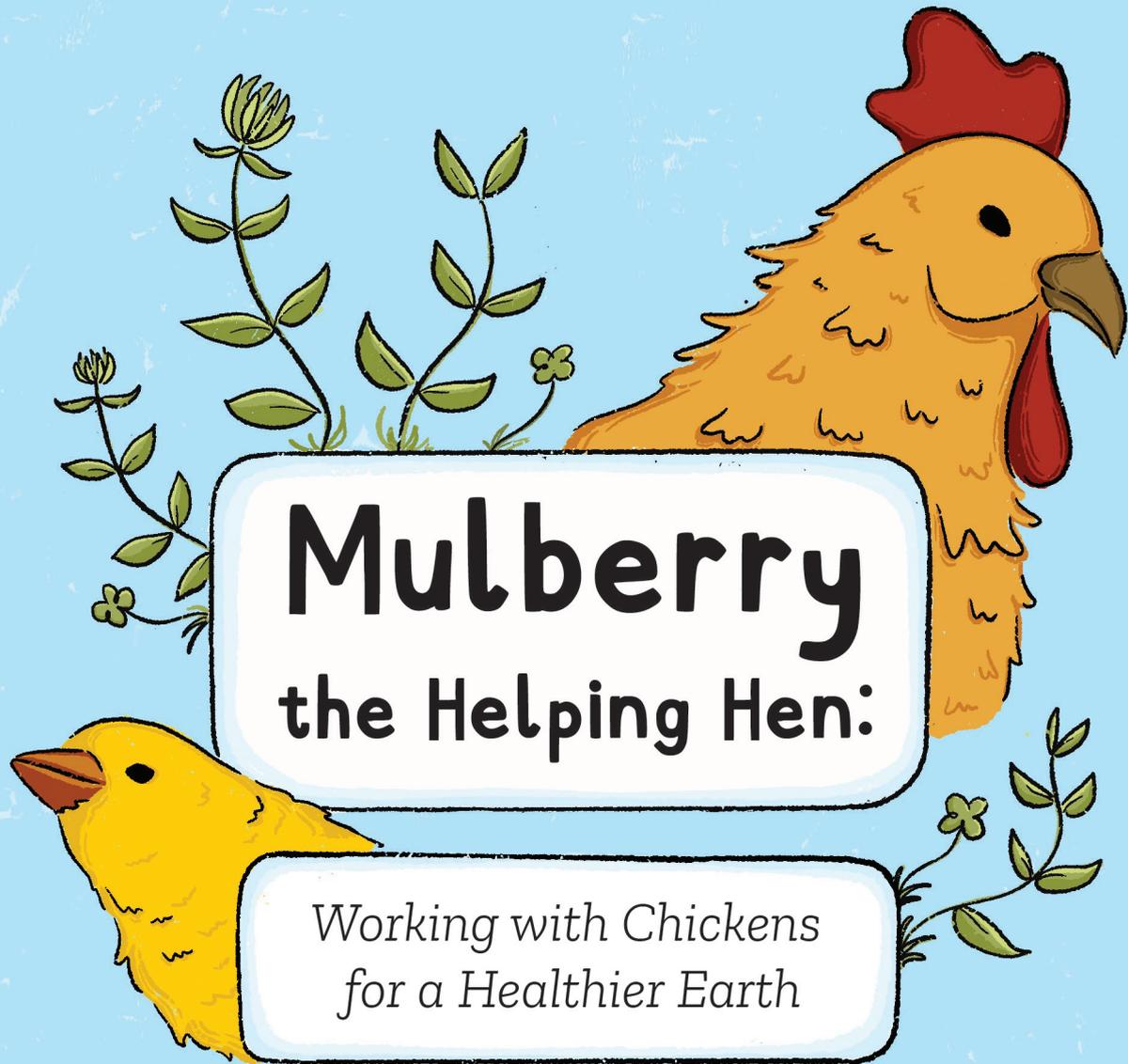


Written by  
EMILY MILES

Illustrated by  
SOPHIA CHRYSOVERGIS



# Mulberry the Helping Hen:

*Working with Chickens  
for a Healthier Earth*

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# Mulberry

## the Helping Hen:



*Working with Chickens for a Healthier Earth*

Based on the INDIANA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTER story  
"Urban chicken movement provides green backyard pest control" by  
ENRIQUE SAENZ & BETH EDWARDS



Not yet, but soon she'll be old enough to hold. You were pretty little when we got Mulberry and the other hens. Do you remember that?

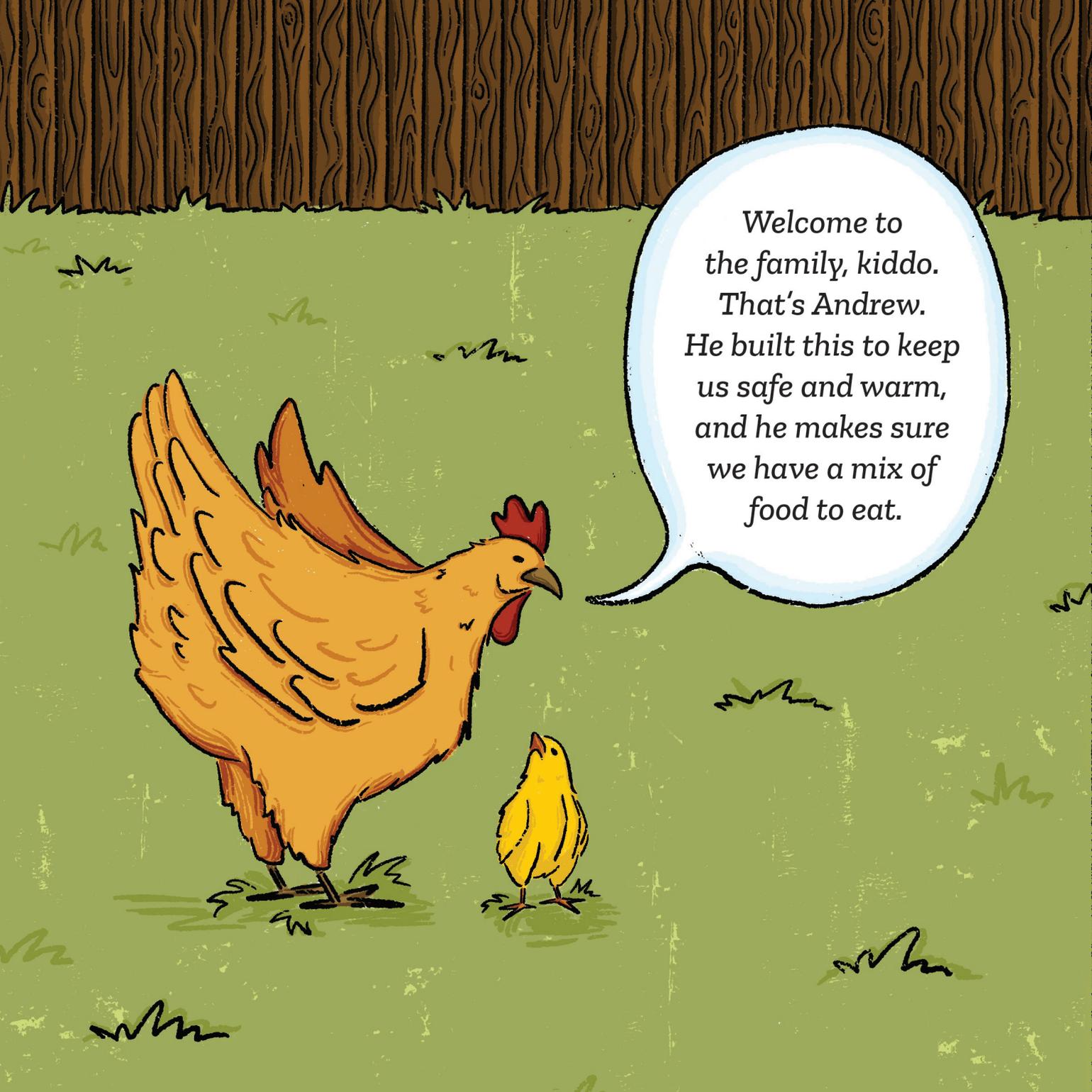
Another one hatched! Can I hold her?





Andrew Brake has raised chickens in his Indianapolis backyard since 2009 and now owns the business Nap Town Chickens.

Through this work, he can build chicken coops and sell them to fellow city-dwellers.



Welcome to  
the family, kiddo.  
That's Andrew.  
He built this to keep  
us safe and warm,  
and he makes sure  
we have a mix of  
food to eat.



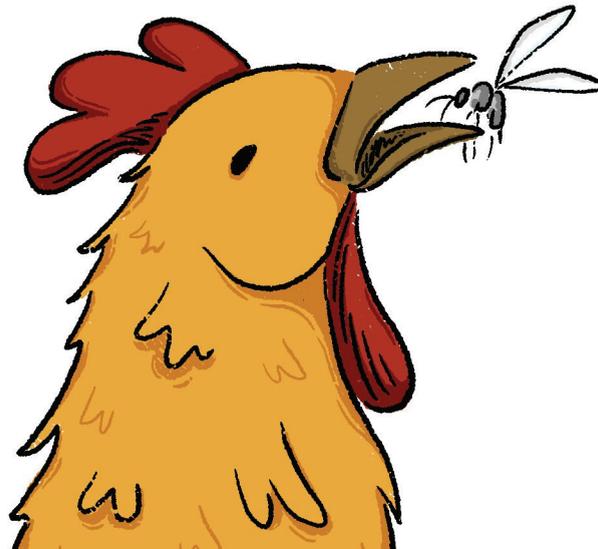
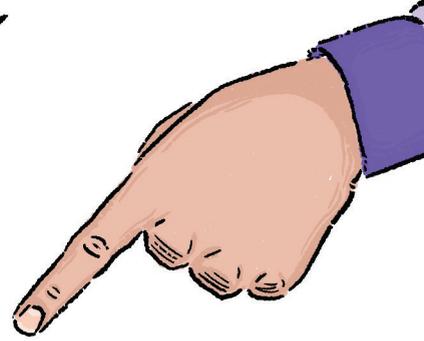
Your mom wanted a garbage disposal, but those don't turn food scraps into rich soil like the chickens can.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we waste between 30 and 40 percent of the U.S. food supply. One way to recover this waste is to feed it to animals who will enjoy it.



So, instead of paying hundreds of dollars for a garbage disposal to chop up his family's food scraps, Andrew bought chickens, which can help turn waste into new food.

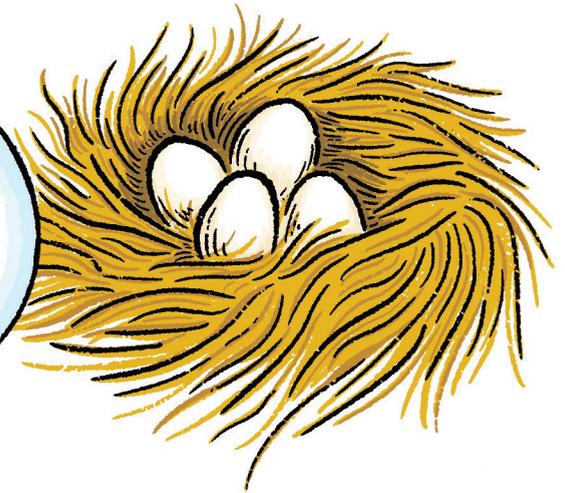
They eat the bugs, too!  
Look! Imagine how many  
mosquito bites we'd get  
without them.





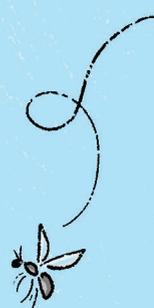
They do a lot  
for us, but we help  
them, too.

First, we use the  
energy from the bugs and  
scraps to scratch around,  
enjoy the sunshine, and  
make eggs.



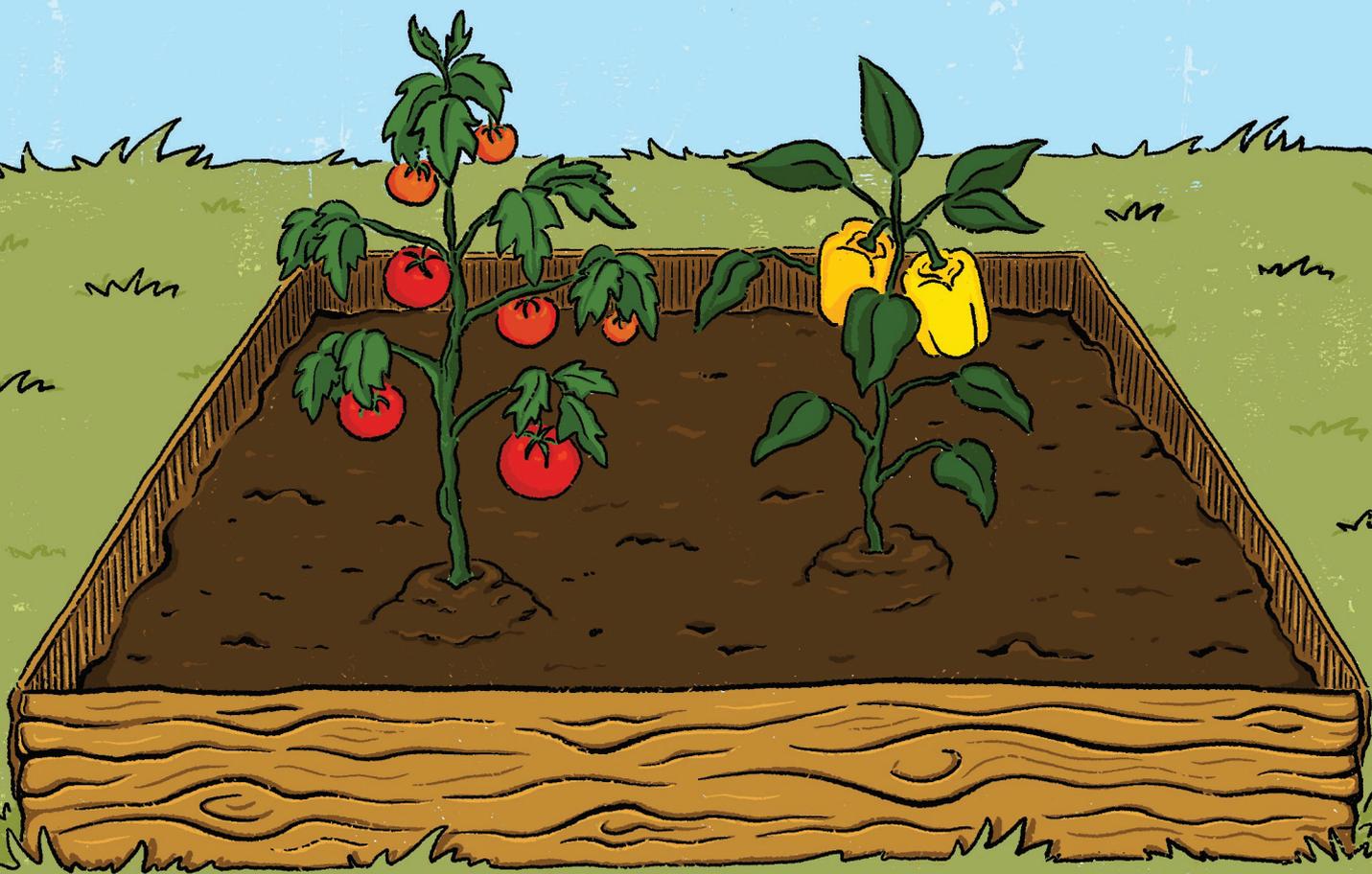
Then, we turn what's  
left into soil with lots  
of nitrogen."



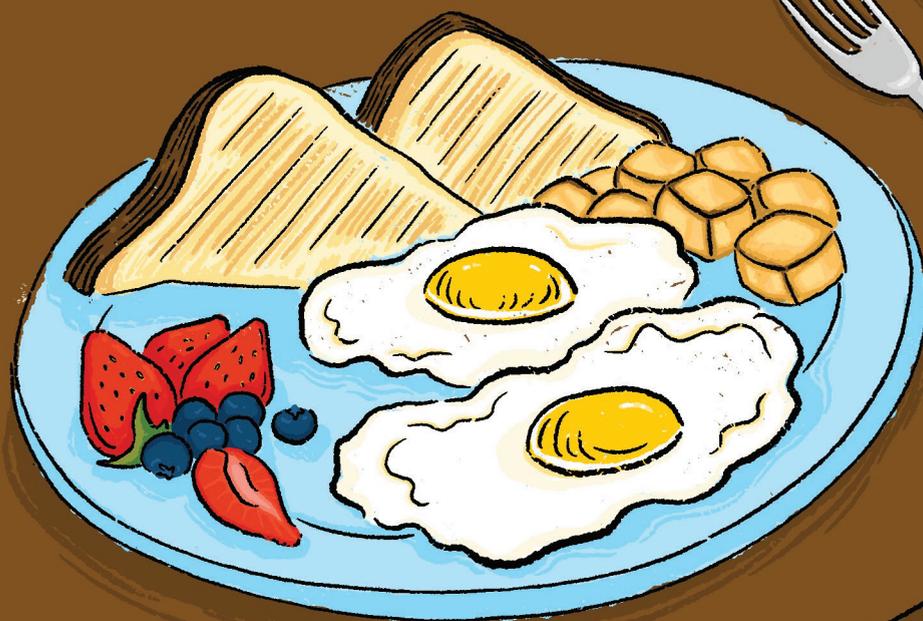


According to the Indiana State Department of Health, Hoosiers are at risk for multiple diseases carried by mosquitoes and ticks, but chickens could help reduce the number of pests that could be carrying one of those diseases. Their manure adds organic matter to the soil and helps the ground retain more water and produce helpful microbes. It also provides nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, which can help plants grow.

They're the reason our  
tomato and pepper plants  
are doing so well this year.



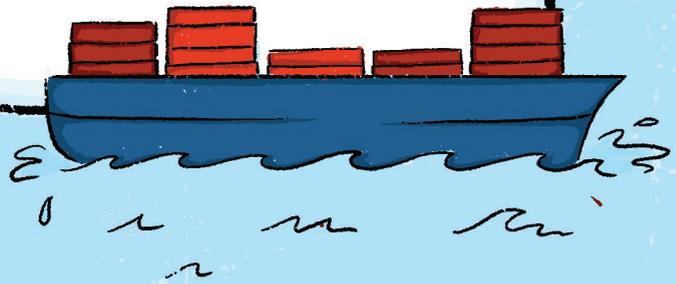
Actually, now that I think about it, do you know where your breakfast came from?



Was it all from here?  
Even the toast?



When we think about where our food comes from, we can consider the chemicals used to make it grow, the working conditions for the people who harvested it, the resources used in packaging, and how far it had to travel. The boats, planes and trucks that carry food long distances pollute the air. When we grow our own food, we can make responsible and sustainable choices that are better for the planet.



An illustration showing two pairs of hands. On the left, a pair of hands wearing blue gloves holds a small green seedling with three leaves growing out of a mound of dark brown soil. On the right, a pair of bare hands holds two white, cracked eggs. The scene is set against a plain white background with two light blue speech bubbles containing text.

The toast came from the bakery,  
and I'm not sure where they get  
their flour. We'll look into that  
later. But you're right, we  
harvested the rest right here!

When they eat our eggs  
and grow their own vegetables,  
they don't have to worry about  
pollution. Plus, they seem so much  
more excited about cooking when  
they know where their food came  
from. And that means we get  
tastier scraps!

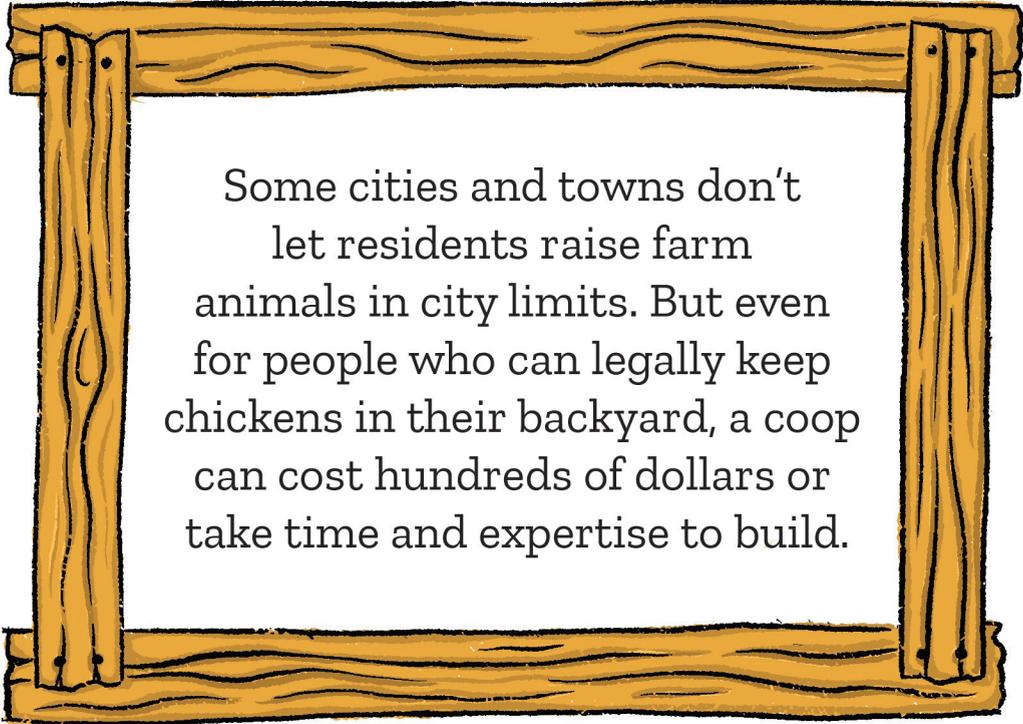


Why doesn't everyone have chickens? Do they cost a lot of money?



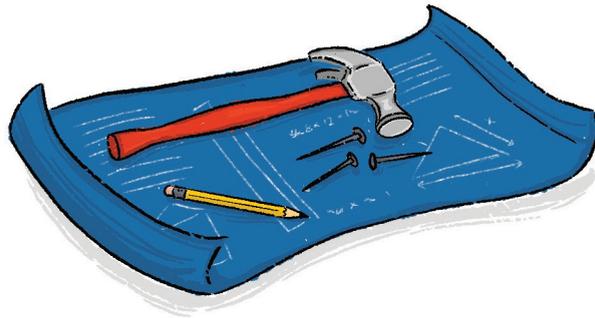
Sort of. It's an investment. We had to build the coop, and we have to buy food and make sure the chickens are warm, but they give us so much in return.

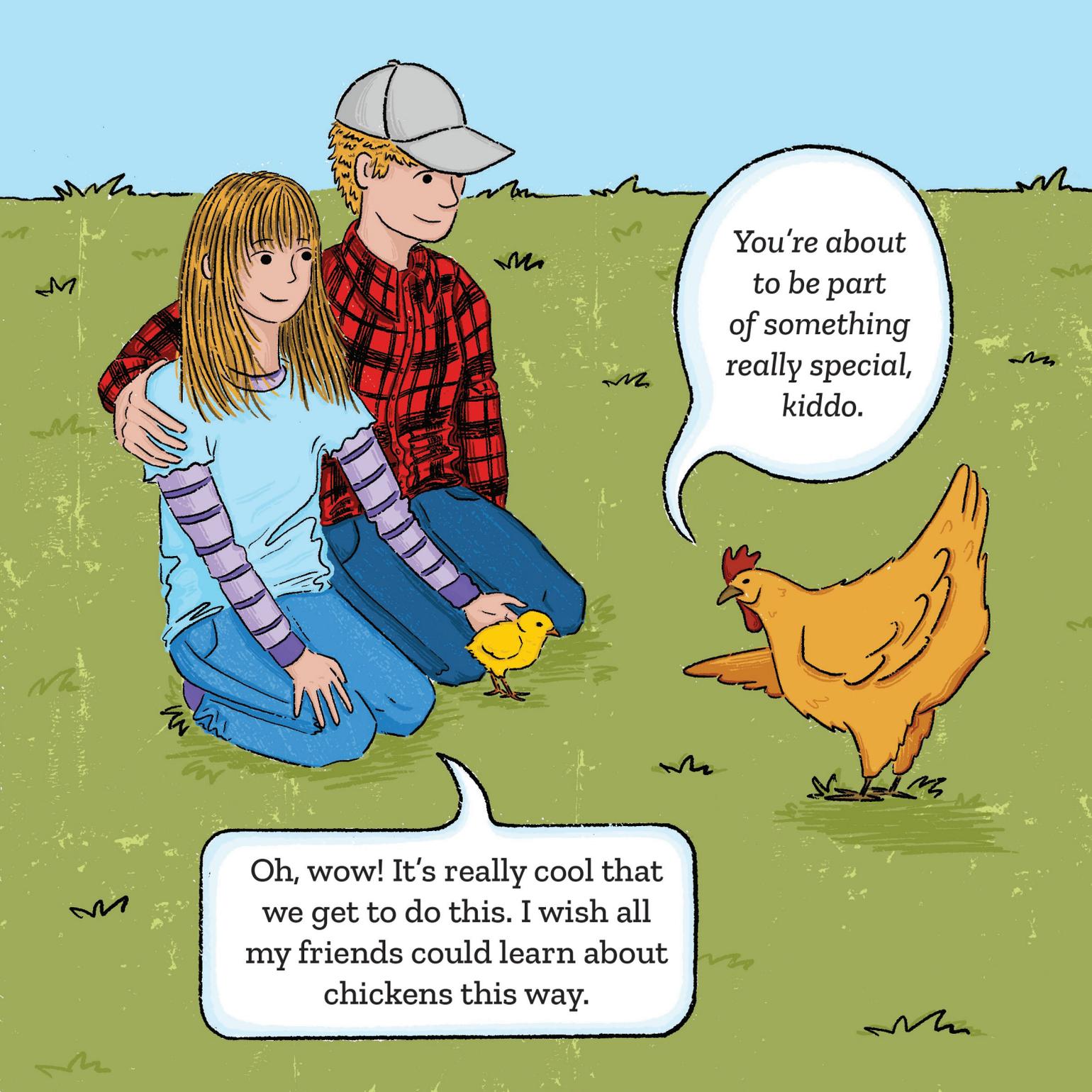
The challenge is that some people don't have enough extra time or money to get started. Other people don't have chickens because it's illegal where they live. But there are lots of folks working to make backyard chickens legal in more places.



Some cities and towns don't  
let residents raise farm  
animals in city limits. But even  
for people who can legally keep  
chickens in their backyard, a coop  
can cost hundreds of dollars or  
take time and expertise to build.

To help people learn more about chickens, Andrew and his friends volunteered to help install a chicken coop at an elementary school in downtown Indianapolis.





You're about to be part of something really special, kiddo.

Oh, wow! It's really cool that we get to do this. I wish all my friends could learn about chickens this way.

