Successful Adoptions

Improving Rabbits’ Lives, One Forever Home at a Time

Ten years ago, Rabbit Advocates was founded to promote the adoption of homeless rabbits into loving homes. Pet rabbits, like any other companion pet, deserve a forever home with the qualities necessary so they can live the rest of their natural lives in safety and comfort, and where they will be valued as integral members of the household.

This issue of The Rabbit Advocate focuses on adoptions. Whether from a shelter, a rescue group or a foster home, an adoption is the establishment of a new relationship. For the adopter, a new life and responsibility is coming into the adoptive home. For the foster home, a leap of faith is required in order to entrust an animal’s life to a new and unknown home and caretaker. This issue of The Rabbit Advocate examines this relationship between foster and adoptive homes and the traits that can make an adoptive home a forever home.

What does the foster home hope for in a potential adoptive home?

1) Someone who has had a companion rabbit before or someone who shows an eagerness to learn.

Successful adoptions can stem from people who have previously had a house rabbit or from people who currently have a rabbit and want another as a companion for their current rabbit. These are the easiest adoptions because the adoptive family should already know about proper rabbit care (diet, housing, etc.) and should already be prepared for what a pet rabbit can cost, including vet bills.

That doesn’t mean that first timer rabbit caretakers aren’t also wonderful to their new pets. But when potential adopters have not previously had a house rabbit, Rabbit Advocate foster parents hope people have given considerable thought to the responsibility of bringing a companion rabbit into their home, and researched what to expect in terms of supplies, medical needs and expenses involved in rabbit care. Even more importantly, our foster parents will be looking to place rabbits with people who have a willingness and eagerness to learn about the unique needs of these special animal companions.

2) Someone who is not concerned with specific physical characteristics.

Love your pet rabbit. That’s the Rabbit Advocate’s cause boiled down into very simple words. Rabbit Advocates love their long-eared charges, whether they are large or small, have upright ears or lop ears, pink eyes or brown eyes. Foster homes hope new adopters will do the same and hope adopters do not care whether the rabbit they bring home is a specific color or breed of rabbit. Instead, our foster parents know all rabbits deserve a good home, regardless of what the rabbit looks like. When selecting a rabbit companion, successful forever homes may take into consideration factors such as temperament – for example, is this a rabbit that will get along with our existing rabbit or won’t be intimidated by a boisterous toddler or dog – but they won’t be fixated on specific physical characteristics.

The one exception to this rule is the reward that goes to the adoptive home that opens to the rabbit with physical characteristics or even deformities that can make it more difficult to adopt. If an adoptive home can look beyond the pink eyes or missing ear or foot to give shelter and love, this home is seen to all Rabbit Advocates as heroic because the adopter is willing to see beyond the exterior of the rabbit to its heart and give that deserving pet a home without judgment.

3) Someone who accepts and appreciates the unique personality characteristics of rabbits.

A successful bunny forever home is one where the adopters can appreciate the unique qualities of rabbits. This home understands that as prey animals, rabbits may take more time than a dog or cat to feel secure in their new surroundings and feel completely at ease in their new home. They comprehend that most rabbits don’t like to be picked up, and would prefer to sit next to their human rather than on a human’s lap. They are aware that some rabbits may be very protective of their personal space, especially if they previously lived in an unsafe situation. They accept that rabbits are constant chewers due to their tooth physiology and cannot be trained not to chew, but instead must be provided with safe chewing options. The successful adoption involves people who accept these qualities about rabbits and are happy to let rabbits be rabbits and enjoy them as the special and unique pets that they are.

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Successful Adoptions

4) Someone who has done some advance preparation.

Our foster parents indicate that the most successful adoptions are those where the adopters have thought ahead about how and where to house their rabbit in their home. If they have other pets, they've come up with a plan for how they will keep the rabbits safe and separate from the other pets until introductions can be made. The successful adopter will have researched rabbit vets and sources for hay and other bunny essentials before they bring their rabbit home. If they travel frequently, the successful adopter has made arrangements for who will watch their rabbit when they are gone. The successful adopter has thought about whether they or anyone in their family may have an allergy to rabbits or hay. Indeed, if a potential adopter approaches a foster home without having thought out these issues, the foster home will want to work with that person to make sure they have made the necessary arrangements before they take a rabbit home.

5) Someone who will consider the bunny a part of the family.

It takes more than just providing a roof and food to be a successful bunny forever home. Bunnies are social creatures and need to feel like they are part of a larger social group. This is one of the many reasons that our foster parents typically only adopt to homes where rabbits will be housed indoors. A rabbit that sits alone outside and only has interaction with their human family once or twice a day when they are fed is unlikely to lead a very enriched life. Bunnies need to be provided with a safe, warm place to sleep, lots of space to run and play, toys to toss and bite, and lots of affection. For this reason, our foster parents tend to be especially wary of potential adopters who indicate they want to bring a rabbit home “for the children.” A successful forever home is one where all members of the family, adults and children alike, are ready to open their hearts to a new bunny. Parents need to be willing to continue providing the bunny with love and attention, even if the children in the family lose interest or grow up and go away to college.

6) Someone who will stay in touch with the foster family.

Finally, and this may be the most surprising to our readers, but the most successful adoptions happen when the adopters maintain open communication with the foster family from whom the rabbit was adopted. The foster family, having taken care of this rabbit for weeks, months or even years, will be aware of any special behavioral issues with a particular rabbit companion and can be a source of information should the adopter encounter any difficulties. Unsuccessful adoptions (i.e. ones where a rabbit is returned to a shelter or foster home) might be avoided if the adoptive family would just check in with the foster family for advice on how to handle an issue rather than just throwing in the towel the moment something doesn’t go as expected. And while the foster family doesn’t expect a potential adopter to make a commitment to stay in touch for the entire life of the rabbit, the foster family would like to stay in touch at least for a few months so that they can rest assured that the rabbit they have loved as their own has truly found a forever home.

Special thanks to Rabbit Advocate volunteer Valerie Madison who provided a wealth of information on the rabbit foster parent’s perspective of a successful adoption.

Temporary bunnysitter becomes full-time rabbit caretaker

Leslee Kirkendall

Leslee knew she needed information about how to best care for Hank. She found Rabbit Advocates and is grateful to rabbit foster caretaker Jan Hutto for the time and effort Jan took to teach Leslee about rabbit care, nutrition and grooming. Today Hank lives in a pen with mounds of hay to burrow into. He also lives with Dot, who was once a stray rabbit surrendered to a veterinarian’s office.

With Hank and Dot successfully paired, Leslee thought perhaps she could offer a loving home to another pair of rabbits. Leslee again turned to Rabbit Advocates and eventually brought home Cha Cha and Marco.

Cha Cha and Marco are beautiful Dutch rabbits, Marco grey and white and Cha Cha black and white. Leslee clearly loves them, and clearly admires their beauty. But appearances didn’t matter to her. “I’ve got everybody’s leftover Easter bunnies,” she said. “But I took the ones that needed a home. That’s what matters to me.”
A home for rabbit rescues

Brian Grosklos and Liesl Vorderstrasse

Brian Grosklos and Liesl Vorderstrasse’s rabbits have come from lots of different places, including their own back yard. The couple used to live in Eugene and adopted Rudy from the Greenhill Humane Society. Their brand-new rabbit came to them when a local family realized that a rabbit for a 3-year old was a poor decision. Today Abigail lives in the kitchen next to Jasper, a rabbit that was caught wandering the neighborhood. Several rabbits seem drawn to Brian and Liesl’s charming Milwaukie home.

Brian and Liesl’s first rabbit in Eugene was a stray named Maynard. It wasn’t until “Maynard” was taken to the vet to be neutered that they realized “Maynard” was a girl bunny. No matter, she didn’t mind being named Maynard and was so loved by Brian that when she passed away, Liesl helped him through his grief by making him two pillows with Maynard’s photos on them.

Liesl admits to favoring Rudy, the bunny from Greenhill, even though he is the orneriest of all the rabbits and chews on things just to get attention. Rudy lives happily with his bunny partner Margaret and together they have tremendous freedom in the house. They even sleep under Brian’s bedside table. Rudy lost his mate soon after Liesl and Brian moved from Eugene. When they arrived in Milwaukie, they searched for “rabbit adoptions” on the internet and found the Rabbit Advocates. From there they talked with volunteer Valerie Madison, who helped them find Rudy a new mate, Margaret.

The rabbits in the kitchen, Jasper and Abigail, are recent additions to the collective. Jasper was found by neighbors. Liesl believes him to be a Britannia Petite rabbit, how such a tiny bunny was able to survive outdoors is still a mystery. When Jasper came into their lives, Brian and Liesl turned to Rabbit Advocate volunteer Valerie Madison for help. “There was talk of our fostering him, but I fell madly in love in about two days, so now he is fully ours,” Liesl said.

The couple has kept in touch with Valerie, even going to her house to help with her rabbits. Valerie credits ongoing connection with adoptive homes to be the big reason she considers these adoptions to be successful. While no long-term relationship between the adoptive family and the foster home is necessary, Valerie noted that a willingness to stay in touch can ensure an adoption both sides can feel good about.

Donations made after September 1, 2012, will be gratefully acknowledged in the next newsletter. All donations to the Rabbit Advocates are tax deductible.

KUDOS

RABBIT ANGEL
Lorraine Gilbert, in memory of Harold Gilbert

RABBIT RESCUER
Karen and Pat Stelter, in memory of Ellie
Kat Slinde

RABBIT SPONSOR
Matt and Lisa Freeland
Vicki Locklair, in appreciation of Joan Gilbert

RABBIT FRIEND
Kristine Stabrawa, in memory of Dozer “Bunnyhood” and in appreciation of Susan Kathleen Tierney
Val and Ben Rullman, in memory of Juniper and Molly
Roya Khodaparast, in memory of PeeWee and Georgie
Bhakti Watts, in appreciation of Jasmine
Rick and Linda Aronstein
Jeannie Hernandez
Kris Johnson-James
Joann Kelly
Larry and Iris Welch
Virginia Winter, in memory of Frederic Winter, Jr.
Joann Myers

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1. Flower Garden Bunny Biscotti. Treat your bunny to these healthy treats from Bunfectionary. Made from whole timothy hay, rose petals, calendula, chamomile, and lavender, they’re sure to get your bunny munching happily. $6.99 for 2 oz., bunnybytes.com

2. Ugli Donut Rabbit Bed. These acrylic and wool donut-shaped beds provide a cozy and, frankly, adorable place for your bunny to rest. $20-$30, etsy.com/shop/thehareapparent

3. Bunny Bunch Carrot House. This cardboard hidey house has two stories and carrot-shaped windows for your bunny to peek through. $19.99, bunnybunchboutique.com

4. Billy’s Big Bag of Pinecones. Pinecones! Bunnies love them. Leith Petwerks steam washes these pinecones to ensure safety, but otherwise, they’re all natural. $4.29, leithpetwerks.com

5. Bunny Cookie Kit. Bake your bunny homemade cookies with this handy kit. The “sensitive tummies” kit contains no oats or fruit. $21.99, bingalingstore.com

6. Personalized Bunny Pendant. Rabbit Advocate Erin Ford can create a beautiful, personalized glass pendant using a high-quality photo of a bunny (or other animal). She also has a variety of pre-made pendants for sale. $20–$35; email zenrabbit@index.com for more information.

7. Bunny Rabbit on Wood iPhone Case. This iPhone case, made for the 4 and 4s models, turns an ordinary phone into a work of art. $18.00, etsy.com/shop/hellonutcase

8. Flat Bonnies. Flat Bonnies Plush Bunny, Flat Bonnie is a plush toy bunny designed to raise awareness about rabbit rescue. It makes a great gift for any bunny lover. $15.00, shop.flatbonnie.com

9. Rabbit-Shaped Paper Clips. These unique paper clips come in a compact case and would be great for stuffing stockings or exchanging gifts. $7.99, leithpetwerks.com

10. Bunny Whisks. Perfect for whipping up a batch of bunny treats. $11.99, modcloth.com

11. Bunny Cardigan. A grass-green cardigan with a white, glasses-wearing bunny emblazoned on the front and back—what more could a girl ask for? $64.99, modcloth.com

12. Ceramic Rabbit Stamper. Put your bunny-loving stamp on it. $24.00, anthropologie.com

13. Rabbit Throw. This gorgeous, limited-edition throw is crafted from silk and hand-dyed and hand-woven yarns. A matching cushion is also available. $360, finnishdesignshop.us

14. Rabbits Hand Shadow Necklace. From designer Inca Starzinsky, this striking pendant features two rabbits in silhouette. $40.71, howkapow.com

15. Rabbit Throw. This gorgeous, limited-edition throw is crafted from silk and hand-dyed and hand-woven yarns. A matching cushion is also available. $360, finnishdesignshop.us
The Rabbit Advocate Wish List

How you can help the Rabbit Advocates celebrate another anniversary!

Gifts for Rabbit Advocates
The Rabbit Advocate organization depends on generous people like you, who give of themselves, their time and their resources. Please consider the Rabbit Advocates during this and all times of the year. Here’s how you can help:

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 web site 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.
Kindness paid forward to save bunnies

Meredith and Gillian

“Timothy has a girlfriend,” Meredith told her family one evening at dinner. Timothy is the family’s mini-lop rabbit, adopted in January, 2012. The family didn’t know it, and Timothy didn’t realize it either, but Julie was about to come into their lives.

Timothy was rescued by a kind employee of an auction house, whose company took possession of an estate from a foreclosed home. Along with furniture and other household possessions, the auction house was surrendered Timothy, a grey and white mini-lop rabbit. The employee knew rabbits, and had even had one herself at one time, but could not keep Timothy long term. She cared for Timothy on a foster basis until he was adopted by Meredith’s family.

In April, 2012, Meredith and her mother Gillian took Timothy to a Rabbit Advocate outreach for a nail trim. There, Timothy found Julie, a brown-colored mini-lop with Siamese markings. Timothy found her beautiful and Gillian and Meredith found her familiar. It was not the first time Gillian and Meredith had met Julie.

Meredith and Gillian met Julie at Rabbit Advocate volunteer Mary Huey’s house. At the time, they decided not to adopt her because her previous owner had wanted her to be part of a pair. But they both believe it was fate that brought them and their single male rabbit Timothy to that outreach and back to Julie. Meredith and Gillian did not adopt Julie immediately, but instead allowed for a “date” between the two altered rabbits at the outreach. That night, Meredith told her family that Timothy had a female admirer. And soon after he had a lifetime companion.

The family brought Julie home and began the bonding process. Rabbit Advocates volunteers will always caution that care must be taken in introducing rabbits. It is never to be assumed that just because they are the same species that rabbits will get along. After several “dates” in the living room, Timothy and Julie were allowed to live together. But the family was careful to watch for signs of a squabble and even employed a baby monitor so that they could listen for disagreements. The baby monitor acted as a one-way security system.

Today the mini lops live harmoniously together and enjoy hanging out in the family’s gathering space in the living room. The whole family enjoys watching their two little lops. “If there is anything you could have that is cuter than a rabbit, it’s two rabbits,” said Meredith.

Once bonded, Timothy and Julie became practically inseparable. Photo by Gillian.

Thank You to Our Vets!

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the following veterinarians and staffs for their services to our rescued rabbits:

- Dr. Katrina Ramsell
Northwest Exotic Pet Vet, and
Dr. Chris Wilson
Beaverton Pet Clinic, Beaverton

- Dr. Mark Burgess and
Dr. Melinda Surrency
Southwest Animal Hospital,
Beaverton

- Dr. Sheri Schlorman
Creswell Veterinary Hospital,
Creswell

- Dr. Doug Ferro
Barclay Hills Animal Clinic,
Oregon City

- Dr. Nell Ostermeier
Lombard Animal Hospital, Portland

- Dr. Ross Weinstein
North Portland Veterinary Hospital, Portland

- Dr. Mary Blankenvoort and
Dr. Peter Davis
St. Johns Veterinary Clinic,
Portland

- Dr. Rebecca Prull
NW Neighborhood Vet Hospital, Portland

- Dr. Ken DeReamer
Paws and Claws Pet Medical Center, Troutdale and Peninsula Dog and Cat Clinic, Portland

- Dr. Matt Fricke
McKenzie Animal Hospital, Springfield

We’d love to add more names to this list! Please call us at 503-617-1625 if you are a rabbit-savvy vet who is able to donate services to help rescued rabbits.
Upcoming Meetings & Events 2013

General Meetings

Rabbit Advocates monthly meetings are held at the Oregon Humane Society, 1067 NE Columbia Blvd., usually 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.

2013 General Meeting Dates
Check for dates on the Rabbit Advocate web site at: www.rabbitadvocates.org

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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 www.rabbitadvocates.org.

Hay Packing

2013 Dates

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Find us on Facebook: Rabbit Advocates

Bunny’s Best Bites

Education & Adoption Outreaches

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 second Sunday of each month from noon-3pm at the Tigard Petco, 11705 SW Pacific Highway, Tigard, Oregon 97223.

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www.rabbitadvocates.org