Rabbit Advocates celebrates 10 years

Ten years ago, a rag tag team of dedicated volunteers lived out a dream of creating an organization dedicated to ensuring pet rabbits live happy lives. Today, Rabbit Advocates boasts a mailing list of 1,000 people and many consistent volunteers and programs. While the work of the organization is needed as much as ever because so many great companion rabbits are homeless, organizers say they won’t rest until all companion rabbits are spayed and neutered and reside in loving homes.

Building an organization from scratch

Anita Winkler walked into the Oregon Secretary of State’s office. In her hands was a file that included the originating documents to establish a new animal welfare organization. Anita was one of about 10 dedicated people who had rabbits as pets, and who thought an organization should be established to teach others about the fun, furry companions. It had taken months of difficult work to get to this point and on May 15, 2002, the dreams of these few volunteers came true: Rabbit Advocates was born. Winkler served on the organization’s first board of directors and saw to the legal and financial requirements of creating a new organization from scratch.

It seemed like the beginning, and it was in a way. But five years earlier, some of the designers of the Rabbit Advocates came together because there was a tremendous need to help pet rabbits at the local humane society, and an even greater need to help abandoned rabbits on some acreage in Beaverton, Oregon. There, volunteers connected with each other and neighbors to help round up more than 60 rabbits. The project, called the Beaverton Rabbit Rescue Project (BRRP) took months because abandoned rabbits had been allowed to reproduce for a very long time. But, with the land set for development, the rabbits would die. So day after day, evening after evening, weekend after weekend, month after month, the rabbits were caught, spayed and neutered, and placed in adoptive homes. The BRRP project solidified the volunteers as a well-functioning group and the thought of an organization dedicated to rabbits and their care became a dream.

continued on page 2
Celebrating 10 years

How can you help the Rabbit Advocates celebrate another anniversary?

Donate
Rabbit Advocates accepts tax deductible donations in any amount. Use the online donation feature on our web site to contribute securely with a credit card or through Paypal. Checks can be sent directly to: Rabbit Advocates, P.O. Box 14235, Portland, OR 97293-0235. If you would like your donation to go to the Medical Fund, which offsets the costs of medical procedures and spay and neuter surgeries, please write “Medical Fund” on your check.

Adopt a rabbit
Give a forever home to one (or more!) of the many rabbits currently being fostered by Rabbit Advocate volunteers. Each adopted rabbit opens up a space for another rabbit in need. Adoptable rabbits are featured on our website: www.rabbitadvocates.org.

Foster a rabbit
Provide a temporary home for a rabbit in an emergency situation or for a rabbit that needs special care. For more information on how to foster a rabbit, contact foster care coordinator Mary Huey at rabbit8.mary@gmail.com.

Sponsor a rabbit
Rabbit Advocate volunteers care for many rabbits with medical issues requiring ongoing vet care or major surgeries and medications. All rabbits are in individual foster homes and all expenses, including medical treatments, are paid by the foster person. Most of these special needs rabbits are unadoptable because of their medical problems and will remain in foster care for their lifetimes. The Rabbit Advocate website (www.rabbitadvocates.org) now features a way to help sponsor the ongoing care of these special needs rabbits. Donations are gratefully accepted online with a credit card or through Paypal. All donations are tax deductible. Sponsor names will be gratefully acknowledged on our website unless the sponsor would prefer to remain anonymous.

Donate your car
The vehicle does not need to be in running condition, but it should be able to sell for at least $75 at public auction. All of the proceeds will go to the Rabbit Advocates and you will receive a donation receipt for your tax records. For more information, contact volunteer Chris Arends at carends44@comcast.net.

Wear the logo proudly
The Rabbit Advocates is proud to offer t-shirts (including the new tie dye shirts), sweatshirts, static-cling stickers and draw-string backpacks featuring our logo. For more information, contact volunteer Tonie Young at tonie@colonialcustomforms.net.

Search or shop online
Rabbit Advocates is registered with GoodSearch.com and GoodShop.com. Simply select Rabbit Advocates as your designated charity, and each time you conduct an internet search using GoodSearch.com or shop online using GoodShop.com, a donation will be made to our organization. It costs you nothing, but raises a small contribution for the Rabbit Advocates each year.

Donate time to Bunny’s Best Bites
Help raise money for the Rabbit Advocates’ medical fund by joining other volunteers who mix and bag hay for Bunny’s Best Bites, the Rabbit Advocates’ own custom blend of hays. Hay packing parties take place at least once a month. For more information check the web site at www.rabbitadvocates.org.

Volunteer for OHS
Rabbit Advocates started as a group of Oregon Humane Society volunteers and the connection with the shelter remains strong. Rabbit Advocates holds its monthly meetings at the humane society and volunteers are encouraged to spend time at the shelter, helping the rabbits in the Small Animal Room. For more information on how to volunteer for OHS, check the web site at www.oregonhumane.org.

A challenge to the group’s resources
Rabbit Advocates faced a tremendous challenge not long after incorporation when in 2006, more than 200 rabbits were rescued from an animal hoarding case in Hillsboro, Oregon. While under police protection, Rabbit Advocate volunteers dropped everything to provide daily care to the rabbits. Many volunteers were mobilized each day for nearly a year to provide basic care to the rabbits, including assessing for health problems, separating the rabbits by gender and cleaning pens. The work was exhausting and took an emotional and physical toll on volunteers. It also brought the volunteers closer together and strengthened the resolve of those who helped take care of these rabbits until they found good homes.

One goal realized, another remains
Through the past 10 years, Rabbit Advocates have made headlines several times, including multiple television segments when camera crews highlight learning about pet rabbits before acquiring one. TV appearances are splashy and help further the education component of the organization’s work, but the real job of promoting rabbits as companion pets remains one rarely highlighted. It is usually rewarding, occasionally heartbreaking and always in need of more help.
Dare to Compare the Bonded Pair

By Pat And Karen Stelter

Imagine for a moment that you are quietly at your home reading the latest issue of The Rabbit Advocate, munching on a crisp fresh green salad, when suddenly your dwelling roof lifts up and open to the cotton-clouded sky, raining damp mossy shingles down on your favorite meal. Without enough time to even hide under the table, you are briskly snatched from your seat and savory supper. The world-renowned gargantuan gorilla, King Kong, then places you in a rusty red caboose carrier and whisks you away to his isolated tropical island refuge.

Sure your survival needs are met, daily grooming sessions with a dried palm frond ensure a tidy but slightly castaway appearance, and monthly jaunts to the local witch doctor and head-hunter outreaches provide some form of obscure human interaction. But wouldn’t the rest of your forlorn existence be beyond better if you had a spouse, partner, sibling, close friend or relative to confide in and provide comfort? After all, a giant ape will likely never quite relate on the same level as a small distressed and disheveled human.

Returning to reality, and the firs and ferns of the sun-challenged Northwest, we empathize and emphasize that the above tale might echo that of a single companion rabbit. Not that all bunnies are unhappy in their household mix of “bonded” teens, toddlers and tabbies. After all, rabbits—as well as people—are innately social mammals, albeit at varying levels of amiable interaction. But when a pair bond is forged, the devotion can be unquestionably inspirational. And for us personally, this primarily translates into much less “away guilt” when our schedules and routines don’t always align.

To this very moment, we still have feelings of regret for not finding that special same species soul mate for A.B., a genius of a furry fellow, who introduced himself to us and the lagomorph life-style in our antiquated NE Portland yard on President’s Day 2000. The very next day he entered the house on his own accord and never left, even with the occasional accidental opportunity of an open side-entrance door.

Upon the factual realization that two rabbits can (and very often will if given their choice opportunity) form an intense mutual relationship, we decided to find A.B. a friend. Experienced Rabbit Advocate volunteers Arlene MacMonagle and Valerie Madison introduced all of us to Desdemona, Marjorie Morningstar, and Daria, an OHS surrender. The neutral meet and greet sessions were an eye popping observation into the “Hyde-side” that rarely is associated with domestic bunnies, that normally stay on the socially mild Dr. Jekyll side of the personality scale. After an encouraging encounter in neutral territory, Daria was adopted post her required - and always recommended - altering surgery. People can pick a “perfect” potential, but rabbits form their own opinions with rollicks, rumbles and understandably rejections. So in the end, separate pen-pal-allies they remained, taking turns exploring, exercising, and gleaning heaps of patience.

A wise rabbit whisperer might be able to bond the most reluctant bunnies, but we admittedly fall short of that gifted super-savviness. Thus our highbrowed response to this divine dilemma is to now opt to seek and successfully adopt an already heartily bonded pair. Enter Chester and Ellie, a surrendered couple from Eugene’s Greenhill Humane Society. Again, an adept Rabbit Advocate volunteer, Barbara Ray, was instrumental in helping them find a new permanent home with us. Barbara told us that in shelters, pairs are more often overlooked. What pray tell had we gotten ourselves into coveting the company of two?

Silence the alarm thumps for starters, because if your family has the time for the care, commitment, and unconditional camaraderie of a single rabbit, then double is hardly more trouble. Consider if you will, most of the necessary supplies and provisions are already in your possession. Expanding slightly on the quantity and/or size could be all that is necessary. For our particular configuration, that meant adding an

continued on page 6
Rabbits are social creatures by nature, and most house rabbits live more fulfilled lives with another bunny to keep them company. If you are thinking of adopting a rabbit, one of the easiest ways to ensure that your new bunny will have the lagomorph companionship he or she craves is to adopt an already bonded pair.

Q: What are the advantages of adopting an already bonded pair?

A: When you adopt an already bonded pair, you are assured from the outset of having a pair that will get along, without having to go through the sometimes stressful, sometimes lengthy process of bonding two rabbits. Occasionally, when two rabbits are introduced, they will have a love-at-first-sight moment and instantly bond with their new friend. However, it is more often the case that bonding is a process that can take several weeks or months to establish. This can mean several weeks or months of having to keep the rabbits close to each other, but separated, and several weeks or months of concerted efforts to supervise their visits with one another, which may entail anxiety-ridden situations like having to break up fights. Occasionally, you might find yourself with two rabbits that just do not want to get along, despite months of bonding efforts. Then you’ll have to decide can you have two singleton rabbits in your house, or do you need to re-home the second rabbit? (See story on page 5 regarding rabbits who refuse to bond.)

Certainly, bonded pairs can have their occasional scuffles, but if you adopt an already bonded pair, you’ll know that the pair you are bringing home already get along, and the foster parent or shelter you adopt from can give you a sense of the types of situations that are likely to lead to fights between the two so that you can avoid them—for example, some bonded pairs can easily share food from the same dish, whereas others can be food bullies and need to be fed from separate dishes to prevent an argument.

It is also worth noting that when you adopt an already-bonded pair from your local shelter or rabbit foster home, you are saving two lives rather than just one—always something to feel good about!

Q: Isn’t it a lot more work and a lot more expensive to adopt two rabbits at once?

A: Not as much as you would think. If you have a bonded pair of rabbits that get along, many items, such as a pen, a litter box, toys and the like can be shared, which means you don’t necessarily have to buy two of everything if you have two rabbits. And while two rabbits sharing a space are likely to fill a litter box a little quicker and throw a bit more hay around their pen than a singleton, it is minimally more work to clean up after two rabbits in the same space as opposed to two rabbits in separate spaces—which truly does result in double the work.

Two rabbits will, of course, consume more food than one rabbit, but where fresh foods are concerned, having two rabbits can actually result in less wasted food. Whereas a bunch of parsley and a head of romaine purchased for your singleton rabbit might not get eaten before the veggies start wilting or turning brown, two rabbits will certainly eat all that up!

In terms of veterinary care, which can often be one of the biggest expenses incurred for a rabbit caretaker, many vets offer special rates for pairs who come in together for check-ups so that the cost is not so prohibitive.

Q: I want a pet that will bond with me. If I adopt a bonded pair, since they’ll have each other, won’t they pretty much ignore me?

A: This really depends on the rabbits. Some bonded pairs of rabbits are completely devoted to each other and pretty aloof to their human caretakers. These types of pairs can still make good pets for rabbit aficionados who can appreciate just watching rabbits do their own thing without needing to be actively involved. But, there are also bonded pairs where one or both members of the pair will also actively seek out human companionship. (This often happens when the rabbits discover that the humans are the source of delicious vegetable treats!) In the wild, rabbits have very complex social structures comprised of many individuals. With some rabbit pairs, their human caretaker can also develop close bonds with the pair and interact as part of the “warren.” As prey animals, rabbits almost always take more time to develop trust and feel safe around their humans than a dog or cat would. But in due time, a human can usually become an accepted part of the rabbit group who can groom and be groomed by the other rabbits and join in on rabbit games like follow-the-leader and human-holds-the-stick-while-bunnies-bite-it.

If you adopt a bonded pair from a knowledgeable rabbit fosterer, he or she should be able to match you with a pair that will be a good fit for you in terms of how much interaction you are hoping to have with your rabbit companions.
Like many first-time rabbit caretakers, my husband and I were initially intimidated by the idea of adopting two bunnies. We had researched pet rabbits and knew that bunnies do better with a friend of their own species, but we worried that we couldn’t possibly take on two when we didn’t even know how to take care of one. So, we made the common rookie mistake of assuming we’d bring home one rabbit, and once we got comfortable taking care of a rabbit, we’d go out and find a friend for our bunny.

And that’s how it was that we first brought home Nibbles (a little 9 oz. puff of a bun at the time), and then, three months later, went out to look for a potential friend for him. (I say “him,” but at the time, we thought Nibbles was a girl – and our vet’s office had even confirmed they were “fairly certain” he was a she.) We went to our local animal shelter to look for a potential friend for Nibbles and were drawn to a very handsome, very friendly young male rabbit about the same size and age as Nibbles. We’d heard that male – female pairings have the best chance of success when introducing two rabbits that are strangers, so thinking our bunny was a girl, we decided to bring Nibbles in for a “date” with the rabbit that the shelter had named Sugar. We brought Nibbles in and the adoption volunteers helped with the introduction. Nibbles and Sugar did some chasing around of one another, but there was no lunging or biting, so adoption volunteers thought there was a promising start. My husband and I took Nibbles home for the night to think about it—and to go buy a second set up for the new bunny since we’d have to keep them separated until they were both spayed and neutered and had a better chance to get to know one another.

That night, as we were going to bed, my husband and I were talking about bringing Sugar home with us the next day. My husband floated the question what if, in the end, they don’t get along. With many sighs and much discomfort, we agreed that we’d have to rehome Sugar since Nibbles was our original bun, and thus our priority. We went back to the shelter the next day, signed the adoption papers and brought Sugar, renamed Cuddles, home with us. Over the next few weeks, we discovered Nibbles was actually a boy, and we had both Nibbles and Cuddles neutered and gave them time to recover. Then we were ready to start bonding them in earnest. We had some trepidation knowing that we now had a male-male pair on our hands, but the shelter volunteers assured us that they showed all the signs of being able to get along.

continued on page 7
additional litter box and litter so each can enjoy quality private time and not feel rushed, a larger gravity water station, and a wider chewable hay basket for additional Bunny’s Best Bites hay (for locations and availability: www.rabbitadvocates.org) plus play items galore.

Most importantly in our opinion, activity/exercise room(s) require careful bunny-proofing. As it is with trying to watch two of anything that can run, jump and chomp (and typically is one hop ahead), supervision is imperative, but attention to detail can be the subjective difference when parents are eventually distracted. Trust us, one inquisitive Mini Rex mind will find that extension cord for the antique reading lamp, whilst the other makes off with your overdue library book Why Does My Rabbit…?

Never fear though, because bonded buddy behavior is near, and pairs generally occupy much of their active time and down time together. Consider that they are also usually more content overall, which is saying a lot as they can be expressive emotional creatures. And when you take the extra time to pause and smell the hays, you won’t be disappointed with their mostly silent, often subtle, yet sometimes silly, inimitable communications. Not to mention the welcome physical (and psychological) relishing of a qualified behind the ear groom…ahh, life enrichment regularly reciprocated!

So the next time you and your favorite humans are vegetating on the sectional for a viewing of the classic or a more contemporary version of King Kong (keep an eye on those skylights for any monstrous moon-size eyes), shake those goose bumps away by knowing that the cuddly yet clever pair hunkered right at your side appreciates that you appreciate them too. Just don’t be surprised if those crisp greens disappear into thin hares during the credits.

(Author’s note: Beloved, exuberant Ellie passed away on June 30, 2012. This article is dedicated to her and all the other rabbit friends who lived a condensed life on earth, but left us too soon for the stars.)
The Odd Couple  continued from page 5

Over the next six months, we tried every bonding trick in the book – car rides, in the bath tub, on top of a table with a pile of greens between them, sitting with them in a pen forcing them to sit side by side with us hovering right on top of them (sometimes called the “wear them down” method), taking them over to someone else’s place so it was completely neutral territory – nothing worked. They learned not to bite each other when we were within arms’ reach, but the second we took that step back to let them do their own thing, they were at it tooth and nail, fur flying. This was incredibly stressful on us and I can only imagine how stressful for Nibbles and Cuddles. We were at our wits end, and by this point, we had fallen so in love with Cuddles that the thought of rehoming him was just not a possibility we were willing to consider. We thought maybe we were doing something wrong since we were new at the bonding thing, so we had two local bunny experts – people who had been rescuing and fostering for years—give it a try, and they both agreed that maybe there just wasn’t a love match to be had there.

We resigned ourselves to having two singletons who would live side-by-side but not together. We figured even if they weren’t buddies, it would still be more enriching to them to have another rabbit close by. Over the years, they have settled into a comfortable routine of living next to each other, but separately. They have even gotten to the point where they flop out comfortably next to one another as long as the bars of the exercise pen are separating them. Occasionally, Cuddles will even groom Nibbles through the bars of the cage, and we’ll think they are mellowing as they get older and maybe we should try bonding them again. We still do try from time to time, but remove those bars, and the flying fur comes right back. We’ve also tried bonding each of them to his own friend, but again, no success. They just seem to like the status quo of being near each other, but separate.

We wouldn’t trade Nibbles and Cuddles for the world—they are our little Odd Couple and we love them, quirky relationship and all. However, having two singleton bunnies has certainly presented its challenges over the years. We have two different pens to keep clean. We have to go through an elaborate process to keep one of them penned in while we give the other a chance to roam free in the house and take turns alternating which rabbit gets to hop freely. When we go on vacation, not only do we have to find a bunny sitter, but we have to find someone who has the space and willingness to keep the two of them separate. As first time bunny people, it certainly would have saved us a lot of grief and anxiety to start with an already bonded pair of adult rabbits!

Donations made after May 15, 2012, will be gratefully acknowledged in the next newsletter. All donations to the Rabbit Advocates are tax deductible.

RABBIT BENEFACTOR
Kat Slinde

RABBIT RESCUER
Susan Wilson
Patrick and Karen Stelter
Leann Bleakney
Julia Heydon in memory of Maggie
Monica Mueller
Sheila David and Erik Bakkom

RABBIT SPONSOR
Kathy Kromm in memory of T.S. Flopp and Miss Harvey and in appreciation of the Rabbit Advocates
Matthew and Lisa Freeland
Andrew Yamrick in appreciation of June Yamrick

RABBIT FRIEND
Jim and Connie Kenney
Helen Olson in memory of Petunia
Kathi Lamm
Diane Elizondo in appreciation of Evelyn Roeloffs
Ruby Schouten
Jeannie Hernandez

Find treasures galore at the Rabbit Advocate

**GARAGE SALE**

***ONE DAY ONLY***

*Sunday, September 23, 2012 9am to 4pm*

4004 SE Division Street, Portland, OR 97202

For more information, contact Volunteer Sarah Baran at sarahabaranz@yahoo.com
**Upcoming Meetings & Events 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Meetings</th>
<th>Bunny’s Best Bites</th>
<th>Education &amp; Adoption Outreaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rabbit Advocates monthly meetings are held at the Oregon Humane Society, 1067 NE Columbia Blvd., the third Sunday of each month from 3:30-5:30 p.m. Meetings include a “bunny basics” question and answer session on bunny behavior and care. The public is welcome. Please park in the gravel parking lot just west of the shelter building.</td>
<td><strong>Hay Packing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Volunteers blend and bag different types of hay to create Bunny’s Best Bites, our own custom blend of hay. For more information about the hay parties, see the Rabbit Advocate website at <a href="http://www.rabbitadvocates.org">www.rabbitadvocates.org</a>.</td>
<td>Rabbit Advocates sponsors educational events featuring adoptable foster rabbits along with tips on rabbit handling, diet, housing, health and general care. Experienced volunteers provide grooming and nail trimming services for rabbits (donations appreciated). Outreaches are held the <strong>second Sunday</strong> of each month from noon-3pm at the Tigard Petco, 11705 SW Pacific Highway, Tigard, Oregon 97223.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 19</td>
<td><strong>2012 Dates</strong></td>
<td><strong>2012 Dates</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16</td>
<td>Sunday, Sept., 2, 9am</td>
<td>August 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 28</td>
<td>Saturday, Oct. 6, 10am</td>
<td>November 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>Saturday, Nov. 3, 10am</td>
<td>September 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday, Dec. 2, 10am</td>
<td>December 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find us on Facebook: Rabbit Advocates

[www.rabbitadvocates.org](http://www.rabbitadvocates.org)