Wolf Connection.

With that threat behind us (at least until next Summer) we have been rolling out our new donor cultivation systems over the last couple of months. Additionally, we've been re-shaping team development and structure, re-focusing tasks, planning not only the year-end fundraising push but all our events into the new year which looks very promising.

Lastly, we are painfully but steadily navigating the intricacies of LA County's building permitting process with the best team we could hope for. The process is slow but we are making progress.

On this note please let's keep in mind that, even though the development of the project is extremely important, keeping the boat afloat and building a healthy reserve to keep us from the current month-to-month cashflow is priority one.

**NOW AREA BY AREA:**

**LATEST EVENTS AND PROGRAMS:**

Programs Wise we have seen an increase in day programs and a decrease in 8-week programs this year. Two of the three 8-week-program clients we were anticipating for the Fall didn’t contract for that period.

We did incorporate several one-day clients that made up for some of that loss of income, in addition to the regular rehab clients. In line with our recent decision to stay at the current level program wise we have not done any outreach whatsoever. I believe that this must change since the High Value Donor strategy is not yet showing results.

Curriculum Wise, Giulia is really shining and bringing both her creativity and power to the clients … and they feel it.

Youth Initiation Retreat: This is one of the new programs. Furthering our partnership with Street Poets, Youth Mentoring Connection, and Roots & Shoots we hosted an amazing youth initiation retreat this past October. A two-night/three-day event under the full moon that served 40 of the most in-need young men in our community who experienced a sweat lodge, time with the wolves, hiking in the moonlight, and profound, life-changing gatherings and ceremonies. The credit for pulling this off belongs to Chris who started the conversation and made it happen both at the community and financial levels. Thank you, Chris!

Another new program is the “Women and Wolves” retreat that is being launched Saturday November 19th. This is totally Giulia’s baby who has rallied all of Wolf Connection’s staff and volunteers to create and develop this program. Participation cost is $195 and we sold out weeks in advance.

Monthly Community Hikes: As we make this ranch truly ours we are finding our footing around how to run these events in a larger facility … and Cortney, our event coordinator, is hitting it out of the park. Our events are all sold out and people leave transformed. Entrance fee $55.

Howl’Oween Event: It is tradition to do a special evening event every year around Halloween. This year we took it to the next level with our decoration, photo booth with the pups, dinner, hike through the scary forest, and ghost stories around the camp fire with s’mores. The event was also sold out weeks in advance and people left blown away. Entrance fee $100.

Full Moon Exclusive Hikes: Following Rosanne’s suggestion we began offering small gatherings the night of the full moon for our high value donors and celebrities.

Wolf Connection is attracting extraordinary people so the purpose of these events is to create a more intimate community of highly influential and innovative people that can get to know each other, spend time with their peers, and hopefully collaborate for the betterment of Wolf Connection and the world. There is no entrance fee for these events yet but they are by invitation only and are not open to the public. So far the two events have raised $15K and $10K and have created promising relationships.

Photo Shoot Packages: Thanks to Ashton’s suggestion, we are in the process of creating and marketing a new product to our community of social influencers – an exclusive photo shoot product at the ranch with the wolves at the starting cost of $1200.

**FINANCIALS:**

Daniel has already sent his financial analysis and recommendations. Overall this transition year has been challenging to say the least, and it is time to take revenue to the next level.

**REVENUE:**

Cate and I are running a tighter and tighter ship using the fundraising system we’ve presented at the last two board meetings. Our cultivation is more intentional and is beginning to show results. This year I have a lot more donors primed for an ask than I did last year which makes me a lot more confident about asking.

The next step is to begin working the system with the Board so we can all feel that way about asking. This year we almost hit bottom over the summer. If it wasn’t for the Annenberg Grant that Chris secured, we would be having a much different conversation.

Lastly, Cate has the personal goal to have every single wolf sponsored for 2017 by the end of the year – potentially resulting in $120,000. This is a simple and focused goal that all of us can get behind … Go Cate!

In the meantime, I believe we need to increase programs so that we can take care of our bottom line and avoid the financial peaks and valleys we’ve suffered this year. Additionally, we are going to develop a more compelling merchandise line that will be offered not only at the ranch but also online.

**LEGAL:**

We are up to date with all our insurance policies. The Board of Directors policy just renewed at a cost of $3100.

This year we have been targeted by two fraudulent workers comp claims. We are not completely out of the woods but luckily our workers comp insurance is protecting us, doing their due diligence, and have denied both claims and both appeals. I am working with them and on my own to determine if we can go after the law firm that is handling both cases.

I realize that we are playing in a new league since we moved to the new ranch. Before people wanted to save us … now, people perceive us differently so they either want to partner with us, or they want to take advantage of us … onward.

**FACILITIES:**

This will be the first winter with the pack on the ranch so we’ll see how everything responds.

Since we moved it has been maintenance, maintenance, maintenance. We are working very hard to keep and fine tune what we have. The new trees we planted need very close attention if they are to survive, we continue thinning out brush and opening the basic trails to hike with the wolves, during programs, and with the public.

* We built a rustic amphitheater
* We put up the second teepee funded by KITT (thanks to Rosanne’s introduction)
* Miguel led the construction of two wonderful sweat lodges for the youth initiation retreat that now are part of our offering.
* We have trails going through the creek and through the forest almost connecting both ends of the property

The immediate needs and development are:

* A water pump for the new well so we can access all that water
* A Solar System that will protect us against power outages and natural disasters
* A 36’ or 48’ geodesic dome for gatherings. This is a temporary structure that can be put up easily so there is no need for permits.

We really want to start thinking about beginning the construction of the **second compound** so we are ready to rescue more wolves when the permits come through. The other compound took six months and we made some mistakes that we can now prevent if we take our time.

Lastly, **Rosanne is ready to go and excited about building her cabin**. We are still determining with the property team the fastest way to obtain those building permits. Hopefully we can move forward with this independently from the rest of the project … it would be nice to see some construction taking place.

**CUP:**

We have a stellar team so if there is a way to get these permits done, this team will find it. That said, the process has been painfully long and the county is bringing new conditions to the table. Luckily we filed last year and the new building regulations that were passed in 2016 don’t apply to us.

We have been having numerous phone calls to zero down the details and the strategy. At the moment, the legal team is trying to determine the pros and cons of subdividing the property to apply for different components of the project separately.

We also had a call with a tax expert to explore the implication of setting up, or partnering with, a for-profit entity. No final recommendation has been made.

**PACK:**

The pack is getting fluffy and ready for the winter very quickly … they are enjoying the cold for sure. We've been having a lot of health challenges among the pack:

**Chance**was diagnosed with terminal Colon cancer and given two months to live almost a year ago. Since then the cancer has spread to the lungs but he is a fighter and he is still with us. A couple of months ago, Lee and her friend Roth introduced us to a product that seems to be helping him so he is actually getting better to everyone's surprise.

**Maya**has been getting older and losing her vision so she is getting regular checkups

**Bandit**is also getting older and his hips and overall energy are not what they used to be

**Koda's**eye continues deteriorating so we've been taking him to several ophthalmologists

**Luna**was spayed last week so she is walking around with a cone on under constant supervision

**Ozzy's** allergies are giving him a hard time and the medication he has been taking is not readily available so we are trying to find him an alternative

And lastly, our grandma **Sissy's** kidneys stopped working and she left us quietly and peacefully a couple of weeks ago.

The day after **Sissy**passed away, we received **Maggie**. A gorgeous High Content female that is warming everyone's heart and makes Sissy's passing more bearable. Maggie is currently going through the initial adjustment stage and she doesn't let anyone touch her yet.

Giulia and Renee have been keeping on top of all of this in addition to making sound preparation for the winter and providing the wolves for every program and event which in itself is huge.

**STAFF and VOLUNTEERS:**

The team is gradually getting used to the bigger, more demanding operation.

I’m incorporating a new volunteer assistant for me since Cortney has been so overwhelmed by events, private visits, and social media that she hasn’t been able to assist me all that much.

I’ve recruited a volunteer interim COO for an 8-month team development process, helping the leadership team lead with more authority and autonomy. This will gradually free me up from management tasks and give room for more CEO areas of focus such as forwarding the vision, working more closely with the Board, doing public appearances and presentations, and publishing some articles and e-books. The interim COO’s name is Andrea Evenson. She is a successful business woman that wants to give back and has graciously offered her time.

We incorporated Amanda Beer (a previous volunteer of ours) as Human Services and Volunteer Coordinator for 10 hours a week, and is gradually taking those responsibilities away from Giulia so she can focus on Programs and the pack. Amanda is a licensed Psychologist with a Ph.D. and experience in HR.

We’ve incorporated Elena Albanese (one of our newest volunteers) as our Social Media Presence Coordinator. She has been working with our Consultant, Dan Tresemer, to develop the strategies to take us to the next level.

The incorporation of formal council practice amongst the team is making a big difference in our communication and bonding amongst the volunteers and staff.

I let go of Anita, our former Pack Services Coordinator. For the time being Giulia is supervising the department and co-running it with Renee. Anita remains as a programs assistant on an as-needed basis.

I’m exploring the incorporation of a Lead of Business revenue. Someone that can put their arms around our outreach, and the creating/retention of program clients at every level. This person would also focus on the development of an online merchandise store and other future revenue sources. I have the person selected and we are discussing employment terms.

We did two community volunteer days where the general public came to help with general tasks such as brush clearing and trail development.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:**

As you all know we have established a very healthy social media presence for an organization this size due to the foundation work I did over the first few years and Cate and her team took further over the last couple of years … and it is time to take it to the next level. As mentioned before, Elena and Dan have been working really hard on our new strategies. We are planning to roll out the plan early in the new year. At that point Elena will take it over from Cate so that Cate can focus on Donor Relations and Grants.

**MEDIA:**

We did two episodes for Reading Rainbow that are already on the air.

We did a couple of interviews that will be released in the next couple of weeks.

The Dodo has picked us up as a preferred source of wolfdog news and stories and has begun publishing about our pack, one having gone viral and made the pages of Good Housekeeping, Cosmopolitan, Esquire, and Maxim just to name a few.

Hollywood Today Live with Ross Mathews has expressed interest in doing a piece on Wolf Connection at the new property and we are in the process of scheduling this.

We now have two offers for a TV series. One from a successful production company on the East Coast and the other one from Discovery / Animal Planet directly. We are in conversations with both and it is too early to tell.

**EVENTS AND DONOR ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:**

* Water For Fire campaign – being released this week, forward it to your closest contacts with a note.
* Giving Tuesday … another opportunity to reach out
* 12-10 Last Community Hike of the year
* 12-13 Full Moon gathering for High Value contacts
* Year-End Push … “Can I count with your support”

**PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR:**

In 2017 we are taking every department to the next level in every area of the operation … from the newest volunteers to the CEO and Board of Directors.

My big-picture goals for next year are:

1. Create a steady revenue stream from various sources throughout the year
2. Build an emergency cash reserve equal to six months of operating budget which at the current spending rate is $270,000.
3. Break the Million dollars in revenue
4. Build the second Wolf Compound, a gathering space, and shaded areas for the Summer
5. Build Rosanne’s cabin
6. Launch the capital campaign for the facility
7. Obtain the CUP for the full project
8. Initiate construction of the bunk houses and multipurpose rooms
9. Expand the team and incorporate:
	1. Lead of business revenue – full time
	2. Dedicated program team – Part/full time
	3. Lead of Events – full time
	4. Lead of Animal Services – full time
	5. Assistant to the CEO – part time
	6. COO or General Manager – part time
	7. CFO – part time
10. Publish my first book working title “The Wolf Connection, Lessons in Life, Death, and Purpose from Humanity’s First Teacher”

**WHAT ARE YOUR WOLF CONNECTION GOALS FOR THE END OF 2016 AND 2017?**

I look forward to seeing you all at the meeting,

Teo Alfero

CEO and Founder of Wolf Connection