



House Rabbit Network

P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102



Dedicated to educating the public and to fostering and adoption of companion rabbits. 781-431-1211 or www.rabbitnetwork.org

Rabbit Tracks

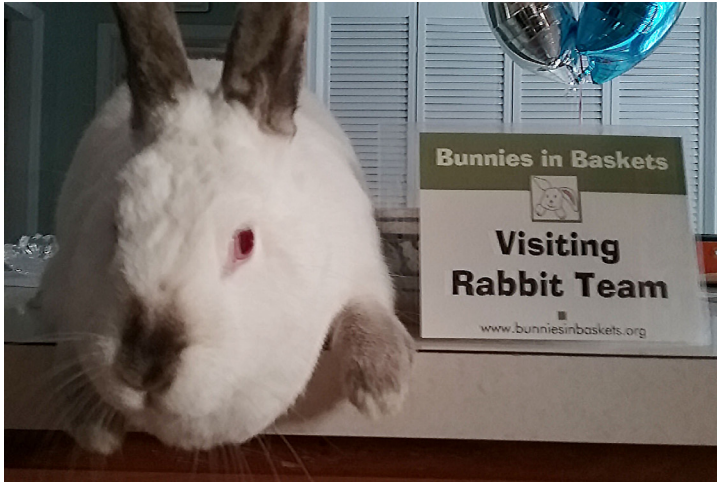
Summer 2017



Table of Contents	
Rabbits to the Rescue.....	pg. 2
Keeping Other Rabbits Healthy.....	pg. 4
Adoption Success Story.....	pg. 6
Volunteer Spotlight.....	pg. 7
HRN News.....	pg. 8

Rabbits to the Rescue

by Sadie MacMillan



Cali with her official therapy bunny credentials. Photo courtesy of Bernadette Quirk.

When Bernadette Quirk enters the Memory Care neighborhood at The Commons Retirement Community in Lincoln, MA, she stops to say hello to a couple of residents sitting in the lobby. They know her.

"The Queen is here," they say.

But they're not talking about Bernadette. They're talking about her rabbit, Cali.

Cali is a 10-pound Californian. She "holds court" at the Memory Care neighborhood every Wednesday and Sunday, where the residents dote on her. Some get excited about her visits hours before she arrives.

Some residents hold her, others just like to watch her do her thing. For one man, it's a semi-weekly opportunity to bring out well-loved jokes about rabbits' feet.

"I think she wants to run away," says one woman fretfully, holding Cali on her lap. "I think she's nervous." But actually, Cali is almost asleep.

Cali's behavior when she goes to work is totally professional. She doesn't fuss or fidget, go to the bathroom, or eat, even when someone offers her something. Given the opportunity to stretch her legs, she doesn't run away or get underfoot; she flops down under the table where the residents are playing Scrabble.

Bernadette first started bringing Cali to the unit in an unofficial capacity, when someone in Bernadette's family moved there and was asking to see her cat. The cat couldn't make it, so Bernadette brought Cali a few times. Shortly after that, a staff member asked Bernadette if Cali could make her visits a regular event, so Bernadette decided to register Cali as a therapy animal.

"It's really heartwarming," says Bernadette. "Some people are just so lonely. When it's their first time holding a rabbit, they can't believe how soft she is. Or she brings back memories of when they were kids and had rabbits."

Cali is registered with Bunnies in Baskets, an organization dedicated exclusively to rabbits as therapy animals. Dogs, cats, birds, horses, llamas and alpacas, pigs, guinea pigs, and rabbits can all be therapy animals, and while dogs may be the best known for it, rabbits have some advantages. Their small size makes it easy for people to hold them, and if someone is afraid of dogs, a rabbit is less threatening.

Therapy rabbits do the same work as therapy dogs. They visit nursing homes, hospitals, schools, and rehabilitation centers; they work with children at local libraries to improve reading skills; and they participate in youth and homeless outreach programs. Interacting with animals has been shown to have beneficial effects on heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormone levels, and bunnies definitely count.

continued on pg. 3

Rabbits to the Rescue Con't

Sometimes, as in the work that Cali does, the therapy rabbit or other animal improves someone's quality of life just by brightening their day. In animal-assisted therapy, the rabbit participates in actual treatment situations, helping to improve someone's physical, emotional, or cognitive health.

Abbie Loewenstein is a mental health counselor who works with children and young adults with depression and anxiety. In this she is assisted by her rabbit Peanut, a 3.5-pound Netherland Dwarf mix that she adopted from the House Rabbit Network (HRN) in May of 2016 (though she has practiced animal-assisted therapy for four years). Like Cali, Peanut is a certified therapy rabbit through Bunnies in Baskets, and he is very good at his job.



Peanut, therapy bunny. Photo courtesy of Joey Phoenix of Salem Pet Photo.

Abbie writes, "I love seeing my clients light up with excitement and happiness and also relax when they get to interact with Peanut. It helps them look forward to therapy and provides us with a shared experience to talk about him. When he's not napping or being pet he can be pretty entertaining. He sits in a basket or hops around the room (monitored always)."

Of course, this kind of work is not for every bunny. As Bunnies in Baskets puts it on their website, the rabbits best suited to be therapy animals are, "highly socialized, human curious, and affectionate."

To register as a Visiting Rabbit Team, the rabbit must pass a health evaluation, the human must pass a training class, and together they must complete two hours of supervised visits at a facility of their choice. After that they can register with Bunnies in Baskets and become a Visiting Rabbit Team. A benefit of being registered is that the team's visits are covered under the organization's liability insurance plan.

Bernadette Quirk thinks Cali's work as a therapy rabbit is important in more ways than one. In her visits to the Memory Care neighborhood, where she interacts with residents, family members, and staff, Cali has become an ambassador for her species. Many people are surprised to learn that rabbits have distinct personalities, and can interact with humans on such a level.

"It's great, because it gets the word out about how wonderful rabbits are. People don't realize it...It spreads the good word about how great bunnies are as pets," she says.

It's worth noting that Cali was one of 140 rabbits rescued from Codman Farm in July of 2016. They were living in terrible conditions, being bred and raised as meat rabbits, before they were purchased and taken in by animal rescue organizations. Cali had been kept in a pen with 27 other rabbits, who were bullying and physically attacking her. At the time of her rescue she was very ill, and it was thought she wouldn't survive.

But she did survive, and she's not a victim anymore. Now, Cali helps others, one cuddle at a time.



Keeping Other Rabbits Healthy When You Have a Sick Bunny

By Suzanne Trayhan

While we all want our rabbits to stay healthy, we do sometimes need to deal with an illness or parasite. If you have other rabbits or pets, there's always the concern about the other animals. How do we keep them healthy and prevent the spread of disease? It's important to make sure that your veterinarian knows if you have more than one rabbit in your home, if your buns share a cage or play area, and about any other animals you have. Discuss both the animals and the living situation. There are some conditions where you only need to treat the sick rabbit but sometimes you need to treat bondmates or other animals in the home too. Part of getting a rabbit healthy involves not letting them get infected again, so a household treatment plan is crucial. Your vet will help you evaluate your situation and come up with a treatment plan for your rabbit and household.



Wash your hands between touching different rabbits.

If you have a bonded pair, you may need to consider if they should be separated. The vast majority of the time you should leave them together. The bondmate has already been exposed, and separating the buns can cause stress and make recovery more difficult. Depending on the diagnosis, you might want to treat the bondmate too as they might either be impacted or a carrier (e.g., fleas, mites, coccidia).

When you first go to your rabbits you instinctively check on the unhealthy rabbit first. Unless there's something pressing or time critical, don't do this. Take care of your healthy rabbits first, and then take care of your sick bunny. If you take care of your sick bunny first and then go take care of the healthy ones, you have a higher risk of spreading disease through your hands or clothing. Wash your hands between touching different rabbits, and consider changing clothes to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

Keys factors to consider when dealing with a sick rabbit are: 1) is this contagious and 2) by what route is the infection spread. There are multiple ways in which diseases/infections/parasites spread and it's important to understand how something is spread to protect against it. The main ways we worry about transmission are through the air, by touch, or in poop, urine, and blood.

Some diseases are transmitted by germs floating in the air. In this case the ideal solution is to not have any other rabbits in the house. However, for the average person, that isn't realistic. What you should do is separate the buns as best as possible. Preferably have them on a different floor of your home, or at least in a different room. Pay attention to how air circulates in your home. Do you have a room with extra ventilation?

Mites (skin and ear) can be transmitted by touch. If you have two rabbits living in the same cage, one will pass it along to the other one. You should always treat both rabbits because most likely the second bunny has them and is now a carrier. If you pat one of these bunnies and then pet another rabbit, you risk

continued on pg. 5

Keeping Other Rabbits Healthy Con't

passing the mites on to the new rabbit. If other rabbits live in a separate living area, practice good handwashing techniques that will help protect the other rabbit. If you pick up and hold a rabbit, you have just contaminated your clothing. Change clothes before picking up another rabbit. If you have carpet in your home, you should keep your sick rabbit off the carpet because it's next to impossible to disinfect carpeting.

Coccidia and pinworms are examples of parasites that are transmitted through rabbit poop. Follow all the guidelines for touch, keeping in mind any place that poop may be. You don't want non-bonded rabbits sharing litter boxes. If you have an infected rabbit in a play area and he poops, pick up the poop and clean the floor before letting another rabbit into the space. Keep your rabbit (and the poop) away from any carpeting since you cannot disinfect it. Look for stray poops in corners, nooks, etc. I've seen poop flung out of cages and across a room. If you have two separate cages, keep them several feet apart. With coccidia and pin worms, make sure your veterinarian knows that your bun shares a living space with another rabbit. The other bunny is most likely already infected and should be treated too.

Parasites like *E. cuniculi* are transmitted through urine. Follow touch protocols for anything that the urine may touch. Keep separate litter boxes. If a rabbit urinates on the floor, make sure you disinfect before allowing another rabbit into the area. If you have a spraying rabbit – consider how far the urine can spray. Does your rabbit dig? How far does the dirty litter fly? Change the litter box last, disinfect, and thoroughly wash your hands when finished.

In the U.S. we don't have to worry much about blood born transmissions. In other parts of the world there are diseases such as myxomatosis which can be transmitted by mosquito bite. Ticks can also transmit disease. If you have an indoor rabbit in the U.S., it would be unlikely that this is something you need to worry about.

If you find a bunny with fleas, you will want to treat every animal (dog, cat, rabbit, etc) in the house. You will also likely need to treat them for at least three months to completely free your home of the pests. Don't use over-the-counter flea products on your rabbits or other pets as they can cause neurotoxicity. Visit your vet instead to get a safe medication. Some topical flea meds, for example Frontline, can be fatal to rabbits.

Good hygiene practice in your home is important. When you bring a new bunny into your home you have a slight chance of introducing trouble. This is more likely to happen if you are a foster home, pull in a stray, or get new foster rabbit. Even if you get a bunny from a trusted shelter, the stress of the move can bring something out.

If you're pulling in a stray or a rabbit from unknown circumstances, you should consider placing him in a separate room for a week. Monitor him closely and consider getting a checkup. Listen for congestion, look for mites or fleas. Carefully clean cages between rabbits. Time is also on your side as many pathogens have a short lifespan. Some are as short as seconds, 30 seconds or less. Others might be 30 or 60 days. If something sits unused for six months in an area away from your rabbit area, you should still clean it but there will be fewer contaminants than an item that was recently used.

We can do a lot to prevent the spread of disease in our household. Follow smart hygiene practices, stay alert to anything you see, understand the situation, and most importantly consult with your veterinarian.



Adoption Success Story

It's Swell to be Chunky Nel

by Jessica Riel

It was love at first site.

On a winter's day this past December, Kelly Guagenty and her two daughters, Cheryl, 13, and Macaela, 10, walked into the HRN shelter with eager anticipation. "We really didn't discuss what breed of bunny we wanted to adopt," says Kelly. "We just knew that 'the one' would pick our family."

The Guagentys immediately spotted Nelson, a 9 ½ pound chinchilla bun. Four pairs of eyes met as humans and bunny took each other in. Kelly and her girls asked to play with Nelson, and, says Kelly, "he started doing binkies right away!"

Nelson moved home with the Guagentys and met his new dad, Mike, and his new brother, a 9-year-old rescue pit bull mix named Toby. "We had taken care of our friend's bunny last fall," says Kelly, "partly to ensure that Toby was a bunny fan." He is.

Nelson's name soon changed to "Chunky Nel," and he found a best friend in his big canine brother. "Oftentimes Toby will bring a tennis ball over to Nel, which is Toby's way of saying he wants to play," says Kelly.

These days, for Chunky Nel, it's love at first bite, especially if you are a banana. "Chunky Nel LOVES to eat (shocking, I know!)," says Kelly. "His absolute favorite treat is bananas. If you are eating a banana in our house, he will find you and hunt you down." That is, unless you are in the kitchen or the bathroom, because there, as every bunny knows, the floors are made of lava and cannot be crossed. Otherwise, Chunky Nel will hop about his entire kingdom, the rest of the house, where he is free to roam to his heart's content while his family is home.

Chunky Nel will at times stake a claim on a very important piece of his territory, "The Land Under Cheryl's Bed," where he rules over his subjects, the dust bunnies. If his family tries to dethrone him by attempting to bring him out from under the low platform bed, he will give a small but dignified growl, much to the amusement of his family.

During the daytime while his family is away at work and school, Chunky Nel naps in his pen. "When Nel hears us walk in the door from work," says Kelly, "he jumps up and down in his pen, banging to get out. When we lift him up, he immediately settles down and enjoys a few minutes of cuddling time." And then it's snack time!

Toys aren't a big hit in Chunky Nel's world, unless they're filled with treats, in which case those toys meet with his approval. Chunky Nel is also fond of couch cuddles with his family and watching his favorite TV shows. "We just adore him beyond belief," says Kelly.



*Kelly, Macaela, and Chunky Nel pose for the camera.
Photo courtesy of Kelly Guagenty.*



Volunteer Spotlight

by A.A.

Amanda began working with HRN four years ago as a foster and is currently a training coordinator and shelter volunteer. Amanda's family loves animals but their heavy travel made it impossible to keep a pet of their own, so Amanda began looking for opportunities to foster. She contacted HRN after seeing a flyer at Starbucks. She found HRN to be well-organized, and she brought her first foster bunny, Cooper, home shortly thereafter. Amanda found the experience very rewarding, even though it was hard to part with the bunnies. Fostering made her want to get even more involved, so she also began volunteering at the shelter.

"Buns are such sweet, social creatures," she said. One obstacle for shelter volunteers is that some of the shelter bunnies have gone through hardships in life and volunteers don't always know what the buns have experienced. Sometimes bunnies need extra help getting to trust people. The simple acts of talking to the buns and petting those who aren't afraid to be touched make all the difference to the ones who are scared or traumatized. With enough love and attention, they go from withdrawn to social. "Because they've been at the shelter with great volunteers, our buns know that people are kind and will take care of them, so when families come to adopt, the buns are ready to trust and become a part of a new family," she said. "Helping to connect families with buns – it's a great feeling!"

When the job of training coordinator became available two years ago, Amanda thought it was a perfect fit for her. "I talk with potential volunteers, explain how the shifts at the shelter work, and arrange for them to go through the training process that we have before becoming full volunteers," she said. Talking to and occasionally meeting new volunteers and keeping in touch with current ones is fun for Amanda because she gets to hear each person's reason for wanting to get involved with HRN. Amanda is also an astronomer and often up late, so the email-based nature of the position allows her to respond at times when it would be too late to call. She notes that astronomy and bunnies go together in the form of a rabbit constellation called Lepus, which is under Orion's feet. She describes it as "a loaf with ears sticking out – not unlike real buns!"

Due to her son developing an allergy, Amanda can't keep buns at home anymore but she does have two cats, Gertie and Peaches. Gertie was a "stick thin" stray who was taken in after she showed up at the house fifteen years ago. Peaches is a year-and-a-half-old and started out as a foster who became a permanent member of the family.

From preparing a foster bun to find a forever home, to helping a shelter bun learn to love again, to assisting new volunteers, Amanda has seen the importance of the rescue process from many aspects. The volunteers themselves, who Amanda describes as "an amazing and dedicated bunch of people," are part of the reason she enjoys working at HRN. Seeing people come together to help bunnies, "strengthens my faith in humanity," she said.

If you're interested in volunteering or adopting a bunny, contact HRN at info@rabbitnetwork.org. Available volunteer positions are also listed at www.rabbitnetwork.org/support/volunteering.



Amanda doting on a shelter bun. Photo courtesy of Amanda Bosh.



HRN News

Bunny Spa Day

Our Bunny Spa Day was held on Sunday, April 2, 2017, at Domino Veterinary Hospital in Concord, MA. Forty-five bunnies enjoyed getting the spa treatment from 16 volunteers who offered nail trims and grooming, professional animal massage, a photoshoot, and reiki sessions. One bunny mama said, "Everyone was very friendly and the event was well-organized." Bunnies went home to enjoy their new fruit tree sticks, dried organic papaya treats, and fruit "leather" from The Microbarkery. Thank you to the volunteers: Sarah Albrecht, Jenny Baustert, Jamie Canada, Suellen Champagne, Beth DiGiulio, Josi Fatta, Jessica Geraldo, Karen Lachapelle, Janie Matocha, Deb McGillivray, Jessica Riel, Marc Riel, Marcia Rotondo, Nancy Pavlakis Scholnick, Keri Stella, and Suzanne Trayhan. The day raised \$1,818 for HRN, and everyone who attended said they'd love to return for the next Bunny Spa Day! Anyone interested in learning more about future Bunny Spa Days or in-home massage for their bunny can email event organizer Jessica Riel, Certified Small Animal Massage Practitioner of Chloe's Paws Animal Massage, at info@chloespaws.com or visit www.chloespaws.com.

Saying Goodbye to a Friend

Stacy Schmidt was a longtime volunteer at HRN. She passed away unexpectedly on Tuesday, February 14, 2017. She lived in Burlington, MA, and had earned her Bachelor's Degree in Human Services from Fitchburg State.

She loved all types of animals, including hamsters, rabbits, cats, and dogs. She even cared for animals in her career by working at the North Shore Animal Hospital in Salem and MSPCA-Angell in Waltham. It broke her heart that there were homeless pets who were unloved, and she wanted to do what she could to make buns at the HRN shelter feel loved. She also adopted animals and cared for many strays over the years giving them the loving home they deserved.

Stacy is survived by her mom Barbara, her brother and sister-in-law Mark and Joanne Schmidt, her niece Lauren Schmidt and her partner Brent Land, and longtime friends Sadie MacMillan, Susan Davenport, and Jason Jackson.

We are so thankful for all the time Stacy gave to HRN. Her care and love made a big difference to many of the rescue buns during their road to finding new, permanent, loving homes. It was Stacy's wishes that memorials in her name be made to House Rabbit Network, P.O. Box 2602, Woburn, MA 01888-1102.

Facebook Auction

Our Facebook Auction ran from March 22 through March 29, and raised \$1,932. Some wonderful items were auctioned, including rabbit jewelry, bunny socks, pillows, towels, note cards, gift certificates to local restaurants, and lots more! Thank you to everyone who donated items:

Aimee Swartz-Glancy	Dawn Lewis	Jess Riel	Sara Christensen
Bernadette Saccoia-Quirk	Jane Kavcak	Lucky Bunny Bungalows	Stacey Paiva
Betsy & Jeff Hartman	Jean Player	Rachel Minnie Mayrer	Suzanne Trayhan
Bonnie Fogg	Jenn Fernandes	Roni Karnis	Trudy Sivixay
Cordelia's Trinkets	Jess Archer	Ryan Benharris, Esq.	



Giggles Fundraiser

On April 9 the House Rabbit Network and Lots of Love Cat Rescue cosponsored a fundraiser at the Giggles Comedy Club for a fun evening of comedy, pizza, and auction prizes. 103 tickets for the event were sold! Thanks to the generosity of local businesses and individual donors, we had great prizes up for grabs, including gift baskets and gift certificates to local dining, entertainment, and retailers. With event tickets and auction tickets \$2,368 was raised for HRN! We are extremely grateful to the volunteers, guests, and donors who made the night possible. A special thanks to Deb McGillivray, Suellen Champagne, Diane Thomas, and Dawn Lewis for all their help.

Giggles Fundraiser Donors:	Cora Lewis	Pelham Saddlery	The Cheesecake Factory
Angela Donahue	Dan Aronovitz	Piglet Franco	The Microbarkery
Bernadette Saccoia-Quirk	Franny McKeever	Rub My Belly Massage	Stace Fedan
Bonnie Fogg Kindred Spirits	Jennifer Hatfield	ScrubaDub Carwash	Suzanne Trayhan
Carol Youngclaus	Pam Steel	StoryLand	



Jessica Riel wears a LuLaRoe bunny dress from the HRN event while petting HRN alumna Sunshine. Photo courtesy of Erin Riel.

Fundraising with LuLaRoe

Stacy Schmidt, a beloved HRN volunteer, shared her obsession with LuLaRoe clothes (especially the leggings) with her friends from HRN. In memory of Stacy, HRN held a LuLaRoe fundraiser. This clothing line is sold exclusively online or at home parties. On May 7, the clothing was sold at the HRN shelter, and online on Facebook from May 8-9. There were even some wonderful rabbit prints. 25% of the total sales were donated to HRN, which resulted in raising \$780 for HRN. Thank you to everyone who participated!

Adoption Totals

**95 rabbits from HRN have gone on to happy homes with their forever families.
We wish them well.**

Join HRN ... or ... Please Renew Your Membership

Through our network of dedicated volunteers and members, HRN is making amazing strides to improve the welfare of house rabbits everywhere. Your support can only further our goals, so become a member and get involved.

Visit our website to find out how to help: www.rabbitnetwork.org

If you are not already a member, please join HRN!

Your membership dollars will go toward rescue and rehabilitation, community outreach and education, and veterinary expenses.

Help make a difference in a rabbit's life. They're counting on you!



Contact House Rabbit Network:

info@rabbitnetwork.org

781-431-1211

P.O. Box 2602

Woburn, MA 01888-1102



House Rabbit Network Membership and Ordering Form

Your membership donation is tax deductible and will be used for medical costs (spays/neuters, veterinary bills) and education expenses. All members will receive a copy of our newsletter, *Rabbit Tracks*, when it is published. Currently, we are publishing three issues per year. You can join online at www.rabbitnetwork.org or just fill out this page and mail it with your check payable to:

**House Rabbit Network
P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102**

Choose your membership level:

- Dwarf.....\$ 15.00
- Mini Lop.....\$ 25.00
- New Zealand.....\$ 50.00
- Flemish Giant.....\$ 100.00
- Mix (other).....\$ _____

Choose your newsletter delivery preference:

- PDF format via email
(significant savings for HRN)
- Hard copy via U.S. Mail

Membership.....\$ _____

Other Contribution.....\$ _____

Total.....\$ _____

Date_____

NAME(S) _____

STREET _____

APT. _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL _____