

All Ears in Sacramento

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Kylie and Barbara – Pet Therapy Ambassadors



*Barbara and Kylie Koenigsmark, with
two other Shriners Goodwill Ambassadors*

House rabbits, by very definition, strike many people as being a very unique type of pet. However, Kylie the house rabbit is more than just a housepet – she, along with her human “sidekick” Barbara Koenigsmark, is also a true, card-carrying Goodwill Ambassador.

Together, Barbara and Kylie constitute a certified pet therapy team. They’ve been

specially trained and certified by the Delta Society, and two to three times a month, they make visits to Shriners’ Children’s Hospital. Each wears an official photo badge to show that they’ve gone through rigorous training and have passed clearance to be in the hospital. (Barbara wears her badge clipped to her shirt, while Kylie’s is pinned to her leash or clipped to Barbara’s pocket.)

How it all started

Kylie, a tiny taupe dwarf mix bunny, was about a year old when she was rescued from the Sacramento City Shelter by Barbara. Although Barbara had planned to foster Kylie, not keep her, the little bunny’s sparkling personality quickly won her over and Barbara knew that she was going to keep her. But little Kylie’s adventures were just beginning. When Barbara heard about the pet therapy program at Shriners’, she knew that Kylie would make the perfect four-legged friend to young patients in need. She made a few phone calls and found out that pet therapy teams needed to be certified through the Delta Society. Soon, the duo was on its way to something special.

The certification process, which took about three months, was somewhat arduous for both Barbara and Kylie. For starters, both animal and handler need a clean bill of

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Kylie and Barbara *continued from page 1*

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health (in Barbara's case, that included shots for measles, mumps and rubella, and proof that she did not have tuberculosis). Once the paperwork was clear, they next had to complete the evaluation process at the hospital auditorium. There, the evaluation team from the Delta Society set up a number of "tests" for the animal/human teams. Each "test" was designed to mimic a situation the team might encounter on an actual hospital visit. "In one case, there were several people sitting in chairs in a row, and they passed Kylie from hand to hand to see how she would react," Barbara said. "Then they had a patient in a wheelchair with an IV pole, to see how she would react to moving unfamiliar equipment. There was a man flailing his arms and making strange noises near her. And they offered her food."

According to Barbara, Kylie passed all the tests with flying colors. "She did nothing – she had no interest at all. She was preoccupied with what was going on."

Twice-monthly visits

Kylie may be the only rabbit certified by the Delta Society in Sacramento. She and Barbara often visit the hospital on the same day as other pet therapy teams, although it's much more common to see dogs and cats roaming the hospital than rabbits. All of the animals – Kylie included – must wear a harness and

leash. Unlike dogs, though, rabbits are not required to learn any commands, and Barbara must carry Kylie from room to room. Once with a young patient, though, Kylie can sit on the bed or in a wheelchair or a lap with supervision. And the pleasure she brings to these children is readily apparent.

The patients are of varying ages – usually under 12 years, although sometimes they visit teenagers on their route. Barbara stops at the door of each room and asks the patient if he or she would like a short visit from Kylie. Patients very rarely say no, and sometimes even seek her out. "When we arrive over there, word seems to get around that there's a bunny in the house. Parents sometimes will come looking for her to request a visit for their children."

Visits typically last 5-10 minutes, with the entire trip lasting about an hour to an hour and a half. Barbara said it's easy to tell when Kylie has had enough: "She gets fidgety, and then it's time to find a litterbox," she explains ... adding that in the year they've been making these visits, Kylie has never had an "accident" while working.

Overall, Kylie seems to relish her role as an ambassador bunny to those who are in need of cheer. While it's true that she sometimes takes a while to warm up to her outings, she quickly seems to settle into it. "During the evaluation process, one thing they ask the handlers is what are the signs of stress in their animal," Barbara said. "For Kylie, it's easy to tell – she crosses her ears when she's stressed or in any unfamiliar situation, such as a trip to the vet. When we visit the hospital, she often crosses her ears when we get there. I think she's just nervous. But after we have been there for a little while she gets comfortable and her ears uncross."

Sharing the love ... and the work!

Barbara said that although the commitment is not a small one, the joy of making a sick child smile is well worth the effort. Some of her favorite experiences have been with

Kylie brings smiles to kids who need them



Rabbits Available for Adoption



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



Meg is an energetic young girl looking for a good home.



Henry is 1 year old boy who is very curious and energetic.



Shelby is a year old girl. She has excellent litterbox habits, is very affectionate and likes to be held.



Pierre is an energetic and curious young male.



Elvin is a sweet, friendly boy.



Cream is 2 year old a Florida White boy. He is very mellow and likes sitting on laps.



Fiona, Felicia & Finnegan (2 girls and 1 boy) are friendly, playful siblings. They want to be adopted as a trio.

Recent Adoptions

Mercedes was adopted by Francis Jones

Lyndie was adopted by Natalie Chen

Shelby was adopted by Wendy Johnson

Fluffy was adopted by Patty Youd

Peaches was adopted by Daniel Ordway

children who were just amazed by the notion of an animal in the hospital. Barbara tells the story of one little girl who was particularly amazed: "She said, 'Oh, is that a real bunny?' She'd never seen a real one before ... just pictures and on the tv. She got to hold her and was just delighted. She went out of her way to say that."

The only drawback, Barbara said, is that Kylie could stand a sidekick – or, rather, another bunny to share the visits. "Kylie needs a little help ... she's exhausted when we get home!" Barbara already has chosen another rabbit from the shelter (tentatively named "Laurie") who may be a pet partner candidate. Right now, Kylie is the only bunny making the rounds at Shriners ... although, says Barbara, laughing, "They do have a pig who visits sometimes. One day his trainer was pulling the pig around in a Red Flyer wagon."

— Kirsten Macintyre

About the Delta Foundation

The Delta Foundation was established in 1977 in Portland, Oregon. Delta's founders wanted to understand the quality of the relationship between pet owners, pets, and care givers (both human and veterinary) – hence the "delta" name, based on this triangle. At that time, pets were widely considered luxury or throwaway items, not of central importance to individual health and well-being. Delta's early years focused on funding the first credible research on why animals are important to the general population and specifically how they affect humans' mental and physical health.

Today, the Delta Society's Pet Partners Program trains and screens volunteers and their pets for visiting animal programs in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, schools and other facilities. The Pet Partners Program was established in 1990 to ensure that "both ends of the leash" (people as well as animals) were well-prepared to participate in animal-assisted activity and animal-assisted therapy programs. Pet Partners is the only national registry that requires volunteer training and screening of animal/handler teams.

Delta's national network links volunteers with facilities in their own communities. Over 6,400 Pet Partners teams now operate in all 50 states and four other countries, helping more than 900,000 people each year.

For more information, visit www.deltasociety.org or call (425) 226-7357.

Samosa's Story

Editor's note: This is a true story from the National HRS, based in Richmond – although it's appalling (don't worry; there's a happy ending), it is typical of the work HRS chapters do. If you've ever wondered what your membership fees and donations go towards, please read on. For more pictures and details of Samosa's story, you can read more at www.rabbit.org.



In addition to her injuries from her fall to the freeway, Samosa suffered from sore hocks and showed signs of severe neglect.

A terrible act of animal cruelty happened in California in mid-July, but thanks to the House Rabbit Society, good luck and providence, this story does have a happy ending. This story begins on Highway One south of San Francisco, when two anonymous witnesses saw what appeared to be an animal thrown out of the window of the car ahead of them. After stopping to

investigate, the people discovered that a very small, badly hurt and terrified black lop-eared rabbit had in fact been thrown into traffic.

The shelter staff was shocked to see the tiny creature fighting for her life.

The witnesses picked the rabbit up and took her to a local shelter, where she was given morphine for her pain. Fully expecting the rabbit to perish, the shelter staff was shocked to see the tiny creature fighting for her life. The shelter contacted a local rabbit rescue group called Rabbit Haven, which cared for the rabbit over the weekend and arranged for her to be placed into foster care with HRS.

The rabbit, now named Samosa, came to the HRS with a long road ahead of her. Although she miraculously had no broken bones or internal injuries, she was suffering from serious skin abrasions from her fall to the freeway. She was also suffering from severe foot injuries likely caused from being constricted in wire cage. She was nearly bald, with only patches of black fur remaining on her tiny pink body.

HRS staff immediately recognized this as a sign of severe neglect, as rabbits often pull out their own hair due to acute psychological distress.

As Samosa started the rehabilitation process, she quickly became a "poster bunny" for the National HRS. The HRS posted a reward for information leading to the arrest of the heartless person who threw the bunny onto the freeway. And although the culprit has yet to be found, something even better grew out of the HRS's efforts to publicize her plight: A permanent, loving home for Samosa.

In a letter on the National HRS web site, Samosa's new family writes the following:

"(Samosa's foster mom) did such a fantastic job rehabilitating her physically and mentally. One would assume that an animal, which had been neglected to badly and then thrown out to die in traffic, would be terrified of people and withdrawn forever. Not so our little Samosa!

She is very welcoming to any species of visitors, be it a human, a cat, or a dog. And for some reason, we are all very drawn to her. Amy, the dachshund, is dying to get into her enclosure. She has met Samosa face-to-face (under supervision) and is just smitten with her! The cats love to come into her enclosure and lay on her chair or in her haybox. Lola, her feisty rabbit neighbor, comes to the 'fence' regularly to snarl at her, which does not faze Samosa one bit. She always comes back to greet Lola again.

And I just love to lay on the floor with her and enjoy her company – she is very loving and presses her head into my hand to get petted.

Samosa is a free bunny now. Freed of suffering neglect, ignorance and pain. Free to roam around in her part of the bunny room. Free to make contact with a variety of friends. And with her positive outlook on life, she will have a long, happy life with many friends. Samosa has found her forever home!"

SHRS Needs Your Help!

The Sacramento chapter of the House Rabbit Society works with local shelters every day to improve the lives of rabbits in our area. Although not all bunnies have a story as dramatic as Samosa's, most of the foster bunnies we take in do need veterinary attention to ready them for adoption, in addition to spaying or neutering.

With the rising cost of veterinary care, we need your contributions more than ever. Your donations help take the burden off our foster parents, and also go towards funding our educational programs, including classroom visits

and special events.

Because the House Rabbit Society is a non-profit organization, most donations qualify for a federal, and often state, income tax charitable deduction. As with all financial considerations, we encourage you to discuss potential tax advantages with your attorney, tax advisor or financial consultant. Use the form on page eight of this newsletter to become a member, renew your membership, or send us a donation. It is your financial contributions that make what we do possible. Thank you for your support!

SPECIAL EVENT AT THE RABBIT ADOPTION CENTER, RICHMOND

Tellington TTouch Class

Would you like your rabbit to be happier and healthier? Don't miss this special TTouch class for you and your rabbit!

Saturday, November 8

9:30 am - 4:00 pm.

House Rabbit Society Center
148 Broadway, Richmond, CA

(You may attend with or without your rabbit)

Limited Space! RSVP: Susan Davis at (510) 814-1867

Fee for the day:

\$90.00 *(with your own rabbit)*

\$70.00 *(using a shelter rabbit)*

Back by popular demand, Dr.Carolynn Harvey, DVM, and Lauren McCall are going to be teaching their wonderful Tellington TTouch class again at HRS headquarters this fall. This is a small group hands-on workshop.

Veterinarians, trainers, shelter personnel and animal lovers worldwide use this revolutionary bodywork to enhance their relationship with animals, improve health and behavior, and increase an animals willingness and ability to learn. At this workshop, you will learn Tellington TTouch techniques to:

- Identify and alleviate pain, fear or tension that can cause physical and behavioral problems
- Help with bonding problems or excessive chewing

- Increase confidence for nervous rabbits
- Ease the symptoms of aging such as arthritis and stiffness
- Aid recovery from injury or illness in conjunction with veterinary care
- Improve your relationship with your rabbit

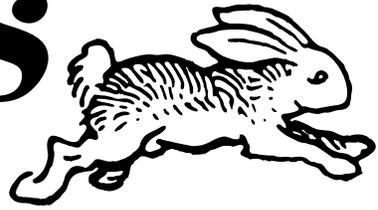


Lauren McCall brings a life-long love of animals to her TTouch, Reiki and animal communication practice. She is a TTouch Practitioner and has Reiki second and fourth degrees. She is the former Executive Director of the TTEAM and Tellington TTouch organization and currently lives Portland, Oregon with her partner, two cats, two dogs, and two very outgoing rabbits.

Carolynn Harvey is a well-known, local veterinarian with a special interest in and connection to rabbits. Since experiencing Tellington TTouch two years ago, she has found it enhances conventional veterinary healing, and fills niches that traditional veterinary medicine doesn't address, such as emotional health and balance.

Lauren McCall demonstrates TTouch at "Rabbit Awareness Day 2001" in Oregon. Photo by Kem Sypher.

★ Radkos for Rabbits

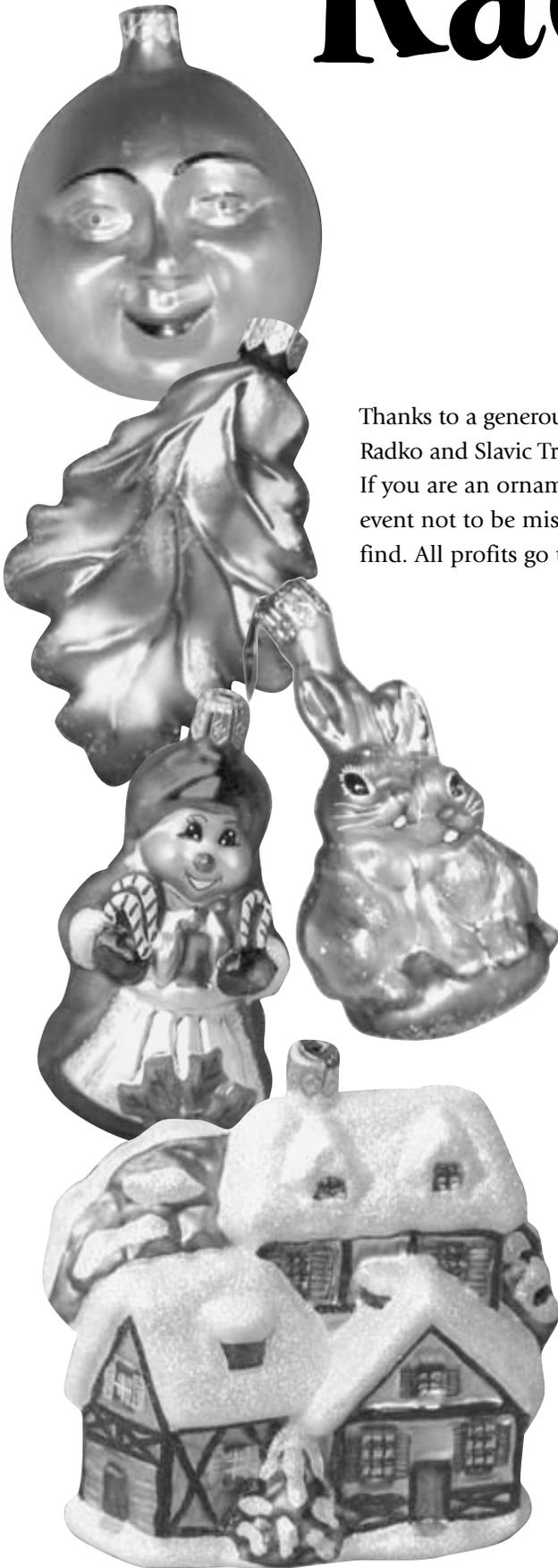


Thanks to a generous donation from one of our members, we have more than 100 Christopher Radko and Slavic Treasure collectable Christmas ornaments we will be selling this December. If you are an ornament collector, or just want to spruce up your holiday decor, this is an event not to be missed. Many of the ornaments available are retired styles that are hard to find. All profits go to SHRS to help bunnies in need in the Sacramento area.

December 6
8:00 AM — 4:00 PM
36th Annual Christmas Fair
Historic Sutter Street, Folsom

Take a sneak peek!

Visit www.alllearssac.org/Ornaments1.html to see all the ornaments available





Sacramento House Rabbit Society
 P.O. Box 19850
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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: _____

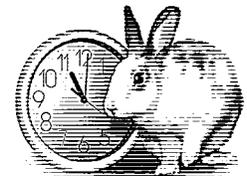
email address: _____

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 shelter rabbits to local adoption days
- Fostering



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY