



FROM THE THEATRE TO THE FARM

By Nick Weingartner
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

It's early in the morning, and a small herd of goats is following Mike Negra. The executive director of the State Theatre and self-proclaimed "up-and-coming goat farmer" is wearing a denim shirt, a thick pair of jeans and a hunting cap straight out of "The Catcher in the Rye," and he's carrying a bucket of food that every goat really wants to get at.

"Looks like the HUB at noon," Negra said with a laugh. "Duddn't it?"

For Negra, it's just another part of life.

When he's not working long hours and booking big acts at the State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave., he and his wife -- along with their partners and mentors Jay and Laura Young -- tend to a flock of 19 goats and a guard llama named Pi.

"You have a llama so coyotes and even bears don't get at them," Negra said. "It scares them off."

Coyotes are a real threat to the goats, Negra's wife Wanda White said.

"We're right outside of State College, but we do have coyotes," said White, who has been married to Negra for almost 30 years. "I've seen them on my property before."

Their 45-acre estate rests in Centre Hall.

sprouting up like a proud ship wrestling through a sea of rolling hills. The house -- probably built around 1780 -- was used as a fort for the locals and even has gun ports, Negra said.

The goats stay in a white barn, which was built around 1740, located across from the house. Out of the 19 goats, 17 are Boer goats and two are Alpines. They are all males bred specifically for their meat.

"Everyone assumes you sell cheese and milk," Jay Young said. "But you can't milk these. It'd be like milking an Angus cow."

In order to deter attachment to the animals, Negra said he tries not to give them names -- unless it makes it easier to eat them.

"We have people who named [one of them] 'Rumsfeld,'" Negra said. "It's like, 'Hey, we're going to eat Rumsfeld tonight!'"

Sometimes, the goats get a bit crazy. Once, when they first got them, they escaped, White said.

"We had 20 of them on the road, stopping traffic," she said. "They're not the easiest thing to move around."

Most would say goat farming is a far cry from what Negra does at the State Theatre, but Negra said they really aren't all that different.

"Business is business," he said. "You

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have a product and you sell it."

Plus, the differences are what make it exciting, Negra said.

"I've had fun just wherever I've been. To me, it's just part of life," Negra said. "If you don't love it, don't do it."

Negra's past jobs have included being president of Mike's Video Inc., a minority owner of One Flight Up -- a punk, new wave club in D.C. -- and tour manager for acts such as Tim Curry and the Yellow Magic Orchestra.

But Negra said he's confident his latest venture will prove successful.

Goat meat is an extremely popular meat in the rest of the world. In fact, 70 percent of all red meat consumed in the world is goat meat, Negra said.

It also contains fewer calories and less fat and cholesterol than traditional meats do, according to a study from

To read a blog post containing student-friendly goat recipes, including one for chili made from goat meat:

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Alabama A&M and Auburn universities.

Another appealing aspect of farming is the sustainability movement, Negra said.

"To me, it's the next wave in eating. Everyone's concerned with where their food comes from," he said.

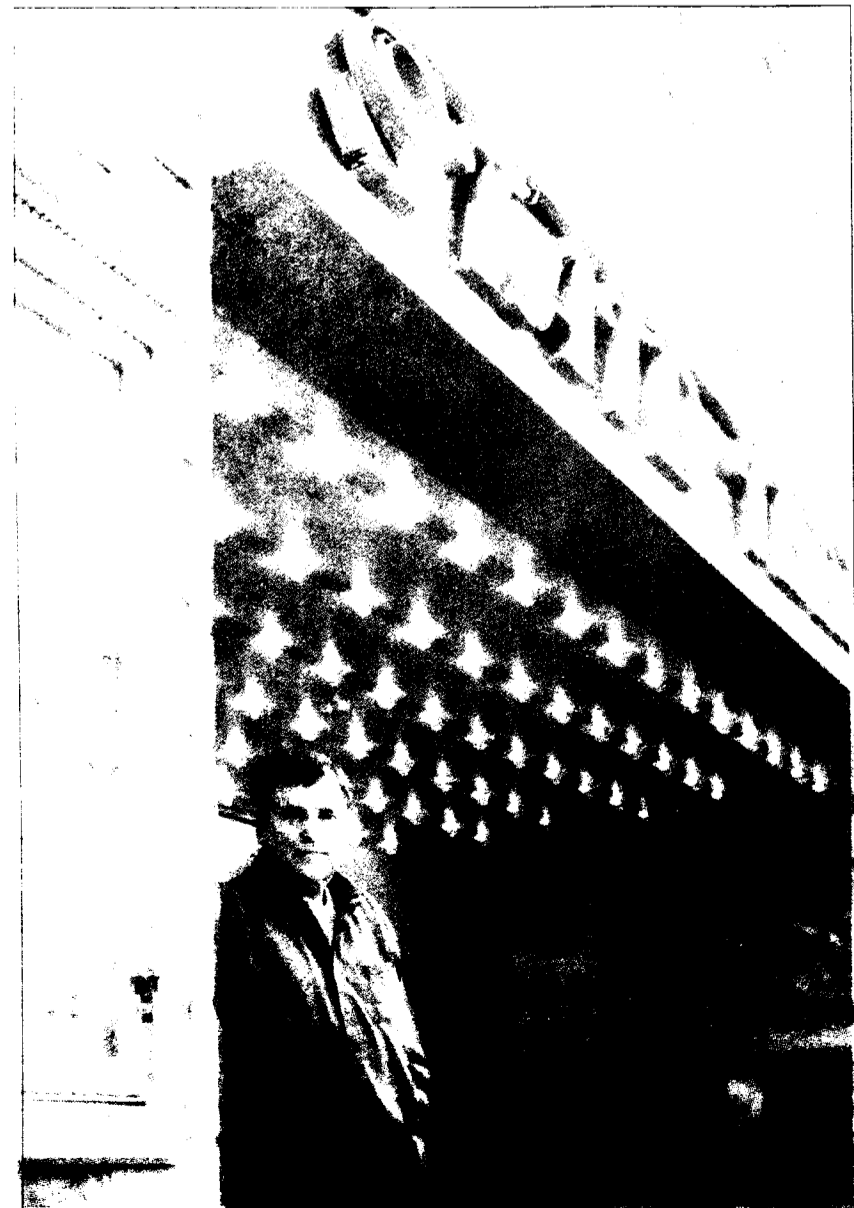
And the movement has been growing in popularity, Negra said. "Food Inc." was the second-highest grossing film in State Theatre history -- topped only by "Milk" -- and sales have been soaring for the farmer's market downtown, he said.

"People supporting local has become kind of an 'in' thing," Negra said. "But when it comes to food, it's not only the 'in' thing -- it's the healthy thing."

Negra said he plans to put more time into goat farming and hopes to take it up full-time whenever his time at the State Theatre comes to an end.

"I always liked people," he said. "But it's nice to work with animals."

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Left: Mike Negra stands outside of the State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave., where he works as the executive director. Top: One of the 20 goats on Negra's farm in Centre Hall. Bottom: Negra pulls out a pine tree for his goats to eat on his farm. In addition to the goats there is one llama, named Pi, to guard the goats from coyotes, fox and bears.

Abby Drey/Collegian