

such contraceptives will have to "fix" them so they don't break the law, said Pat McEwen an

development, which its sponsors, McCollum's congressional record that is "far outside the law abortion and might lead to mainstream."

Big Cat Rescue boss in limelight

He's finalist to be Animal Planet's Hero of the Year.

By LEIGH SPANN
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It takes a lot to be a hero, and for one Tampa man it takes a lot of meat.

Scott Lope, director of operations at Big Cat Rescue in Tampa, helps house and feed nearly 115 large cats every day. Animal Planet has rewarded his work in educating the public about the plight of these animals by naming him a Hero of the Year finalist.

One of the volunteers at Big Cat Rescue, Sharyn Beach, wrote the letter that nominated Lope. She says she has been inspired by his dedication.

"Long after we're asleep at night, Scott's still working, and long before we wake up in the morning, he's already working," Beach wrote.

That letter put Lope in the top

10 of 4,500 entries. In the letter, Beach focuses on Lope's ability to educate and inspire others about the animals he cares for. She notes how children have birthday parties at the rescue and ask for donations for the animals instead of getting presents.

"One person doing a lot of work is a great thing, but what's really important is getting out there and talking to other people about what's going on with these animals," Beach wrote.

Lope began working at Big Cat Rescue 11 years ago as a volunteer. He had a job in the medical field, but he decided to follow his dream of working with animals.

Lope said he "decided that this was more important than some of the material things that really aren't that important. So I quit my job and moved here."

It's been an amazing journey, he said.

He says he's lucky to be working with the animals, and he hopes he inspires change.



Staff photo by JAY NOLAN

John Lope gave up a job in the medical field 11 years ago to work at Big Cat Rescue in Tampa as a volunteer. Now he's director of operations.

"Just in the last 10 years here at the Big Cat Rescue, we've worked to get laws changed. We've gotten animals out of a terrible situation all over the country," Lope said.

It is no easy task to feed and house more than 100 big cats. Big Cat Rescue has a \$1 million annual budget. It costs \$7,500 a year to care for each of the 23 lions and tigers.

One of the prizes for the Hero of the Year is \$10,000 toward his or her animal charity. Lope said

that would take care of one of those lions or tigers for a year.

The winner of the Hero of the Year contest will be announced Dec. 18 during Animal Planet's Heroes Week. Voting started Monday and continues through Sept. 27.

Learn about nominees at www.animal.discovery.com/roar/hero-of-the-year/nominees/.

To vote, go to www.animal.discovery.com/roar/hero-of-the-year/vote/.