

# All Ears in Sacramento

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**Inside this Issue:**

Fostering for the HRS .....1  
Rabbits Available  
for Adoption .....3  
Recent Adoptions.....3  
Chapter Updates .....4  
Bear's Bunnies: The Dog  
Who Loved Rabbits.....6  
Upcoming Events .....7  
SHRS Goodies .....7  
Keep in Touch! .....8  
Volunteer  
Opportunities .....8

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## Buying a Bunny a Little Time Fostering for the House Rabbit Society

*Ed. Note — The Sacramento HRS rescues and adopts out approximately 40 rabbits a year from local shelters. However, there are many more rabbits we cannot save due to the limited number of foster homes. We would like to add more foster homes to our program by reaching out to our regular readership – people who already know and understand house rabbits. If you have the space in your home and a few hours a week to interact with a rabbit who is in need of a second chance, please consider becoming a fosterer.*

Since HRS was founded in 1988, more than 7,000 rabbits have been rescued throughout our foster homes across the United States. For an unwanted rabbit, the best chance of survival is to enter an HRS foster

program. Foster homes enable the rabbit to get out in the public eye (via the HRS newsletter, web site and adoption events) instead of spending seven days a week at the shelter. But even more critically, the foster program buys the rabbit time. Because of the crowded conditions at most shelters, an animal has to be adopted quickly or be euthanized. This is unfortunate for rabbits because they don't "sell" themselves in a shelter kennel, and it takes much more time for their personalities to show. Foster homes, on the other hand, have no time limit. Our foster par-



SHRS Fosterer Kimberly Wheatfill gets Klondike (now Peanut) ready to go home with his new mom, Linda Balestreri. Read more about Peanut on page 6.

ents usually take at least a month to get acquainted with these rabbits from unknown backgrounds – they become the rabbit's guardian, advocate and friend.

Becoming a fosterer is a relatively simple process. Once you are

approved by the chapter and have set up your foster bunny's living area at your home (see related sidebar), you're ready to get your foster bunny. If you are a first-time fosterer, a current HRS fosterer will accompany you to the shelter to pick out a bunny (shelter staff will need to know you're an HRS representative, and it gives you a chance to ask questions of another fosterer.) Once the rabbit arrives home with you, you will be surprised at how much he relaxes. A small few will be naturally friendly and, as soon

*continued on page 2*

## QUICK FACTS ABOUT FOSTERING

- Fosterers must be members of the National HRS, as well as the local chapter.
- Most fosterers do have rabbits of their own. Foster rabbits can be kept in a different room or part of the house than the “resident” rabbits, but they must be allowed significant out-of-cage time (at least 30 hours per week) and treated with the same care and love as the home’s other rabbits.
- All new HRS fosterers are required to start off with just one foster rabbit. Fosterers are never required to take another rabbit after a foster has been adopted; you can stop fostering (or take a break) at any time.
- The SHRS will pay for spay/neuter costs and 50% of all other veterinary costs for the foster rabbit (in most cases, there are none).
- Startup expenses may include a cage (although loaner cages may be available from other HRS fosterers), food/water crocks, toys and a litter box for the rabbit. Ongoing out-of-pocket expenses are generally limited to food, hay, and litterbox material. For a foster home with one rabbit, this adds up to less than \$10 per week.
- HRS fosterers are asked to bring their foster rabbits to the monthly Adoption Day (a four-hour time commitment on a Saturday). Fosterers are not required to attend any other regular meetings or events.
- HRS fosterers can be added to the HRS volunteer e-mail list, which provides a forum to ask questions and seek advice from other fosterers.
- The HRS fosterer always gets the final say in whether an interested party adopts his or her rabbit.
- The HRS foster program is a wonderful way to network with other rabbit-lovers and make a variety of new friends. Our fosterers are single and married, male and female, retired and college-age.

Begin this socialization process with gentle petting from the top of the head, or you might try putting your head down close to the bunny in the cage. A person’s nose sometimes seems to be less intrusive to a caged rabbit than fingers. When you and the bunny are nose-to-nose, you can just “hang out” or talk softly to him.

After that first weeklong adjustment period, as he begins to run around, you will be able to observe his characteristics. You will need to experiment with lifting and handling. They all have sensitive areas. Find out, through firm but gentle experimenting, what he likes and doesn’t like, where to pet him, and what annoys him. Learning all these traits will make it easier for you to make a good match with an adopting family.

Some bunnies need more socializing than others. One advantage of fostering both not-yet-adoptable and adoptable rabbits is that the unsocialized ones get used to strangers who come to meet the other rabbits. Rabbits are often mislabeled at the shelter, so through fostering, you will become the best judge of the rabbit’s sociability. What is considered a “hard to place” animal can be viewed entirely differently by a person who appreciates a bold or willful bunny or has sympathy for a timid one.

After you know your foster rabbit, you can describe him in appealing but honest ways to people who show interest in him. Many first-time adopters are looking for particular physical characteristics, and chances are that your bunny won’t be exactly what the person has in mind. Unless there’s a very strong preference, you may be able to generate interest in him by telling the prospective adopter about all your rabbit’s wonderful traits and quirks. You don’t have to be a fabulous salesperson or particularly great at public speaking. Just talk about what you like about the bunny, and you’ll find that he sells himself.

Be completely straightforward about your bunny’s good points and bad points. The adopter may be surprised to hear that something they would assume is a negative is actually a positive (for instance, older bunnies are often easier to housetrain). Also, size

as their health checks out, can be put up for adoption. Most of them, however, have come from homes where they have been socially neglected. This is almost as bad as having been mistreated, and in some cases, it’s hard to tell the difference.

The HRS suggests that foster bunnies stay in a cage for the first week. You won’t learn too much about your rabbit’s personality during this period, but it’s a good time to start his litterbox training. If he has never seen a litterbox before, and it will take him several days to understand what it’s for. By the time his quarantine is over and he’s allowed to run, he will have grown accustomed to his cage and should return to use the litterbox when necessary. This period of cage confinement is also a good time to show him that all people aren’t so bad.

**Drop us a line! We welcome your submissions to *All Ears in Sacramento*. If you live in the Sacramento area and have story ideas, photos, illustrations, or article topics, send them to the address above. We can’t return items, so please do not send originals.**

# Rabbits Available for Adoption



**Logan** is a male who is looking for a friendly home.



**Lily** is a friendly girl who loves attention.



**Anakin** is a friendly and loving mini-lop boy.



**Flower** is a mellow girl with excellent litterbox habits.



**Sunshine and Freckles** are baby mini-lops and best friends. They would like to be adopted together.



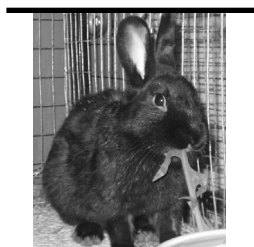
**Brandon and Penny** are a one year old girl/boy pair. They will need to be adopted as a couple. They are very independent and curious.



**Elderberry** is a boy who enjoys exploring his surroundings and being petted.



**Gibson** is a two year old mini-rex. He enjoys sitting in laps and being petted.



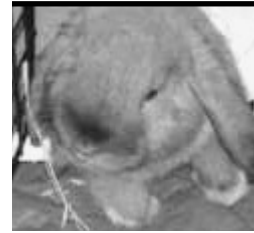
**Little White Paw** is a young active male who likes cats.



**Velvet** is a female rabbit who is loving and playful.



**Thumper** is a mini-lop boy who likes to play with humans and sit on their laps.



**Damon** is a fun, active young lop boy.



**Pierre** is an energetic and curious young male.



**Zorro** is a young boy who loves to be petted. He is very friendly, extremely curious and active.



**Henri and Sabine\*** are a pair of bonded grey Angoras. Henri likes to cuddle; Sabine is more independent. They would like a family who would enjoy brushing their long, soft coats.



**Alexander\*** is a sweet Angora with cotton-candy soft fur; however his coat is high maintenance. He needs a home with a family who will love to spend time with him.

*\* Henri, Sabine, and Alexander are currently living at the HRS center in Richmond so please call the hotline ahead of time to make arrangements for them to visit Sacramento.*

## Recent Adoptions

**Quigley** was adopted by Matt Rush as a companion for his bunny.

**Lotto** (now Daz) was adopted by Noah Buxton.

**Younger** was adopted by the Strode family.

**Thunder** was adopted by the Lewis family.

**Suzette** was adopted by the Eggerton family as a companion to Blueberry.

**Jezebel** was adopted by the Rattanavong family.

**Emma** was adopted by Dionna Wangan

makes no difference in manageability. Individual personalities alone determine whether or not a rabbit is easygoing or feisty. If there's a physical defect, tell them about it and how it should be treated (many rabbits are adopted from us in spite of health problems).

Sometimes a fosterer will have a specific bunny for only a few weeks before he is adopted out; sometimes the rabbit is in foster care for much longer. Almost all of our bunnies are adopted out eventually, and yes, although it's hard to part with them when they go, there's

nothing better than the feeling of knowing you helped to save a life and make a match that is beneficial for both the rabbit and his or her new family. There are very few "perfect" animals in the world, and adopters don't always expect to get a perfect rabbit from you. However, as you foster and get to know the personality unique to any bunny, you will find that even his imperfections are part of what make him so special and so adoptable.

— *Excerpted, in large part, from the HRS Fostering Manual*

# Chapter Updates, Events and Highlights

This has been a busy summer for Sacramento House Rabbit Society volunteers, who are working on multiple projects and outreach efforts to increase the number of bunny adoptions. Here are some recent highlights from our chapter:



- In May, the HRS staffed a booth at the grand opening of the Sacramento SPCA's new wing, which includes a room especially for the rabbits and small animals. (If you haven't seen the new facility, stop by to admire it! It's truly wonderful.)
- Our tireless volunteers **Susan King** and **Margaret Batterman** have been putting in long hours working with the Yolo County Animal Services Shelter in Woodland, which, until recently, had very few resources for rabbit care. Because the shelter has been so overloaded, the HRS worked with them to plan a special on-site adoption day on August 17. Six rabbits, including two bonded pairs, were adopted out. Six more still need homes. Please call our hotline if you would like more information or if you'd like to volunteer to help out at the shelter.

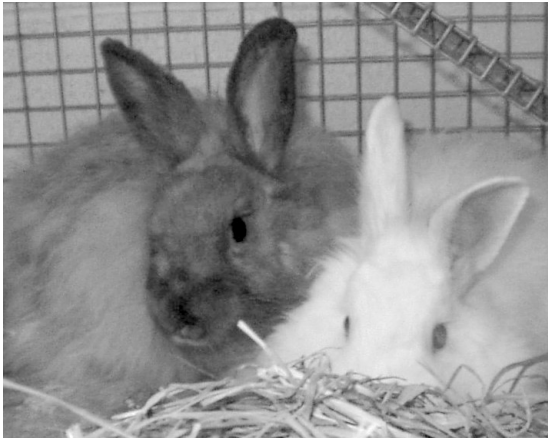


*Top: Sharon Lowrey talks to a visitor in front of the HRS booth at the Sacramento SPCA grand opening.*

*Middle: Several rabbits lounge in their new "showcase" at the Sacramento SPCA.*

*Right: Some of the bunnies waiting to be adopted from the El Dorado County Shelter.*





- **Kimberly Wheatfill** served as the HRS's liaison with the El Dorado Shelter when they had a large-scale rabbit rescue situation earlier this year. Kimberly arranged for on-site adoptions and coordinated with our volunteers to donate supplies and labor to the shelter. Within a month and a half or so, all the bunnies were either adopted or transferred out of the shelter. Kudos to Kimberly, and to everyone else who helped out, for saving so many lives!
- **Sharon Lowrey** and **Barbara Koenigmark** staffed a booth at a Saturday open house held by All Our Pets, a veterinary clinic in East Sacramento. **Dr. Julia Larson**, one of the vets at this clinic, has recently been added to our recommended vet list. Thanks to Dr. Larson for the invitation to participate in the open house!
- **Barbara** continues her weekly visits to Mercy-McMahon Terrace. She and her bunny visit the seniors once a month to brighten their days. Barbara and several other volunteers are also giving "bunny lectures" at the Sacramento SPCA's "Camp Kindness" for kids ages 9-11.
- The SHRS has updated its list of **rabbit-savvy veterinarians** in the Sacramento

area. Call our hotline at 863-9690 to request a copy, or access it online at [www.allearsac.org/sacvets.html](http://www.allearsac.org/sacvets.html). If you know of a good bunny vet who is not on the list, let us know!

- **Jan Gasber** is teaching two courses on rabbit care for the employees at Placer SPCA, to help them better care for the bunnies who come into the shelter.
- **Brandon Chee**, our webmaster, reports that our web site ([www.allearsac.org](http://www.allearsac.org)), is seeing more traffic than ever! We average almost 160 "hits" per day, and the average visitor stays about 5 minutes to peruse the site. Site visitors are from all over the world, including Australia, Singapore, France, Mexico and Israel.
- And finally, we'll have a booth at PetExpo, held at Cal Expo on Sept. 20, 21 and 22. Please come by and visit us, or e-mail **April Galligan** ([emaspetite@yahoo.com](mailto:emaspetite@yahoo.com)) if you'd like to volunteer.

*Max and Mollie, (far left) were adopted from Yolo County Animal Services on August 17, along with four other lucky bunnies. Notch (middle) and Cinnabun (right) are still waiting to be adopted.*



*The homepage to our chapter website, [www.AllEarsSac.org](http://www.AllEarsSac.org)*

Bear checks in on his bunny companion, Peanut



## Bear's Bunnies: The Dog Who Loves Rabbits

**All Ears in Sacramento** is published quarterly by the Sacramento House Rabbit Society, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization.

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I want to tell you the story of two animals, which by nature are predator and prey. When I had first brought my dog Bear home as a puppy, he was only eight pounds, which was approximately the same size as my bunny, Skipper. Skipper came over to examine the new arrival; however, Bear was so shy, he hid his head so the bunny couldn't "see" him. It was not long before Skipper became the self-appointed alpha animal in the house.

Bear just kept getting larger by the week and at maturity weighed in at 80 pounds, but that never stopped Skipper from asserting himself. When Bear got on Skipper's nerves, Skipper would simply stand on his hind legs, growl, and start "boxing" at Bear's face.

They were the best of friends and when I would get home from work, I would find Bear lying with his body against Skipper's cage while Skipper was lying up against the inside of his cage so that the two were touching.

Skipper passed away at nine years of age, six years after I had first brought home Bear. Bear mourned the death of his buddy for quite some time, and three years after Skipper's death, it was time to let Bear choose

another companion rabbit.

I brought Bear to the House Rabbit Society's adoption day. There were several rabbits to choose from, and there was one mini-lop that caught our attention. I got in the pen with the bunny while Bear watched from outside the pen. Bear and the bunny seemed curious about each other. When they sniffed noses, Bear would wag his tail. The two seemed like a good match so I adopted the bunny, Peanut.

When I brought Peanut home, he and Bear made friends with each other very quickly. Bear goes up to Peanut and licks his head and ears (which makes for some pretty crazy hairdo's) while Peanut just lies there. Occasionally, when Peanut gets into mischief, Bear will go over to him and discourage his mischievous behavior by sticking his nose down between Peanut and whatever Peanut is digging at or chewing. And sometimes when Peanut is running through the house, he runs right up to Bear's face and comes to a screeching halt. It is so amusing to watch the two interact. They are the best of friends.

— Linda Balestreri

# Upcoming Events

## Pet Expo

September 20, 21, 22

Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95815

This wonderful event showcases all kinds of animals, from dogs and cats to iguanas and pigs. The SHRS booth will feature free information and premiums for sale, and our volunteers will be on the lecture circuit, giving talks about bunny behavior and care. Stop by and see us!

Bring your bunny to any Clinic for a \$5 nail trim - no appointment necessary!

## Adoption and Information Clinics

Are you thinking about adding a bunny to your household? Or are you just looking to learn more about the one you've already got? Regardless of whether you've had a rabbit for years or if you're new to the joys of rabbit companionship, you'll have a great time at our monthly Adoption and Information Clinics. Come ask us questions about bunny behavior, care, grooming, nutrition, or anything else you can think of. We have free printed information on a variety of topics, and, of course, we also have our fabulous fosters on hand, waiting for just the right family to come along! The adoption donation is \$50 (\$75 for two), and includes a copy of *The House Rabbit Handbook*.

If you already have a bunny, you're welcome to bring him or her to the Clinic in a secure carrier. Our experienced "rabbit wranglers" can trim your rabbit's nails for a \$5 donation. We also detangle matted bunny fur. If your rabbit has stubborn knots that you just can't get out, call our bunny line in advance (916-863-9690) and make arrangements to bring him to the Clinic for a makeover. We have clippers, combs, and lots of patience. Donations of \$10 per hour are appreciated!

August 31

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Fair Oaks PetCo

8840 Madison Avenue

September 14

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Citrus Heights PetCo

6067 Greenback Lane

September 28

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Fair Oaks PetCo

8840 Madison Avenue

October 12

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Roseville PetCo

1917 Douglas Boulevard

## New Mailing Address

The SHRS has a new mailing address:

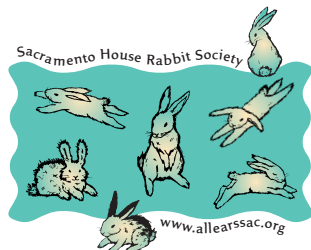
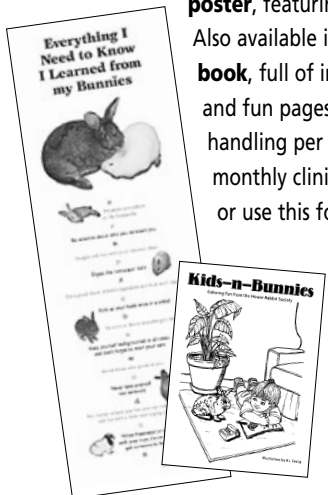
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PO Box 19850  
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Our old mailing address will still be valid for a few more months.

## SHRS Goodies

Our popular **SHRS t-shirts**, featuring delightful illustrations by SHRS member Shannon Hawkins (see below), are still available for purchase. Sizes available are L in natural and M, L, XL in navy. \$15

Back by popular demand is the **"Everything I Need to Know" poster**, featuring local rabbits. 12 x 36 inches, \$12. Also available is the **"Kids-n-Bunnies" coloring book**, full of information about house rabbit care and fun pages to color. \$2 plus \$1.50 shipping and handling per coloring book\*. Come by our monthly clinics to see these items in person, or use this form to order by mail.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

ITEM	COLOR	SIZE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
shipping & handling*:				
total:				

Please mail completed form with check or money order (payable to Sacramento House Rabbit Society) to:  
Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 19850, Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

\*SAVE on shipping & handling charges when buying in quantity!  
1-3 items ordered is \$4.00 s&h    4-6 items ordered is \$8.00 s&h, etc.  
if ordering only coloring books, shipping & handling is \$1.50 per book.

allow 2-3 weeks for delivery



Sacramento House Rabbit Society  
 P.O. Box 19850  
 Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

membership  
 expiration date



**Not a Member?**

Sacramento House Rabbit Society depends on donations to keep running. Please fill out the form below to keep receiving *All Ears in Sacramento*, and to support local rabbits in need!

**Keep in Touch!**

Time to renew your membership? New to the House Rabbit Society? The annual membership to the House Rabbit Society is \$18. This includes a subscription to the quarterly *House Rabbit Journal*. The annual membership fee for the Sacramento Chapter, which includes the quarterly *All Ears in Sacramento*, is \$15. The House Rabbit Society is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. All membership fees are tax-deductible and go towards care expenses for the rabbits and for providing educational materials, such as these newsletters.

- Please sign me up for the National Membership, \$18
- Please sign me up for the Sacramento Membership, \$15
- Please sign me up for both for \$30
- I have enclosed an additional donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_
- I would like to volunteer with SHRS (see choices to the right)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

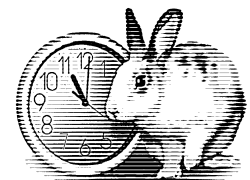
email address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Return with check payable to House Rabbit Society to:  
 Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 19850, Sacramento, CA 95819-0850*

**Volunteer!**

Would you like to help local rabbits and bunny-lovers? We could use volunteers in the following areas:

- Public Events (staffing education tables)
- Fundraising Events
- Distributing Literature
- Working with Shelters
- Transporting rabbits to the National Headquarters in Richmond
- Fostering



**HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY**