

## Q&A

LAURA MARANO

**YOUNG PEOPLE** know her as shy songwriter Ally Dawson on the Disney Channel's *Austin & Ally*, but Laura Marano is anything but shy when speaking about the causes close to her heart.

Attending The HSUS's Genesis Awards Benefit Gala last year was an "eye-opening experience" for the 18-year-old actress, singer, and songwriter, who was inspired to become the first spokesperson for The HSUS's Meatless Monday

school outreach campaign targeting K-12 students. In February, hundreds of schools across the country received a poster featuring Marano, a Meatless Monday information packet, sample recipes, and a tool kit.

In this edited interview with Catherine Vincenti, editor of The HSUS's youth magazine, *Kind News*, Marano explains her commitment to this cause.

### What do you hope to achieve through your involvement with the campaign?

I hope to show people how eliminating meat for just one day a week has an amazing amount of benefits. It helps the planet, animals, and a person's health.

### Do you think that there is a crisis with the eating habits of today's youth?

Oh, completely! Everywhere you look people are eating foods that are not good for their bodies and actually take their energy down.

### How do you think bringing the Meatless Monday campaign to schools will help?

Children will be introduced to healthy alternatives to eating meat. The amount of tasty and healthy alternatives is limitless! I think once kids are introduced to these foods, they will start asking for them more. Hopefully, parents will join them in this endeavor.

### I understand that you recently visited an elementary school in New York City as part of a program that encourages kids to read.

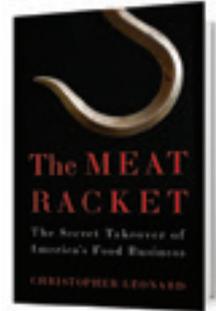
Yes, I read children *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. It's funny because it's about eating healthy in a way. This poor caterpillar is really hungry and is eating all this horrible food and doesn't feel good. Then he finally eats a leaf and turns into a butterfly. It was the perfect book for me to read to them!

### What are your plans for the future?

I want to continue my entertainment career, but I also want to continue giving back to my community as much as possible. This summer I'm totally looking forward to volunteering at an animal shelter.

**FOR THE PROMISE** of cheap meat, American consumers have traded away the U.S. farming system to a handful of corporate giants that control every aspect of industrial meat production. In his recently published exposé, *The Meat Racket*, journalist Christopher Leonard reveals what a bad bargain it's been. Leonard traces the evolution of industrial animal agribusiness and the contract model that traps farmers—"who are only called 'farmers' for lack of a better word"—in the role of "modern-day sharecroppers."

While *The Meat Racket* doesn't delve into factory farming's negative impact on animals and the environment, it does reveal a ruthless and corrupt system that drives hardworking families to bankruptcy, guts rural economies, and imposes significant costs on consumers and taxpayers.



**NEARLY BALD** from compulsive feather plucking, Peepers looks more like a vulture than a citron-crested cockatoo. Fagan, an African grey, arrived at a sanctuary with tar-covered feathers and an addiction to nicotine. Umbrella cockatoo Lou was left behind

in a foreclosed home with a bowl of dog food in his cage.



Through the stories of these and other birds, PBS's *Parrot Confidential* explores the crisis of abandonment and neglect fueled by an industry that markets parrots as suitable household companions.

Well-meaning owners discover too late that their feathered friends—whether wild-caught or captive-bred—are tragically unsuited for life in a cage.

▶ **WATCH** the film at [humansociety.org/parrots](http://humansociety.org/parrots) and buy the DVD at [shop.pbs.org](http://shop.pbs.org).