

THE HUMP

NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS FEBRUARY 2015

Divina and Grant: Watching a Romance Bloom

By Brian Rodriguez

Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Sam and Diane, Ross and Rachel: romances we read about or see on television are always more dramatic than those we know in real life. Romances rarely involve damsels in distress, sword fights, or canned laughter. However, that's not to say there isn't a component of struggle when it comes to relationships and matchmaking. Every couple that's still left standing knows that there have been days when the last person they wanted to see was their partner. (I know my girlfriend, Nicole, would agree with that.) For people, great structures need solid foundations, and solid foundations take time to build. And what Nicole and I were to discover is that all of this isn't exclusive to humans.

Enter Grant and Divina, the loves of our lives. Grant, a 4-year-old Lionhead rabbit, came to us around two years ago when we rescued him from the local shelter. I had lived with Nicole for about a year and we were still both getting used to our

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



February is "Adopt-a-Rescued-Rabbit Month." Diamond is waiting for you at the Petco store, Union Square North.

own co-habitation. Ever since we had moved in together, she had wanted for us to adopt a pet. She had grown up with pets and felt a void. I, on the other hand, was in my late teens by the time my family got a dog, so having an animal wasn't something I'd been used to.

"Our apartment is too small for a dog," I would say, and Nicole would always end up agreeing – until one day she

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Cotton, the 'Perfect Bunny,' Is Convinced He's Really a Dog

By Jon Hood

When my wife, Carol St. Hilaire, told me that she wanted to bring home another bunny, I became immediately concerned. We already had three rabbits in the house, one of whom had wormed her way into our hearts after we agreed to foster her for "a few weeks." As much as I love rabbits, I wasn't sure that bringing yet another lagomorph into the house was a good idea.

But this rabbit was different, she assured me. This was "the perfect bunny."

Within minutes of meeting Cotton, I knew what she meant. Our other three rabbits, although adorable and sweet, are introverts at heart and don't like to be bothered for more than a few minutes at a stretch. They scare easily, like most rabbits, and will tolerate being petted, but rarely crave it.

Cotton, on the other hand, seems convinced that he's a dog. He will sit in my or my wife's lap for hours on end,

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retorted with something different from her usual reluctant nod: “What about a rabbit?”

“I don’t know anything about rabbits,” I replied. Fast forward a couple of weeks and she won that argument (as she often does), and on somewhat of a whim, we brought Grant into our budding family.

In hindsight we should have done more research before adopting. I, for one, was not aware rabbits could have so much energy! When we met Grant at the shelter, he was docile and almost shy.

Once we brought him into our uptown one-bedroom apartment, his wild side came out. He was friendlier than ever, but would run around the apartment, chinning everything in sight, entering every single room and doing what must have amounted to 20 laps in each area before moving on. It was cute, but it was taxing.

A year later – this time after doing some research – we decided to try to find Grant a partner. We attended some bunny speed-dating sessions to find the right fit. Some rabbits nipped Grant; he nipped some of them.

Enter Divina, a 5-year-old sable Silver Marten. The speed date between Grant and Divina wasn’t exactly love at first sight, but both were curious. Both seemed to get along. The match was deemed doable, so we gave it a try and went ahead with the adoption.

Divina was brought to our apartment by her foster mother, Mary Christine Basile, who became our day-to-day rabbit bonding coach. She taught us the ins and outs of the process, which I must admit, seemed quite daunting at the time. We couldn’t have done it without her experience and advice, as well as the literature we received at the speed-dating session.

We set up their enclosures next to each other, with a textbook in between to separate them, and let each of them have their own active time. When we did

Photo: Nicole Deluise



Divina and Grant.

this, we would cover the other rabbit’s cage with a blanket, or else one of them would get a serious case of the jealous thumps. This separate active time allowed both rabbits to get acquainted with the apartment and, more important, the smells of their future potential partner.

And then came the dating, which Nicole described as “the cutest and yet most frustrating process ever.” The dates started off short and simple. With a one-minute maximum time limit, and with Nicole and me acting as chaperones, of course, we took them to a neutral space in the apartment. In our case, this was the bathroom. We kept a close watch for charging and nipping, and broke up any sort of mounting.

The rabbits would slowly approach each other. Sometimes nothing would happen. Sometimes they would get aggressive. We would make sure to stroke both rabbits to let them know that this was a place of calmness, a safe place, and not something they needed to be afraid of.

After a week, we extended the time limit to two minutes, and we added a minute onto every date as each week passed. Some dates went really well. The rabbits started to interact and would even attempt grooming each other. No matter how well the date went, we stuck to our allotted time limit. It’s nice to end a date on a positive note as the fortunes of a date can change in an instant.

And, of course, there were some bad dates. For example, Grant, being a Lionhead, has very long fur, and Divina, not used to grooming it, would often pull too hard, hurting and annoying him. And Grant, adopted with a pre-existing condition of bad front teeth, often failed at properly grooming Divina, which would annoy her. She would become pushy with him about it. They hadn’t quite settled into their roles yet, which is normal in any relationship, I suppose.

One of the worst dates happened after several minutes of great bonding. Grant proceeded to urinate on Divina after she had tried to mount him. Let’s just say she wasn’t too thrilled about it. As much as they seemed to enjoy a lot of their time together, there was still a struggle for dominance. Grant, being the male, seemed to want to take control, but partly due to his bad teeth, and partly due to his size (he is about two pounds lighter than Divina) just couldn’t seem to fulfill all her needs, and this would annoy her to the point where she would nip. Eventually the tables turned. Divina started doing most, if not all of the grooming and once she became the dominant bunny, their dates got better and better.

Still, after more than two months, they weren’t bonded. We started to get a little discouraged with the process and

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Divina and Grant

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wondered if they would ever be completely comfortable with each other. Even though they were showing progress, through grooming and relaxing with each other, it would never last. I started to relate to Grant. I myself had some adjustments I had to do. I knew both rabbits could do it; I just didn't know when.

The turning point came during a routine trip to the vet just shy of three months into the bonding process. We brought them into our car in separate carriers. Grant, who doesn't mind a car ride, was okay but Divina, on the other hand, was incredibly nervous. She fidgeted back

and forth and was startled with every turn I made. This was the first time we had brought her into our car so we had not realized she had such a problem. We told the vet about this and on the return trip, he suggested we put them in the same carrier. We were afraid that because they weren't bonded yet, some setback might occur, and we thought we were so close to a breakthrough.

However, Grant's calmness seemed to comfort Divina and she made much less noise on the way home. When we got back to our apartment, we opened the carrier and both rabbits were relaxed and cuddled with each other. It couldn't have been much more than a week later when we deemed them successfully bonded, and as soon as they were bonded,

we saw two different bunnies. Divina became less bossy toward Grant. They both found the balance they needed to make things work. Grant changed, too. He became gentler, and more settled. He knew his single days of running around the apartment, chasing whatever he could, were over. I guess that sort of thing happens to most guys.

Both rabbits have been bonded a year and now they are inseparable. Nicole and I are blessed to have both of them in our lives. It wasn't easy but the process was definitely worth it. Patience was the key to making our bunny romance work. Our little family is complete, for now, thanks to a bonded Grant and Divina, and we could not be happier.

Photos: Jon Hood and Carol St. Hilaire



Cotton flops in his bed.



With his reflection.

'Perfect Bunny'

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falling asleep as we pet him and watch TV. The minute we stop stroking his ears, he'll wake up and gently remind us that we're not quite finished yet. If not carefully watched near the dinner table, he will try to grab not just fruits and vegetables but pieces of cheese and meat, seemingly unaware that his stomach isn't cut out for these kinds of foods.

A few weeks ago, my wife brought home a little bed for Cotton, and I now find him curled up, again like a dog, every evening when I get home from work, a few toys strewn about near his head. He'll run to the door and greet me as I put my briefcase down, and if he doesn't get a treat within a few seconds I'll be gently reminded with a little nip.

Unlike our other three, Cotton doesn't like to be by himself. If we're in the living room watching TV, he'll hop in to see what we're up to and squeeze his way onto the couch. He's already started standing guard over his bun wife-to-be, Ethel; I often find him sitting by the gate that separates her room from his and looking longingly toward the bed,

under which she spends most of her time. We haven't yet started the process of bonding them, but it's clear that Cotton is pumped to have a bunny friend to play with.

After just a few months of having Cotton, we can't imagine our life without him. We were shocked recently when we learned Cotton's sad back story: found abandoned in a housing project elevator, he was emaciated and mangy, his hair matted and his bones clearly visible through his coat. It's unimaginable that anyone would leave this little guy to fend for himself, but equally shocking is that in spite of this background Cotton is the most social, outwardly affectionate bunny I've ever met.

Cotton is still a baby. He turns 1 tomorrow! We consider ourselves blessed to have this little guy living under the same roof as us, and we hope that he brings us joys and laughter for many years to come.



At play.

Volunteer Spotlight

This is the first in a series of Thump profiles, introducing readers to the hard-working volunteers who work for Rabbit Rescue & Rehab.

Rea Dabelic

Fosterer since August 2013, and Volunteer at West 72nd Street Petland since October 2014.

What first brought you to RRR?

I saw volunteers at Petco with bunnies for adoption a few years ago, and said that when I got the time I would like to volunteer.

What keeps you coming back as a regular volunteer?

I love taking care of the bunnies at Petland. They are all so sweet, and I know that by going we are helping them get used to people and attending to their needs. And who doesn't love seeing all those happy binkies and flops?

What changes have you witnessed (if any) in NYC's rabbit scene since you started volunteering?

I feel like we are getting some great things done for the bunnies. For one, the recent ban of the sale of rabbits at pet stores, I know, has gotten a lot of support from the volunteers. We are also educating people on what it really means to have a rabbit and how to take care of them properly. Hopefully, this will lead to a lower surrender rate in the future.

Tell us about your own rabbits.

I have a bonded pair, Trixie and BunBun, that I adopted after fostering in September of 2013. They are brother and sister, from a litter that was born to a surrendered bunny. Trixie is a Californian mix with beautiful red eyes, and BunBun is a gorgeous tan bunny with grey eyes. They do everything together and are very intelligent. Trixie, especially, is a troublemaker, and loves to climb and jump on anything she can reach. They have free roam of my studio apartment and like to take advantage of that. Every morning they both like to

jump on the bed to wake me up for their breakfast – no alarm clock needed here! Their favorite thing to do with each other is to tuck their head under the other in a contest to determine who will get groomed first. Usually Trixie wins and BunBun is more than happy to wash her face, giving her eyes a thorough cleaning. Then Trixie will make sure BunBun's ears are spotless, and the contest continues until one of them falls asleep.

What would your rabbit tell us his/her favorite thing to do with you is?

Anything that results in them getting food or treats! Trixie loves to cuddle, especially in the morning when I am in bed. BunBun likes to get head rubs, but only on his terms, and will bonk me with his nose when he is ready.

What is your day job/profession?

I am a research scientist at Columbia University, where I study viruses and the immune system.

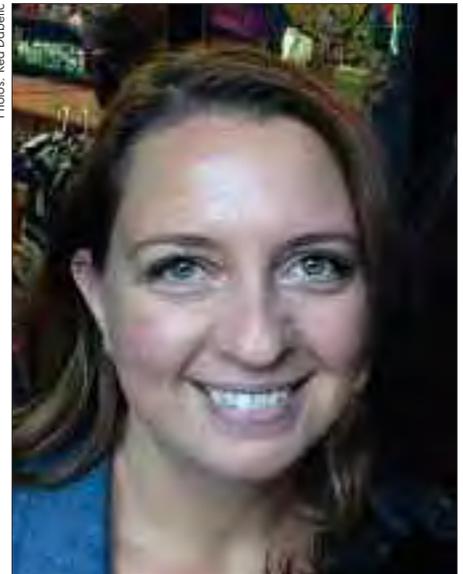
What would you say to others who are thinking about volunteering?

It is a very rewarding experience, both for the bunnies and for you. The best part is when you get bunnies that are very shy and not at all interested in people, and over time you help them come out of their shell or overcome whatever previous experience they had with people. When a bunny finally comes over to you for pets after weeks of seeing him, it is such a happy feeling.

What are your best tips for new bunny parents?

Learn as much as you can about rabbits from resources such as the House Rabbit Society's website (www.rabbit.org), and by talking to the volunteers. Ask lots of questions, and really try to understand the rabbit's needs. Make sure you have all of the emergency necessities on hand before you experience that first emergency. Go to a rabbit-savvy vet and get a checkup right when you get the rabbit. The vets are a great resource and can

Photos: Rea Dabelic



Rea Dabelic.



BunBun and Trixie.

help you learn about the bunny, and what to do in the case of an emergency.

What is your favorite memory from your volunteer work?

All of the binkies!

What do you like to do when you aren't volunteering?

CrossFit is a big part of my life. Music is another big part of my life. I play the piano, guitar, and flute, and I love to go to karaoke. When I have the time, I like to explore the city or travel and take pictures.

What inspires you?

Struggle.

Sophia and Leopold: They'll Always Be 'Babies' to Us

Photo: Birgit von Roemeling



Leo and Sophia.

By **Birgit von Roemeling**

Noodles, mother of Sophia and Leopold, was featured in last February's Thump. The photo on page 21 showed her with six babies born on Dec. 3 at the Manhattan shelter. Cathy Zelonis had been volunteering at the shelter that day, cleaning out as usual all the cages and taking care of the bunnies.

Noodles was downstairs ready to be spayed. When Cathy cleaned her cage she felt something moving in a little hidden nest in the hidey box, and the six babies appeared. Cathy immediately ran downstairs to bring Noodles back upstairs, and therefore saved the babies' lives. Shortly afterward, Cindy Stutts pulled the little family out of the shelter, and they were then temporarily in foster care at Sabine Heinlein's home, but she was scheduled to leave on a trip in February.

My husband, Reinhard, and I had just lost our sweet Annabel in December 2013, and when we were asked if we could foster two babies for a little while, it was such an opportunity and a gift! So at the end of January 2014, Sophia and Leopold went on a long journey to my

home in Connecticut. They had just been separated from their mom two nights earlier, and then from their siblings, so they both were frightened. But they slowly warmed up to their new environment. And since then, every day is a new surprise, and we are building new memories. These adopted babies are now part of our family.

Leopold is the brave explorer, never afraid to go into new territories, and he always finds exciting new play areas in the house. Sometimes I really have to search for him, calling his name, going from room to room, and then I realize that he is standing right behind me, looking at me and probably thinking, "Why are you calling me, Mommy?"

Sophia is the soft, easily scared bunny. One night, she didn't want to come upstairs to the bedroom. She was sitting under the dining-room table by herself. After a while, Leopold went back downstairs to get her, and then gently led her upstairs. This was so cute.

Sophia and Leopold spend a lot of time cuddling next to each other, and, of course, doing a lot of mischief together – like making antique furniture look a

bit more antique, hopping from chair to chair under the dining-room table, unrolling toilet paper in the bathroom, and much more.

We have had so much joy watching them blossom. And when they both race at full speed up and down the long hallway, throwing their binkies into the air, we know they are so happy, and it warms our hearts.

They are inseparable and lost without each other, even though they sometimes spend time apart, sleeping in different areas in the house during the day (Leopold upstairs in the cardboard castle, and Sophia downstairs in the powder room). They are the bosses in the house, and we are their slaves.

They conquered our hearts step by step, and they are here to stay – forever. Once a bunny parent, always a bunny parent! We cannot imagine our lives without them. The "babies" brought sunshine back into our home, and we are delighted to have adopted them.

Snowstorm Rescue

As heavy snow fell on Jan. 26, police were called to an outdoor location in the Gowanus area of Brooklyn, where they observed more than 70 rabbits.

Police officials contacted the ASPCA and Animal Care and Control and asked them to come to the yard, and the decision was made to take the rabbits into custody, police said.

Three days later, members of the NYPD and the ASPCA returned to the location to rescue more than 100 additional rabbits, according to the Police Department's official news blog, NYPD News..

The case is under investigation, and future plans for these rabbits remain unknown.

Margot Bravely Steps Into a New Life

By Marisa Hughes

After losing nearly everything in a house fire last January (including, tragically, a beloved pet Netherland Dwarf), I had to give myself some time to heal before thinking about adopting a new bunny companion. I share this because it's part of what makes my relationship with Margot so special, and thought it a fitting tale to share given the inspiring nature of her own past.

I mulled over dozens of photos and bios of homeless rabbits in New York last autumn, and Margot's resonated with me the most, and I always teared up when I read about her unmatched "zest for life," though she had suffered

such brutal trauma and a difficult road to recovery after being attacked by a pack of dogs.

Margot is still playful, curious and attentive; even after being hurt so badly, she is deeply attuned to and graciously interested in her environment. She is also very kind and caring, and even "checks in" with me very sweetly.

She helps me to carry on calmly, helping me to make peace with the sense of pain and fragility that had been straining me in the months before we met. My boyfriend and I have only been living with her for a few months now, but we just adore her.



Margot enjoys being petted.



Photos: Marisa Hughes

Margot.

While we were visiting the bunnies at AC&C the weekend before we adopted her, a worker who had seen Margot at her worst told me that maybe she got her name because it looked like "maggot," a reference to the grubs that had beset her open wounds. Yikes.

These experiences in Margot's past were tough but perhaps positively formative; I believe she is all the lovelier and more grateful for her time now as a result.

She walks and chills around our house with an air of quiet triumph (or sometimes with an air of "feed me now; it's food time" – but I really mean it, this cutie is majestic).

In light of all this, I'd like to give her a fresh label in this life. Margot and I are still thinking about the right new first name for her, given her magnanimous spirit, but I think she'll get a re-christening soon. It'll be symbolic of brave new beginnings for both of us.

Each Day Is a Moxie Wabbit Adventure

Photos: Marta Michaud



Moxie.

By Marta Michaud

We added a new member to our family on Oct 17: Moxie Wabbit.

Right before Columbus Day I made a trek to the pet store to pick up some food and toys for our parrots, Freddy and Trudy. Whenever I am at the store, I always like to visit with the birds that are for sale. There are always so many different pretty varieties of birds, and they enjoy getting attention from customers as they wait for their new homes.

This particular day there was a beautiful blue parrot that had not yet received her signage as to what her breed and origins were. She was playful and quite stellar,

so I turned to ask a woman who was busy tending to other cages if she knew what kind of bird this lovely creature was. She politely told me that she was the “bunny lady,” and that she only took care of the rabbits. “Neat,” I thought. And then, as I was walking around the birds in order to look at the toys and travel cages, I felt something moving down by my foot.

There was a wire pen with a cardboard castle inside, and sniffing my foot through the pen was a peculiar-looking white, fluffy, flirtatious ball of fire! I had my blond hair loosely pinned up that day, and as I leaned down, my hair touched the fur of the pretty blonde space critter.

She scampered into her castle and played peek-a-boo with me from each cut-out window.

We were kindred spirits. She had crazy uneven shaggy white hair that hung in her eyes, and short silly ears and the cutest mush face. I wasn't sure, but I thought she was a bunny. Just then a young couple came over after seeing us playing (by now I was crawling on the floor with this newfound friend) and asked me, “What is that!??” I said, “I think she is a bunny.” She attracted so much attention from visitors that she ran away and hid from everyone. By now I had forgotten that I had come to the store to buy bird food.

I got up from the floor, dusted myself off and went to see “the bunny lady.” I hadn't encountered a rabbit since child-

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Moxie relaxing in her pen.

Moxie

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hood when I visited my friend's farm, where the bunnies lived outside in cages. I asked "the bunny lady," whose name I now know is Nona, "Can this bunny live inside?" She explained that these house rabbits only lived inside, and that they were litter trained as well. I naively said, "You mean she could live inside like my kitty?" When I heard that this amazing bunny could live in my home, my wheels were spinning. Is it possible that we could have two parrots, a designer kitty and an awesome bunny all at our carriage house? I thought, "Our kitty really could use a playmate, and the birds already love the kitty..."

Nona told me that the white rabbit's name was Moxie. That has been one of my favorite words ever since I visited Calvin Coolidge's house in Vermont when I was a kid. He had cases and cases of a carbonated beverage called Moxie, and he loved it. I continued to play with Moxie and she cuddled and tossed her toys around, showing off for me. Thankfully the floors were clean as I crawled around with her.

Out of curiosity, I decided to ask how much she cost. And to my surprise I found out that she was an orphan like me, and up for adoption. Nona told me about the adoption procedure, and said NYC Metro Rabbit provided support and education for adopters, and a network of resources to help properly care for a bunny.

It was nearly Columbus Day weekend, and my birthday, too. My husband and I had already made plans to go close our cottage in Maine for the winter, a must-do so the pipes don't freeze. I just knew this trip would prevent the possibility of my adopting Moxie because so many other people seemed interested in her.

I went home and discussed the idea with my husband. We both are self-employed and work from our home much of the time, so we really enjoy our pets. He

was open to the idea, and he went the next day with one of our sons to see Moxie. I ran over and met them at the store. They, too, saw that Moxie and I were like "peas and carrots," and that evening I stayed and visited with Moxie until the store closed. Sadly we had to leave town the next day.

I had to run to the pet store before we left. While I was there a bunny caregiver told me that someone had picked up an application to adopt Moxie. The potential applicant was a person who previously had a bunny, and now was ready for a new one. As I chatted with the rabbit volunteer, Moxie got very upset. She looked at me, went into her box and would not come out. My heartstrings tugged and I asked if my husband and I, too, could put in an application.

When I got home I told my husband that Moxie had someone who wanted to adopt her, and that because of the trip we had to take, it did not seem likely we were to be Moxie's new parents.

The next day we packed up early and boarded an Amtrak train. Thankfully, I use my computer to work while traveling, and I got an email saying the other application had not yet been received

and that I shouldn't be discouraged. By now my husband and I were so crazy about Moxie that we already were doing Moxie impressions and giggled nonstop as we talked about Moxie.

When I tried to fill out the online application, my Internet connection wasn't working properly. So I called my friend, a computer wiz in San Francisco, and dictated our answers for the application so that he would prepare it for us.

The Moxie excitement was contagious! Our sons, too, were cheering for Moxie. The anticipation was mounting, and fortunately, due to the holiday, it all worked out.

We returned from Maine and the next morning I ran to Babies "R" Us and bought Moxie the cutest pen! And baby mats and toys. And then to Duane Reade for baby first-aid and care items, like a great brush and baby gas drops. Too adorable! It really felt like we were adopting our new child. I had it all delivered to our home and my husband joined me at the pet store to meet with the head of the bunny organization and a couple of volunteers. They spoke with

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Moxie and the cat are friends.

We Are Looking for Loving Homes

Written and compiled by Kirsten Ott

Razzle and Dazzle

Razzle and Dazzle are a bonded pair of small male bunnies, or “husbuns,” who were surrendered at the shelter in different stages of neglect, but they have recovered to become healthy, gorgeous boys. Razzle has the looks of a beautiful and soft Mini Satin, and Dazzle has the markings of a Mini English Spot and the sweet round face to match. Both are very curious and friendly, and will immediately start giving you kisses. Soft blankets and cilantro are just two of their favorite things. They are looking for a forever home that can give them lots of affection and attention and show them that YES, they deserve the good bun life. Razzle and Dazzle are currently living in a foster home.

Winter

Winter is a small- to medium-sized black-and-white male who was found in a gymnasium. He likes gentle petting,



Winter.



Dazzle and Razzle.

and will let you stroke his silky black ears. Winter has fun, large raccoon-like rings around his big eyes. He would do best in a quiet home with experienced bunny people.

Mortimer

Mortimer is a large orange lop with a curious and spunky personality. You could say he fits the stereotype of a fiery redhead! This smart guy is eager for

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Moxie

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us for a couple of hours about bunny care and bunny safety and how to bunny-proof our home.

While I learned how to take Moxie’s temperature, my husband walked with the shopping list around Petco and selected a litter box, more toys, hay and pellets. I ordered lots of fresh lettuce, herbs and greens from the grocer. Just as the store was ready to close, everyone at Petco said good-bye to Moxie. The wonderful bunny volunteers hugged us and congratulated us on our new baby.

Since Oct. 17 our home has been the home of our bouncing baby girl: Moxie Wabbit. She and kitty are friends, and Freddy the parrot has a crush on her.

The biggest crush is that of my husband David. He is totally smitten by Moxie, and she’s smitten with him! They cuddle

Photo: Marta Michaud



Moxie cuddles with David, Marta’s husband.

and watch TV and play for hours. I tend to our menagerie, and get to brush Moxie’s beautiful soft fur every day. I even trimmed her bangs for her. Our whole big family is eating healthier now,

too, thanks to Moxie’s diet of fresh greens. And, boy, does she love carrot tops, mint and cilantro! I use the carrots to make soup for the rest of the family, and we are all eating lots of salad these days. Even Riley the kitty is shinier and more active with this pretty new sibling to keep her on her toes.

It is hard to imagine that just last summer beautiful Moxie was left abandoned in Prospect Park and found nearly starved to death before the amazing volunteers rescued her, bought her back to health and treated her for blindness in one eye. I sometimes think of how scared little Moxie must have been out in the wild – and my heart sings that she will now be forever loved, cherished and spoiled.

We are so enchanted by her spunky personality and the excitement and joy she brings to our home and family. Each day is a new Moxie Wabbit adventure!

Looking for Loving Homes (Continued from page 9)



Mortimer.

activity and exploration, and becomes cutely annoyed if he doesn't get his way – he'll look right into your eyes as if he's staring you down. Mortimer will certainly entertain his forever people, but he's likely to boss them around as well!



Rosanne.

Rosanne

Rosanne is a medium-sized tan bunny who was found on East 116th Street. This lovely bunny has elegant looks and a calm demeanor – if she were human, you might say she has a lot of poise. Rosanne has a beautiful creamy tan coat, and if you look closely you can see that it's kind of two-toned, with slightly lighter and darker shades of tan. She has a slightly mottled, tan-on-tan pattern on top of her head. Rosanne would make a good choice for a first-time bunny owner.



Celeste.

Celeste

Celeste is a medium-sized black and white female. Poor Celeste was so neglected by her former family that she didn't even know what petting was, and tried to bite every hand that came near. Now Celeste has learned to love affection, and will nudge your hand for petting rather than try to bite it. Celeste has tons of energy, loves to explore, and will follow you around all day. She'll also run you down and jump all over you if she thinks you may have a treat for her. Although Celeste is becoming very affectionate, she still gets a little nervous. She should be approached gently and slowly, and may not be a good choice for families with young children.

Forever Homes Found!



Burrito.

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Charlie, Brock, Stella, Crimson and Clover, Zucchini, Viking, Benny, Angelo, Roberto, Jess, Hippo, Clover, Tate, Arnie, Desiree, Tut, Jeremy, Snowball, Old Blue Eyes, Percy, Bree, Medianoche, Cloud, Arya, Burrito, Cocoa, Oberon.



Sincere thanks to all of our generous donors of hay, pellets, greens, supplies and equipment!

House Rabbit Musical Debuts Here

Photo: Michael MacKenzie Wills.



"A Superbunny Christmas" starred, from left, Calum Fleming (Champ), Justin Galletto (Thumperino), Karlene Grinberg (Veronica) and Adelmo Guidarelli (Bertie Biggs).

"Can you give a home this holiday? It's something we all should discuss; to give a small being a sense of believing in kindness and caring and trust." These lyrics from the new family musical, "A Superbunny Christmas," were inspired by the lives of two very special adopted house rabbits, Thumperino and Veronica. In 2010, Thumperino met Veronica on a bunny speed date arranged through Rabbit Rescue & Rehab. Since then, the pair have become the subject of an award-winning children's book series and a cycle of New York Times-recommended musicals.

This production (produced by Rabbit Hole Theatrics, written by Michael MacKenzie Wills, with music by Alastair William King, and based on "Thumperino Superbunny and the Christmas Star Caper" by Amber L. Spradlin) hopped its way into audiences' hearts in December

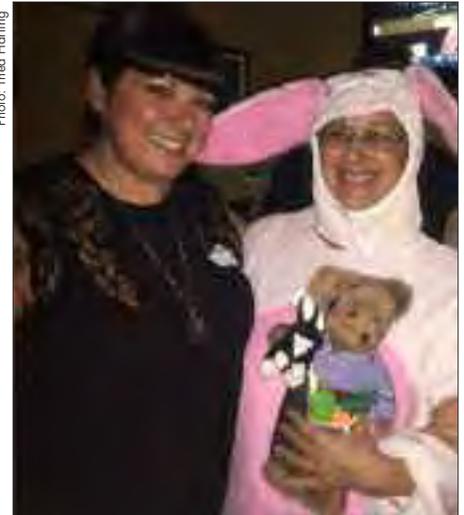
at the Actors Fund Arts Center in Brooklyn. It brought to the stage a mix of live actors and puppets to help Thumperino Superbunny solve the Christmas star caper.

"A Superbunny Christmas" is not just about entertaining children with the story of a missing Christmas star and the mission to get it back. It also champions the value of pet adoption. The hero of this story, Thumperino Superbunny, himself an adopted New York City house rabbit, becomes an ambassador for pet rescue when he saves 101 of his fellow rabbits from an evil villain. With the help of his new friend Veronica, he finds them all a home for Christmas. A wish come true for all shelter pets!

– Submitted by Amber L. Spradlin

Fund-Raiser at Pub

Photo: Thea Horning



Nicole Fusco-Evans, left, and Marcie Frishberg (holding Boyd Bears' Marcie Bear in honor of her volunteer work) celebrated at a Jan. 24 fund-raiser at the Monro Pub in Brooklyn. Nicole and her husband, Vincent Evans, owners of the pub and rabbit adopters, hosted the event for the benefit of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab and NYC Metro Rabbits, and Mary Christine Basile helped in organizing it.

City Plans \$8 Million In Shelter Upgrades

The city Health Department and Animal Care & Control on Jan. 23 unveiled plans to improve shelter animal care. More than \$8 million in capital funding will be provided by the city to build a new adoption building at the Manhattan center, modernize the Brooklyn facility, and double the current fleet of mobile adoption vans.

The city is joining with AC&C to design and construct a building dedicated to the adoption of dogs, cats and rabbits on the site of an unused garage adjacent to the Manhattan center.

The capital funding will also enable AC&C to acquire the additional mobile adoption van, and these will be used in the Bronx and Queens. Improvements at the Brooklyn facility will include the redesign and replacement of heating, air-conditioning and ventilation systems.

Our Spanky

By Marylee Matturro

Is it possible to actually feel like your heart is broken in two at the passing of a beloved pet rabbit? Yes, it is.

When I rescued Spanky from a pet store in 2003, her delicate fur was covered in pine shavings and she was cowering in the corner of a cage. She was 8 weeks old, according to the store employee, and was shipped up from a breeder in Florida. Some of the other rabbits in the shipment didn't make it, he explained. How horrible, I thought!

I asked if I could hold her and immediately fell in love. She weighed 8 ounces, according to our first doctor's visit, and fit in the palm of my hand. You can't imagine how cute she was! When my husband Rich saw her for the first time, he was smitten as well! He named her Spanky because she was such a little rascal. She would fly up the stairs, her floppy ears sticking straight up in the air, and hop onto the bed with one fell swoop to get her ears rubbed by Rich while they sat on the bed watching TV. She found the wrapping paper I stored under the bed and had such a great time tearing it up I could never stop her. Spanky would race around the dining-room table where the traction was good and jump straight up in the air doing a pirouette binky. Her name suited her well. Now I recall how she chewed the bottom of the antique pine armoire, but who could mind after I picked her up and she proceeded to lick my face nonstop with her bunny kisses? (I am the only person she kissed.) So out came the sandpaper and I sanded it away. I could go on and on about her little antics.

Spanky was a cuddle bunny. If I came home from work after a stressful day at the office, she would curl up in my lap and we would have our "cuddle time," as I would call it. I would pet her, rub her ears and tell her everyday how much I loved her.



Photo by Amy Stern

Spanky 11 years old.



Photo by Amy Stern

Spanky and me.

Because of Spanky, I started to attend the annual rabbit conferences held in New Rochelle, educating myself on the very best rabbit care. I sought the very best rabbit vet I could find (Dr. Gil Stanzione) and met the amazing Rabbit Rescue & Rehab people (Mary Cotter) and joined the House Rabbit Society. It all paid off in spades because I was blessed enough to have my Spanky for 12 long years. We had a birthday cake for her in December to mark the milestone. People always would ask, "How long do rabbits live anyway?" and I would answer, "You mean how long do MY rabbits live?"

The last few years of Spanky's life were rough. She became blind from glaucoma, had a huge growth coming out of her nose, and had severe arthritis. The last few months she was disabled where she



Photo by Marylee Matturro

Spanky, 8 weeks old.



Photo by Marylee Matturro

Spanky 5 years old.

could no longer stand and had to get butt baths because she was incontinent and could no longer hop into her potty. But she continued to have a voracious appetite and lick me incessantly, so we knew she was not suffering. Rich and I gave her the best care we possibly could. She saw an eye specialist with better credentials than my own doctor, had

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Commander Melvin's Legendary Escapades

Photo: Heather Lorence



Commander Melvin.

By **Stephanie Lorence**

I never knew what to expect from Commander Melvin and Rose when I came home after everyone had gone to bed. Would they be perched on top of the couch like statues, as if caught in some secret act? It was also highly possible that they would be involved in an elaborate marathon and would take notice of my arrival by zipping past me on a race that they had devised. However, one thing was clear before I opened the door, and that was that their whereabouts always would be a surprise to me.

Commander Melvin had been with us for only a few years, but he had a variety

of complex body motions that you picked up on after watching him in action for only a short while. He was known for his healthy appetite and was one of the few rabbits who almost tripped me in excitement as he eagerly anticipated his dinner. As if this weren't enough, he proceeded to narrowly miss hitting his head on his food bowl as I attempted to gingerly place it on his mat. His companion, Rose, a diminutive white bunny, would watch Melvin as he dived into his bowl of greens, with a gusto that only those rabbits who have been running circles around the apartment all night possess.

As I often watched Melvie and Rosie together, I marveled at their unbreakable bond. It was difficult for me to imagine that they weren't always as close, and even used to occasionally nip each other a bit when they were first introduced. However, up until the end of Commander Melvin's life on Dec. 3, they would often lie side by side; groom each other's ears and face, and race to see who could eat their special treat of banana or Craisin the fastest.

People often asked why he was named Commander Melvin, as it seemed to them like a very odd name for a rabbit. However, as we all got to know him, we realized that it suited him perfectly. He was a rabbit who attacked every aspect of his life (especially food) with enthusiasm, and when excited, would greet you at the door. He had a special hop for when he was especially pleased, and treated each member of the family as a unique individual. My family has had quite a few rabbits, but he is one of a very few who made a habit of leaping onto me from a few feet away while I was watching TV. He certainly knew how to make an entrance.

Although Commander Melvin is no longer with us, he taught me a great deal about the importance of body language. As someone who is quite talkative, I feel that I place value on someone's speech first. However, I felt that Commander Melvin was able to convey his mood to me through his varied hops, leaps, slow walks and facial expressions. I truly believe that Commander Melvin was an invaluable companion who taught me the importance of slowing down and picking up on the subtleties that exist without our even being aware of them.

Our Spanky *(Continued from page 12)*

several prescriptions, and even had a few laser treatments to help with the arthritis at the end. We continued to have cuddle time until her last days, where she would sleep on my chest and I could kiss her head.

She passed away in her sleep this past weekend (Jan. 18) and even though I prayed she would not linger, when the reality hit that she was really gone, my heart hurt. My husband built her a beautiful pine box that we lined with her sheepskin bed, and we laid her in it with a white rose. Rich buried her in

our rose garden and I ordered a memorial river rock stone from Artistic Etching with a carving of an American Fuzzy Lop.

The inscription will read:

"Spanky 2003-2015
Our Beloved, Sweetest Girl"

Letters From Adopters

Photo: Anthony Garcia



Digby with Sara.

Digby

Digby, formerly known as Jerry, was adopted by Anthony and Sara in mid-December. We received this update in early January.

We just wanted to fill you in a little on how Digby (aka Jerry) has been doing lately. Where to begin...lol.

Well, the first and biggest thing is that Sara and I decided to rename Jerry. And after careful consideration, we decided

on Digby! Of course, we ran it by our little bunny friend and he seemed to like it just as much as we do (if binkying is any indication), so Digby it is. :)

Aside from that, we've all been getting along famously. Digby now seems comfortable in his no-longer-so-new surroundings, and sometimes I think he even thinks he runs the place. He likes running laps in the living room, and especially loves running/binkying around his favorite chair. We've been careful to bunny-proof the entire space for him so that he's safe at all times.

I've attached a picture of him sitting with Sara and I have to say, we're all enjoying spending time together very much! So it's been a great start to the new year.

Thanks again for all your help in bringing us together, and again, Happy New Year!

Gratefully,

Anthony, Sara and Digby

Tallulah

Tallulah, previously known as Diana, was adopted in November by Cheryl Mazzeo, who sent us this letter the following month.

I joined my friend at the Union Square Petco to view the rabbits, since we're both animal lovers, and told myself I wouldn't adopt a rabbit.

However, I was terribly wrong. I quickly fell in love with Diana (now named Tallulah), and thought she'd be a perfect new friend for my two other rabbit children.

She has a playful personality and loves hiding her toys underneath her – for storage purposes, of course. While she has a wonderful time playing with the household cat, I am still working toward bonding her with Totoro and Queen Latifah. This will definitely be a worthwhile friendship in the end.

Photo: Cheryl Mazzeo



Tallulah.

Thank you for introducing me to this sweetie!

Cheryl

Penelope

Penelope, formerly known as Corla, was adopted by Debbie Kross and her family. We received this update at the end of December.

I am the happy adoptive “mom” of Corla, who has been renamed Penelope.

Penelope joined our family of five on Nov. 1, after being adopted from the East Harlem NYC AC&C shelter.

Photo: Debbie Kross



Penelope and Miles.

We had been thinking about adopting a house rabbit for a couple of years, and my son Miles and I finally went to the shelter together. As soon as we entered the “rabbit room,” which was the home of a dozen very cute rabbits, my son saw a cute little brown rabbit looking at us and he immediately fell in love. We spent a long while speaking with Erin McElhinney, a passionate and caring volunteer who has been working there for several years. She gave us advice and a lot of tips about how to take care of a rabbit. Very quickly we knew that Penelope would be coming home with us that day.

Now installed in the living room of our apartment, in a large cage which is rarely closed, Penelope runs around and likes to relax in her favorite spots – behind the couch, under the ottoman,

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Letters *(Continued from page 14)*

behind a chair. She was initially quite shy – which we fully expected as she was only a few months old when we adopted her – but she quickly warmed up and now she spontaneously jumps on the couch to snuggle with us.

She really enjoys getting a variety of greens – and, of course, the occasional piece of apple or banana, or a raisin. We were pleasantly surprised how clean she is, only going to the bathroom in a small corner of her cage, and never anywhere else in the apartment.

She is a bit mischievous, too. Two weeks ago she managed to crawl into our window A/C unit and we frantically searched for her for three hours. And, of course, she chews on cables and homework.

But we couldn't be happier about her joining our family!

Regards,

Debbie

Photo: Tara Figueroa



Galileo.

Galileo

Galileo, previously called Angelo, was adopted in early January by Tara and Andre Figueroa. Here is an update sent about a week later.

Dear Rabbit Rescue & Rehab,

Our first week with Galileo was wonderful! He settled in rather quickly and is now happily exploring the greater parts of his

new digs. He has even made a new buddy, our senior toy poodle, Junior. It is so cute to see Galileo rush out of his pen to say hello when Junior walks by.

Galileo is such a smart fella. Our daughter's job is to give him a treat every morning, and now he showers her with extra affection. We are all so in love with him.

Warm regards,

The Figueroa Family

Photo: Rebecca Cisneros



Daisy and Hippo.

Hippo and Daisy

Benny and Rebecca adopted Hippo as a partner for their bunny Daisy, and they sent us this update in mid-January.

We are absolutely in love with Hippo! He and Daisy have become the best of friends already!

They love to run around together and even sleep side-by-side. They also are already sharing their food and grooming each other. We are so lucky to have them bonded so quickly!

Daisy has been so much happier now that Hippo is in her life and we absolutely adore them both!! Thank you for letting us adopt Hippo into our home. He now has a forever home and friend. :)

Rebecca and Benny

Photo: Laura Johnson



Samson.

Samson

Laura and Michael adopted Tupac, now called Samson, in January and wrote this letter a week later.

We adopted Samson mid-January. He was originally called Tupac, but the volunteers had renamed him King Tut, which was very fitting with his black hotot eye markings. I was envious of his ability to pull off such strong eyeliner, but it was his friendly, inquisitive nature that won us over. We decided to name him Samson, a similarly apt name for a dominant, strong-willed little bunny.

Samson has megacolon, which means he requires special care and lots of attention. However, with a drop of aloe vera juice in his water, plenty of hay and lots of exercise you wouldn't be able to tell at all. Despite having a large open pen, we let him have full reign of the apartment (all meticulously bunny-proofed, wires hidden, etc!!) during the daytime and evening.

We knew he wasn't a fan of vegetables when we adopted him, and so far have tried him on kale, carrots, parsley and other herbs, spinach, carrot tops, various fruit, but he doesn't seem interested. So we'll keep going until we find his favorite veggie! He will sometimes demolish a

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Letters *(Continued from page 15)*

strawberry but looks distinctly bored when greens are placed in his food bowl!

Although he's only known us a week, he's already fully adjusted to living with us. He will follow us from room to room, just to sleep under the bed or next to the couch, taking comfort in

knowing we're nearby. He will happily sit on the couch with us while the TV is on, rest his head and front paws on my arm and cuddle for an hour or so, "purring" happily away. If he's on the bed he will snuggle under the covers and fall asleep propped up next to one of

our legs. He really is an adorable, loving rabbit. We're so grateful to Petco on 86th and Lex and especially Susan for all of your help.

Kind regards,

Laura, Michael and Samson

Photo: Katharine Zarrella



François.

François

François, who used to be known as Francis, was adopted by Katharine in April. She sent us this update at the end of December.

I know it sounds ridiculous, but Mssr. François Froufrou, formerly known as

Francis, has quite literally changed my life – for the better. When I first found his profile online, I knew I wanted to give him a better life. It was something about his eyes. His fantastic foster mother helped me set up a meeting, and I adopted him on the spot.

I can't adequately explain our connection with words, but I'm not sure what I'd do without him. Of course, I love watching him play and binky on the carpet. I love feeding him big leaves of kale, and I really love when he jumps up next to me on the couch and snuggles up for a head rub. I even love when I'm working on my laptop and he leaps up on the keyboard and chins the computer.

But Francois is more than just a cute pet. When I adopted François, I had just

learned that my mother had stage-four cancer. She passed away this past August, and I don't know how I would have gotten through it without François. He'd travel home with me every weekend to see her. She always loved his visits, and called him her "French Grandbunny." When I cry, he hops right over and rubs his sweet little head against me.

I'm sure I sound like one of those crazy pet people, but François has become my best friend. When he's happy, I'm happy. And nothing warms my heart more than the wiggle of his perfect little nose. I feel like the luckiest lady in the world to have him as my companion.

Katharine K. Zarrella

Sisu

Sisu, who had been called Leonard when he was at the shelter, was adopted by Rick Hiciano, who sent us this update in mid-January.

Sisu has been a wonderful and cute addition to the family. I first met Sisu at the Manhattan shelter (Animal Care & Control of NYC) where the friendly and extremely helpful staff and volunteers gave me the complete rundown on taking care of rabbits.

During the adoption process, I was able to play with Sisu, and this was when I knew he would be an excellent choice for our family.

Since he's been home, he's been nothing but great company. He is friendly, calm and happy. My family, especially my

Photo: Rick Hiciano



Sisu and Rick.

mother, has adapted well to him, and we enjoy his frantic hopping around the play area (our living room).

Sisu has been home for a month now and his personality continues to surprise me. In the beginning, he was afraid to even leave his pen, but just the other day he climbed up on our couch!

I cannot wait to see how his personality develops, and I know our bond will strengthen as time goes on.

Adopting Sisu was definitely one of my greatest decisions, and I am so thankful to start the year off with him.

Your friend,

Rick

CELEBRITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Wheeler.



Fluffy.



Billie.



▲ Cabbage. ▼ Angelo.



▲ Brock. ▼ Edward.

▼ Jeremy.





▲ Lola. ▼ Jumungi.



Frankie and Tico.



▲ Zucchini. ▼ Oreo Butler.





Ivy.

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*To learn about rabbits, visit www.rabbit.org
To adopt a rabbit, email nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com*



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rabbitcare.org

www.rabbit.org

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Rabbit-Savvy Veterinarians

Here's our recommended vet list for the New York metropolitan area. **Please note that many clinics have multiple veterinarians, and our recommendations are for specific veterinarians in those clinics.** If you can't get an appointment with a recommended vet at one clinic, don't assume (no matter what you are told by the clinic) that other vets in the same clinic can help your rabbit. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the vets on this list, please contact Mary Cotter at (914) 337-6146. When you make an appointment with any of these vets, please tell them you were referred by us.

Long Island:

Jennifer Saver, DVM

Laura George, DVM

Kristen Miller, DVM

Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital
2056 Jericho Turnpike, New Hyde Park,
NY 11040 • (516) 877-7080

Heidi Hoefler, DVM

Island Exotic Vet Care
591 East Jericho Turnpike
Huntington Station, NY 11746
(631) 424-0300

Jeff Rose, DVM

Jefferson Animal Hospital
606 Patchogue Rd. (Route 112)
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776
(631) 473-0415

Manhattan:

Becky Campbell, DVM

Deborah Levison, DVM

Symphony Veterinary Center
170 West 96th Street, New York, NY 10025
(212) 866-8000

Katherine Quesenberry, DVM

The Animal Medical Center
510 East 62nd St., New York, NY 10065
(212) 838-7053, (212) 329-8622

Alexandra Wilson, DVM

Anthony Pilny, DVM

Cynthia J. Brown, DVM

The Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine
568 Columbus Ave., New York, NY 10024
(212) 501-8750

Shachar Malka, DVM

Humane Society of New York
306 East 59th St., New York, NY 10022
(212) 752-4842

Westchester County:

Gil Stanzione, DVM

Dakota Veterinary Center
381 Dobbs Ferry Road, White Plains, NY 10607
(914) 421-0020

Laurie Hess, DVM

Veterinary Center for Birds and Exotics
709 Bedford Road, Bedford Hills, NY 10507
(914) 864-1414

ADOPTABLE RABBITS

There are lots of adoptable rabbits available in Manhattan, Long Island and Westchester.

To adopt a rabbit in **New York City**, contact Cindy Stutts at bygolyoly@yahoo.com or call her at 646-319-4766. On **Long Island**, contact Nancy Schreiber at nschreibmd@aol.com or at 516-510-3637 (www.longislandrabbitrescue.org), and in **Westchester** contact Mary Cotter at mec@cloud9.net or 914-337-6146 (www.rabbitcare.org).

The rabbit volunteers' email address in New York City is nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

Adoptable NYC Metro rabbits are at Petco's Lexington Avenue (86th-87th) and Union Square locations; rabbit volunteers are present at both stores on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to answer questions. There are four rabbits living at each of those stores.

In addition, NYC Metro rabbits are at Petland Discounts stores on West 117th Street, East 86th Street and West 72nd Street.

You can also visit Animal Care & Control of NYC (AC&C) at 326 East 110th St., between First and Second avenues.

Rabbits for adoption can be found by going to: <http://www.nycacc.org/> and doing an adoption search. Volunteers are there every weekday evening and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but it is best to arrange an appointment first.

Bunny speed dates can be arranged by appointment only on weekend afternoons either at Columbus Square or Union Square. Please contact Cindy Stutts at bygolyoly@yahoo.com to make arrangements.

Many of our rabbits are living in foster homes and you can meet them as well. You also can arrange to foster a rabbit until he or she finds a permanent home. Contact Mary Cotter at mec@cloud9.net or Cindy Stutts at nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

For basic information about rabbits as pets, go to www.rabbitcare.org, www.longislandrabbitrescue.org and the House Rabbit Society main site, www.rabbit.org.

Licensed HRS Representatives

Mary Cotter, president, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab; Chapter Manager, NYC House Rabbit Society, mec@cloud9.net, (914) 337-6146, rabbitcare.org

Nancy Schreiber, HRS Licensed Educator, President, Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, nschreibmd@aol.com, (516) 510-3637, LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

Cindy Stutts, HRS Licensed Educator, Manager NYC Metro Rabbit Program, bygolyoly@yahoo.com, (646) 319-4766, nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com

Mary Ann Maier, HRS Licensed Educator, Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group Volunteer, altitude8@yahoo.com, LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

Donna Sheridan, HRS Licensed Educator, Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group Volunteer, hpocus217@yahoo.com, LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

Kerstin Aumann, HRS Licensed Educator, NYC/AC&C Volunteer, nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com, nycacc.org

Mary Harnett, HRS Licensed Educator, mmharnett@optonline.net, (914) 948-7976

Gabrielle LaManna, HRS Licensed Educator, New Fairfield, CT, gabbysbunnies@yahoo.com, (203) 746-7548

Mary Christine Basile, HRS Educator-in-Training

Jennifer Saver, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

Laura George, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

Monica Shepherd, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

THUMP February 2015

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Rabbit Rescue & Rehab is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation in New York State. Our purpose is to rescue, rehabilitate and find permanent homes for abandoned, abused and neglected rabbits, and to educate the public on rabbit care through publications, phone consultations, home visits and presentations. This newsletter is published by RRR/NYC HRS, which is solely responsible for its content. We retain the right to edit all submissions, which become the property of the NYC Chapter and cannot be returned.

All donations go directly to caring for our foster rabbits and are tax-deductible. Please help us help them. Mailing address for contributions to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab: Gabrielle LaManna, 7 Carriage Lane, New Fairfield, CT 06812. For contributions to Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, please go to www.longislandrabbitrescue.org.