How Serafina and Her Task Force Saved 180 of Her Friends
The Role of Social Media in Rabbit Activism
Wholistic* Rabbit Grooming

Welcome to our first full-color issue!
Welcome to our first full-color issue of *House Rabbit Journal*! Inside you will find the stories you love—stories of rescue, families sharing their lives with rabbits, rabbits in culture, rabbit care information, and more - now with beautiful artwork and photos in color. Thank you for supporting House Rabbit Society’s life-saving rescue and education work. We couldn’t do it without you!

-Anne Martin, PhD  
Executive Director, House Rabbit Society
EVERY YEAR we hear about a number of emergency rabbit rescue situations around the country that involve anywhere from 15 to 1500 rabbits.

In order to help, in 2007 we started the Emergency Rescue Fund. All donations coming to HRS that specify “Emergency Rescue Fund” will go toward these grants. We use these funds to make targeted grants (usually ranging from $250 to $750) to animal rescue organizations who are involved in a large rescue of many rabbits. House Rabbit Society’s Chapter Grant program seeks to assist HRS chapters in their mission of rabbit rescue or education and outreach. Below are a few of our grant recipients for 2016. Congratulations to these great rescues and HRS chapters!

2016 EMERGENCY & CHAPTER GRANT RECIPIENTS

**BUNNY BURROW** $500
Assisted with costs associated with rescuing 6 bunnies and 19 babies from Mesquite Animal Control
[www.thebunnyburrow.org](http://www.thebunnyburrow.org)

**HARVEST HOME ANIMAL SANCTUARY** $720
Helped with their rabbit playpen rebuilding project (HRS chapter grant)
[harvesthomesanctuary.org](http://harvesthomesanctuary.org)

**SE PENNSYLVANIA/DE HRS** $750
Assisted with a rescue of 47 rabbits from a backyard, housed in deplorable conditions and allowed to breed uncontrollably
[www.rabbit.org/chapters/se-pennsylvania/](http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/se-pennsylvania/)

**SWEET BINKS** $750
Helped the Rhode Island chapter of HRS with the medical care for 19 rabbits found badly neglected and injured in a garage
[rirabbits.org](http://rirabbits.org)

**LAS VEGAS HRS** $1000
Helped fund a series of billboards educating the public about rabbit abandonment (HRS chapter grant)
[lv-hrs.org](http://lv-hrs.org)

**WIENOSIN HRS** $1000
Helped fund their Easter bus tail ads (HRS chapter grant)
[wisconsinhrs.org](http://wisconsinhrs.org)

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Helped fund their Easter bus tail ads (HRS chapter grant)
[wisconsinhrs.org](http://wisconsinhrs.org)
On a blazing hot day in July 2015, the Georgia chapter of House Rabbit Society (GHRS) got a call that would change many lives. A concerned man said that for three days he had seen a rabbit in a cage at the end of a driveway with a sign saying “Bunnies Free.” There was no food, water, or shade, and the rabbit looked very sick. Distraught, he asked what he should do.

This was the beginning of a powerful task force that ultimately shut down Pet Parties Plus, a petting zoo business, and ended with GHRS taking in 153 rabbits from the 180 that were rescued from terrible conditions.

The Power of the Press

The rabbit in the cage arrived at our shelter dehydrated, hungry, and with head tilt/rolling. We named her Serafina and began protocol for Encephalitozoon cuniculi.

We reported the owner to the county’s animal control office, which found that this business was not licensed, as required, by the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Animal control made a preliminary site visit and discovered about 200 rabbits living in overcrowded, pitiful conditions. Georgia’s animal control offices are underfunded and overwhelmed with dogs and cats; rabbits are not in their budget, and they wanted GHRS to take them. Our chapter did not have the resources to care for this many rabbits, but we knew this business had to be stopped.

We formed a volunteer task force including our vet, a media relations consultant, and an attorney specializing in animal rights issues. The first challenge was getting the rabbits off the property of the Pet Parties Plus owner, who was indiscriminately breeding and severely neglecting these rabbits used as props for kids’ parties.

Our media relations consultant successfully pitched the story to local media, whose representatives showed up in droves for our meeting with animal control; Channel 2 Action News even sent a helicopter! All four local television stations and two newspapers covered the story. This meeting was difficult since animal control said the rabbits “looked okay” and insisted that there was no place for the rabbits unless GHRS took custody. Meanwhile, rabbits were suffering.

With media pressure and the resulting public pressure, animal control removed 180 rabbits the next day and housed them at their facility in a garage bay with fans. They weren’t ideal conditions, but animal control was cooperating to save as many rabbits as possible, even though they had no extra staff to help. GHRS made the best of it, with our volunteers working long hours to triage, arrange veterinary care, feed, and otherwise care for the rabbits for three weeks.
The Lifesaving Vet
Following recommended HRS protocol for confiscations, we identified and spayed all pregnant females except one in the first two weeks, which resulted in only three live births after confiscation. Animal control was able to transfer 27 rabbits to licensed rescues. Out of time at animal control, GHRS took responsibility for the rest.

Dr. Stewart Colby, an experienced rabbit vet, was an incredible resource. He came to the initial meeting with Animal Control and diagnosed and recommended that all the rabbits be treated for syphilis and ear mites, supporting the case for neglect. He and his team successfully treated more than 30 severe cases and humanely euthanized those who could not be saved.

Serafina’s Day in Court
In September, we represented Serafina and her friends in court. Animal cruelty cases are prosecuted by the state with an assigned prosecutor handling negotiations with the animal abuser. Our lawyer contacted the prosecutor to ensure she had all necessary evidence and provided helpful facts; pictures showing abuse, neglect, and suffering; and Department of Agriculture reports.

Crime victims are allowed to speak with the judge (and the public) in court through a “victim’s impact statement.” On behalf of Serafina and her friends, we spoke of their plight and that prosecution was vital to keep this from happening again. We also told the judge about the immense amount of time, resources, and love we poured into remediying the animal neglect disaster this defendant created. From the judge’s expressions and the results, we knew we had left an impression.

The owner accepted a plea deal conviction that included three years of probation, fines, community service, and mandatory veterinary care for the animals she was allowed to keep; prohibition of buying and selling animals; unannounced visits by Animal Control; and the shutdown of her business operations.

What Did This Mean?
This rescue has created a continuing burden for GHRS. We still need help and will gladly arrange transportation to any chapter that has room for a few more buns! We were thankful to transfer 53 rabbits to other HRS and licensed rabbit rescues, have adopted out 35 (as of time of writing), and will continue to work on finding homes for the rest. Prosecuting this animal abuser was a start, but stronger laws in Georgia are needed to stop this from happening again. We have become involved with an organization to help this process.

What Did We Learn?
It is important to have established relationships with members who have specialized skills. Without a media spotlight, the county would most likely not have moved quickly – or at all—on confiscating the rabbits. Without an attorney, we wouldn’t have known how to best present our case at court and shut down Pet Parties Plus forever. Without an established relationship with a generous rabbit-savvy vet, many of these rabbits wouldn’t have survived. And without the dozens of amazing volunteers who put in thousands of hours transporting, medicating, feeding, watering, petting, brushing, snuggling, and cleaning, this story could not be told.

Serafina has shown great improvement and, while she’s not completely recovered, we know she’s happy. We tell her often how she saved so many of her friends from an awful fate. She’s now in her forever home where she is living the life she deserves and being introduced to a potential mate.

Serafina’s story is one of bravery and survival against the odds. She has shown us, as an organization, what we are capable of achieving, and for that we are profoundly grateful.
Almost all of us use social media daily. We log into our accounts in order to see how our friends and families are doing as well as to make plans for our daily lives. But the purpose of social media is growing and changing, leaning away from communicating with people we already know, and turning more towards forging new and dynamic relationships by connecting to people with interests similar to our own.

I recently created a social media account on the popular photo-sharing site, Instagram, for my two rabbits, Rolo and Poppy. This account was meant to be a fun little hobby where I could post pictures of my rabbits. Immediately our followers began to grow. We had 50 followers in our first week, and now we are sitting at 1,000 just a few short weeks later.

That is 1000 sets of eyes on our rabbits—watching them, and thus seeing the example of care we set. This thought occurred to me after I posted a picture of our rabbits munching down on some leafy greens when I first made the account. Immediately the post was commented on by several concerned rabbit guardians. “You know rabbits should not eat iceberg lettuce,” wrote one. “Rabbits should only eat dark, leafy greens like Romaine,” voiced another concerned follower. The photo was of the bunnies eating Romaine, but the lighting made the leaves much lighter in appearance. I was so excited to see people politely guiding others towards proper rabbit care.

Since that day, I have made a point of doing this myself by politely commenting on posts of rabbits being bathed in sinks, being held on their backs, and being fed human food. These rabbit guardians are mostly well-intentioned but without proper rabbit education. Usually the response of the rabbit guardian is very positive, and they often thank me for the information. It helps if you can provide a link to educational material (rabbit.org, the HRS website, is a great resource to use) in order to reinforce your comment.

If you have your own account, you can also lead by example through the pictures you post. One prime example of this is posting a picture of your rabbit’s housing. People often do not know what options they have other than store-bought cages, which are often far too small. When people see that there are more humane, affordable options for their rabbits, they are often inspired to build something similar of their own.

Posting pictures of the toys your rabbits enjoy may also be helpful to others. Rabbits need proper mental stimulation and enjoy toys that they can safely chew and play with. We have made several toys for our bunnies that are simple and cheap to produce. I hope to share pictures of the rabbits using these toys in hopes that others can benefit from our ideas. We have already seen several innovative designs for homemade toys from our friends that we are excited to try.

There are currently 510,245 posts linked to #rabbitsofinstagram alone as I write this article. That number grows every minute. I encourage all of you to reach out to rabbit guardians on social media to help educate them. In the social media age, we can all advocate for improved rabbit care. If you feel uncomfortable posting a comment on someone’s pictures or are maybe afraid to embarrass a well-intentioned, but misinformed guardian, you can always send them a private, direct message. Remember, the best way to get through to someone is to approach them with logic and kindness.

To follow my rabbits and their new friends, please visit us @binksandbumps on Instagram.

“In the social media age, we can all advocate for improved rabbit care.”
Together

by Chris Weisner

A long time ago… my first memories:
I was in a cage, with two like me.
These humans came by, and they took us away.
They gave us a home, with toys and water and food and love.
They held us and they played with us, and loved us so much.
We shared our lives— together in life.

They cleaned our messes without a fuss.
And we each had the others, all three as one
Together in life.

Yet the years happened, faster than for you.
One of us left, so quick death took him,
he was gone in a minute, leaving us two, side by side, still
Together in life.

My brother’s legs stopped working for him.
He hurt and he struggled and I held him the best that I could.
Our doctor had to give grace, for he could not move.

Alone. I am so alone. The home that held us in joy is now just a cage.
I look for them each day, yet remain so alone. I am ten years old.
My legs, my body, they are failing me now. I am ten years old.
These are my last days. I hurt and I am so alone.

Yet I know that when I breathe my last breaths, my brothers will be beside me,
my trip will not be alone. Together in life, together in death.

I will not be alone.

WRITE FOR US!

Do you have a great story to tell about your rabbits? We’re looking for submissions to House Rabbit Journal and we would love to have your contribution! Our next submission deadline is October 1st, 2016 for the fall issue. We’re seeking articles on the following topics:

- Rabbit medicine (subject to veterinary review)
- New ideas in rabbit rescue/rabbit sheltering
- Discussion of rescue efforts and lessons learned
- Review of rabbit-related or veterinary books or articles written in the last three years (and not previously reviewed in HRJ)
- Review of rabbit topics covered at veterinary or professional conferences
- Discussion of rabbit activism initiatives
- Rabbit care and behavior topics
- Rabbit-related how-to articles
- Rabbit-related topics with an educational message

rabbit.org/hrjsubmissions
I am typing this article with my left hand. My right hand is petting my three-and-a-half-year-old rabbit, Denis, adopted in 2015. I spend several hours each day petting Denis. While petting with one hand, I surf the Internet, read, eat, watch television, or type. Denis multi-tasks sometimes. While being petted, he poops, licks my hand, flops, eats, or sleeps. For most petting sessions, however, he concentrates on my petting 100%. His head is lowered and his body is still. My son observed that I have a reverse-Velveteen rabbit touch, turning real rabbits into stuffed animals.

My previous rabbit, Abba, often sat like a statue under my computer chair. My back twisted each time I reached down to pet him. Claiming a bad back, I sought the help of a chiropractor. The chiropractor adjusted my back. I returned for repeat visits, frustrating my chiropractor. She could not understand how I messed up my back so often. I was too embarrassed to tell her my petting secret. Ultimately, Wi-Fi fixed my situation. My laptop and I had been tied to a wired connection. With Wi-Fi, my laptop, Abba, his stuffed rabbit toy, and I relocated. Lying on the couch meant a shorter, non-wrenching reach to pet him. I’ve been teaching online since 2001, working half-time during the school year. During Abba’s six to eight hours of petting each day, I ran out of students to respond to and course rewrites to complete. After some flailing around on the Internet, including a stint with online poker (legal at that time), I decided to write a book. Abba was with me, under my chair, when I typed my first two books. He was with me, next to the couch, for books three through six. Without Abba, I would not have become an author.

Since this is the *House Rabbit Journal*, I must write about not only my career but that of my rabbit. Is Denis getting to be his best rabbit self while still being petted so frequently? I decided to keep a diary for a week. Each time entry records the minutes that I was petting Denis at his request. By “his request,” I mean that he presented his head to me at our petting spot. In parentheses, I recorded what Denis did when he left our spot. Here is my record of two hours of a typical morning:

7:22-7:27 a.m. Denis hopped to his empty veggie bowl and stood by it, looking expectant. I put cilantro in his bowl, some of which he ate.

7:46-8:00 Hopped away to scratch.

8:03-8:14 Hopped away to eat more cilantro.

8:22-8:23 Left to scratch and use his litter box, eat hay, and then eat pellets.

8:57-9:30 Left to scratch and eat cilantro.

At this point, I locked him in his enclosure and left for my daily swim.

Petting is broken up with normal rabbit behavior, not to mention the multi-tasking that Denis sometimes accomplishes during petting. And, of course, Denis also gets a break from petting when I’m away from home or asleep.

You now know what my chiropractor, friends, and colleagues do not even suspect: I pet for hours each day. For me, there’s nothing that feels as nice as petting rabbit fur. And there’s nothing better than knowing that my rabbit trusts me, enjoys my petting, and shares a loving bond with me.
When I was really young, people referred to the Man in the Moon. I never knew exactly what they meant, but then a man walked on the moon and all that talk seemed to stop. For me, it was replaced by a story in grade school that the Japanese see a rabbit on the lunar surface. It took about ten years, but one day, as I looked upon the full moon’s terrain, I saw it: the silhouette of a complete rabbit arcing gracefully along the left side of the satellite.

Later, when real rabbits became my constant companions, I read how numerous cultures—East Asian, Aztec, Mexican, and others—associate rabbits with the moon. I saw many artists’ representations of this, and learned various versions of how the rabbit came to be there. Here in the U.S., however, I was not aware of anyone talking about seeing the actual outlined rabbit. Over the years, I asked several people if they had seen it, and no one I met had. Then, walking beneath the moon’s full glow with an Aboriginal woman in Australia, I asked if she saw the rabbit in the moon. “Yes,” she said.

Recently, while researching lunar images, I also discovered that there’s more than one rabbit. It turns out the bunny landscape is subject to interpretation. There, on the web, others had drawn the rabbit they see. Like some, my rabbit looks up and out into space. Others’ rabbits look toward the moon’s center. Many see a rabbit with a pestle, pounding medicine or mochi (a pounded rice dish).

The other week during a discussion of inkblots, I mentioned the variety of rabbit-moon interpretations. Psychiatrist Max Burns acknowledged that he also sees a moon rabbit, but he swears he sees the Energizer Bunny playing a drum. A modern interpretation of the mochi rabbit, we decided.

Just as there are many tales of the celestial rabbit, there are a number of rabbits there to be seen.

Everybunny Needs Love
by Lulu James

When Peanut was little
She didn’t care much for cuddles or kisses.
She would run away when she saw Mrs. James
and spent all her time under sofas.

But now that she is seven years old
She likes to be stroked from her ears to her toes.
When you kiss her belly, her legs turn to jelly.
She leaps in delight, she nudges for more.
She wants to be loved and kissed all over!

Now when Mrs. James gives hugs
Peanut comes right up to the front
(before the other buns)
And flattens herself like a pancake,
which is the best shape for cuddles.

Which just goes to show
You are never too big or too small
Too young or too old
Too furry or too bald
For love.

Peanut by Lulu James

DONATE YOUR WHEELS

Did you know you can donate your vehicle to House Rabbit Society?
Contact rabbit-center@rabbit.org or call 510-970-7575 for more details
rabbit.org/other-ways-of-donating-to-hrs

Photograph by Sandy Parshall
Wholistic* Rabbit Grooming

*From grammarist.com: Wholistic is the philosophy of life that all parts of a thing are interconnected. In medicine, wholistic treatment is the treatment of a person as a whole, mind, body and social factors.

By Criss Starr, HRS Educator and Certified Pet Stylist

As a professional groomer, adopting Stormy, a fluffy, long-haired rabbit, was a challenge. In grooming school they only taught us how to care for dogs and cats. I soon learned that rabbits pose unique grooming needs. As prey animals, rabbits must be handled much more delicately than their predatory counterparts. Common grooming restraints for dogs and cats such as loops, ties, and muzzles must never be used.

A Tough Case
Stormy did not like to be groomed. He had come to associate grooming with intense brushing and hair plucking sessions wherein he was pulled out of his cage and his long wool was collected for spinning. He felt a terrifying lack of control, and he began to bite and scratch whenever anyone came for him, knowing he was in for a battle. For Stormy, it took patience and unconditional love (plus the jaunty short haircut he truly desired) to bring him from a fuzzy ball of biting teeth to a sweet fellow who truly enjoys our grooming time together.

Setting the Stage
In wholistic rabbit grooming, what you bring to the table emotionally is just as important as any tools you may use. A calm demeanor and soft voice will help your rabbit feel safe in your expert hands. Rabbits take their emotional cues from us, and grooming while rushed, stressed, sad or fearful is not recommended. Grooming takes lots of time and positive energy. Find a quiet area with lots of light. Try putting a waist-high, non-skid grooming table in a corner as walls on two sides provide physical and psychological security.

Before bringing bunny to the table, gather all of the supplies you will need. Breathe deeply and relax. Visualize bunny relaxing in your capable hands as you place her with all four feet on the table. Spend some time just petting and nuzzling her; maintain deep, rhythmic breathing. Imagine the two of you surrounded by healing green or soothing blue light. Appeal to bunny’s sense of smell by chopping an apple.

Skin Care Products—Keeping it Real
Rabbits have sensitive skin, so chemically laden sprays, powders, and shampoos made for dogs and cats are not safe for them. Many rabbit-safe body care products can be found in your own home.

Herbal Teas: rabbits are naturally sweet smelling, so ditch the artificial perfumes! For a natural refresher, brew up a teaspoon of diluted chamomile, basil, peppermint, or dill. Dip a wet washcloth in the cooled tea, wring mostly dry, and gently wipe the surface of bunny’s fur (avoid the face).

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: try using a drop or two to soothe crusty ears, or to lubricate anal glands for cleaning. Coconut oil works well to loosen stuck-on feces.

Aloe Vera Gel: this all natural gel is a wonderful alternative to petroleum based lubricant for thermometers and cleaning anal glands.

Isopropyl Alcohol: rubbing rabbit ears with alcohol on a cotton ball is cooling and antiseptic. Just make sure to keep fumes away from bunny’s nose, and don’t put it on any cuts or sores (ouch!).

Cornstarch: a light dusting of cornstarch can help keep a messy bunny’s privates dry. This is helpful for elderly or paralyzed buns who cannot clean themselves.
**Why Groom Rabbits Wholistically?**

Rabbits require a gentle, natural approach to grooming that takes into account the state of their minds and hearts as well as their bodies. Wholistic rabbit grooming focuses on the whole animal: physical and emotional. A relaxed and peaceful groomer will transmit soothing reassurance to a potentially frightened animal. The goal is the comfort and health of the animal, not a particular haircut or style. The close and trusting connection between groomer and rabbit makes for a more enjoyable experience for both.

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**Ointments for Urine Scald**

Aloe Vera gel, Neosporin (original formula without “pain relief”), Secura Protective Ointment, HEALx Soother Plus, Vaseline, and Vetericyn all work on buns with skin damaged by urine scald and can be obtained over the counter. Your vet may also prescribe Silvadene cream if necessary.

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**Tools of the Trade**

There are dozens of different grooming tools available. Have fun experimenting with different combs, brushes and clippers to find the ones that work best for you.

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**A Note on Nails**

Nail trimming need not be stressful. Learn to clip with confidence with well-maintained, sharp nail clippers and a supply of styptic powder. Forgive yourself if accidents happen, but educate yourself on how to prevent them in the future. Great instructions can be found here: [rabbit.org/how-to-trim-your-rabbits-nails](http://www.rabbit.org/how-to-trim-your-rabbits-nails)

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**Basic Coat Care**

Most rabbits will benefit from regular care of the coat. I like to use a metal greyhound-style comb, but even moist hands can massage out loose hair. If you have a comb or brush, gently lift layers of hair and comb through a small section at a time. Skip the bath! Rabbits clean themselves and do not generally need bathing or shampooing unless medically necessary.

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**Be a Grooming Detective**

Grooming is the perfect time to look for clues about the health of our buns. The more effort we spend regularly inspecting our rabbits, the sooner we’ll discover any problems that arise. Every grooming session should include a complete search for anomalies. During grooming sessions of my own and hundreds of rescue rabbits, I have found many hidden issues such as broken teeth, dental malocclusions, fatty lumps, abscesses, bite wounds, embedded plant material, ear and fur mites, cataracts, uveitis, botflies, flystrike, urine scald, ringworm, syphilis sores, genital prolapse, yeast infections, cryptorchidism, pregnancy, hernia, exposed bone, fractures and splay leg. Many of these medical emergencies would have been missed but for careful, inch by inch grooming and examination.

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**Enjoy the Process**

While it takes time to perfect many techniques, anyone can groom wholistically. The goal is to help your bunny grow comfortable with being handled. Rabbits are creatures of the earth, and using natural products protects their sensitive skin from harsh chemicals. Take the stress out of grooming by using deep breathing and visualization. Above all, cherish the time spent with your bunny! Use only positive reinforcement. My buns get a treat after grooming. With patience and caring, we can earn the trust of these wonderful creatures.
Books that abound with bunnies seem to proliferate like, uh... well, you know!

My first article about favorite rabbit books brought people bound- ing forth, wanting to share even more. The number of books about rabbits seems as prolific as those friends we all love so much. Here are a few more, in alphabetical order:

**Artie and Julie**, written and illustrated by Chih-Yuan Chen
Talk about friends from different worlds. Julie, a bunny, eats grass and is supposed to stay away from lions. Artie the lion is supposed to eat, uh, creatures like Julie. The two animals are forced into a situation that gives them a chance to become friends—before they discover what their natural roles are supposed to be. The book is cleverly designed so that their stories are told on separate, split pages until the two end up sharing time together. Then their stories come together, too. This tale has a message about how friends don’t have to focus on their differences.

**The Mischievous Hare**, by Darien Summers; illustrated by Bryan Proehl
This is a story about a playful rabbit named Patches. While the tale is whimsical, it stresses the importance of spending time with your rabbit in your home, and treating your bunny like a family member (or else she might become destructive).

**Nobunny's Perfect**, written and illustrated by Anna Dewdney
This little book will make a special read for preschoolers, who will understand how important it is not to hurt their friends or do things that will make them feel bad. The story is told completely in rhyme, with adorable bunnies illustrating times when good bunnies might not play fair, or “spit their carrots out,” and “instead of using words, they bite.” It’s a wonderful introduction to manners, and to the consideration of how one’s behavior has an effect on others: “And when the day is warm and sunny, they share it with another bunny.”

**The Rabbit Problem**, written and illustrated by Emily Gravett (“and a lot of rabbits”)
Children and adults alike will delight in this beautiful and humorous math problem/calendar covering a year in the life of a rabbit colony. You’ll be introduced to Fibonacci’s Field, as well as to the two rabbits who start it all. You’ll be with them as they manage their ever-increasing family numbers and meet the challenges of each season. This book is hilarious and smart, with imaginative additions such as birth announcements, a baby rabbit record book, carrot recipes, and even a pop-up finale. It’s based on the actual query of thirteenth-century mathematician Fibonacci, who posed and solved a problem about the growth of a population of rabbits. The answer, generation by generation, is a sequence of numbers that have come to be known as the “Fibonacci sequence.”
had never been a rabbit guardian in my life. I always thought bunnies were boring and just chewed everything up. So when I came across our bun loose on the street, I immediately said to my husband, “We can’t keep her.”

We found our bunny about two weeks after Easter this year. We were walking our two dogs and two cats when we noticed something hopping towards us. Fortunately, I had trained the dogs not to chase after small animals. When we got closer we saw a tiny little ball of grey fur. It was the easiest rescue ever. When my husband went to pick her up she settled into his arms. I panicked, not knowing how to care for a rabbit.

We took her home and I kicked the dogs, a Corgi mix and a Chihuahua mix, out of their crate and put the bun in. I had no idea what to feed her. I put a small bowl of water into the cage with her. She drank the whole bowl. My husband was so happy, he started trying to name her. I told him, “No, no, no naming a found animal.” I grabbed my baby carrots out of the fridge and gave her about ten. I know now that’s not a good meal for a bun. I googled small animal rescue near me in Richmond, CA and found House Rabbit Society. The next day I took her there to see if they recognized her, and to check for a microchip. No luck. The staff at HRS were kind enough to trim her long nails and check to see if she was spayed. They said she wasn’t and she didn’t have a spay tattoo. I took her home not knowing what to do next.

I got home and shared the news with my husband. He was so happy, but I told him she still might have guardians looking for her. I posted ads online and made a ton of flyers to try to find her guardians, or to find a new home for her. I asked my husband to help me put them up. I’m pretty sure he didn’t do it. He probably just went to the park and recycled the flyers. I was getting nervous. No one called or emailed.

After a month of trying to find a home for her, I heard my husband very quietly say to the bun, “Don’t worry your little ears Alice Liddell; she’ll come around and fall in love with your little face.” At that moment I knew it would break his heart to get rid of the bun. So the next day, without letting him know my decision, I went to HRS to get her all she needs to be happy and healthy. When I got home my husband saw all the supplies. He started to cry, ran over to the bunny and told her, “See, you’re mine! I knew she’d love you eventually.”

Life with Alice is fun. The dogs and cats love her as much as we do. I can’t imagine life without her. She is spayed now thanks to HRS’ help, and we’re actually considering adopting another bun. I would like to thank Alice Liddell, my husband, and HRS for giving me this awesome experience. Thank you all for reading this.

PS: On a happy note, on April 22, 2016 we finalized an adoption to get The White Queen, a one-year-old bunny of unknown breed. She and Alice Liddell have bonded well. We couldn’t be happier.
Bringing Home Bunny
by Jana Cruz

My children grew up without furry pets. Their father is allergic to cats and dogs, so we compensated with a few goldfish that we won at carnivals, then housed properly. They died within a few weeks.

When our girls were teenagers, their cousin (also allergic like her uncle) brought home a little white bunny. We were surprised to learn that many people who cannot tolerate cats or dogs have no allergic reaction to bunnies. My younger daughter Julia, then fifteen, begged for a bunny.

We began looking around at animal shelters, learning about bunnies and their needs. A helpful woman at a local animal care center took time from her busy day to educate us. She stressed that bunnies must have hay as the basis of their diet, and need a safe place to play.

When we visited the county animal shelter, we saw stacks of wire cages. Three of the cages held soft-looking light-brown rabbits: two pairs and a single bunny. We asked to hold the single bunny, and it was love at first cuddle. After paying four dollars for the bunny and another five dollars for a cardboard carrier, we asked what sex our new friend was and took home our first bunny. Julia named her Chloe.

We were fascinated with our bunny’s every movement. All we had to house her was a small wire cage a friend gave us. To expand her living space, we bought a 30-inch tall folding exercise pen and placed it on a beach towel on the floor. Chloe happily munched away on a big fat carrot.

We began to let her out to play in the family room while we were home, and then shut her in the cage at night. She did not like being picked up or held, but after many nights of being scooped up to stay in her cage she had no choice but to get used to being handled. We bought an outdoor hutch and moved Chloe outside during the day and inside at night.

While I watched Chloe clean herself one day, I noticed some bulges in her genital area. Because I felt sure that females do not have these parts, I asked the vet to confirm her sex during our visit to treat her ear mites. Our bunny was a boy! The flummoxed Julia hastily chose a new name for our four-pound bundle of joy: Bean Burrito, No Onions (her favorite fast-food meal). He quickly became Beanie.

It didn’t take long for us to adapt to our little Beanie. I read everything I could find about living with rabbits, both
online and at the pet store. At some point I discovered House Rabbit Society and its wonderful resources about bunny health, diet and well-being. Beanie’s diet was strict: a small handful of pellets daily, plus unlimited hay and water, and a nice pile of fresh greens each morning. We gave him fruits and carrots as treats only.

We kept all electrical cords out of reach. Soon my husband (a woodworker in his spare time) was commissioned to make a folding wooden bunny gate to keep Beanie in the family room. After a while, I began to dislike the metal exercise pen as a permanent part of the room, so I sought indoor hutch ideas online.

Soon the “pet palace” came into being. Using some scraps of oak lumber and panels from an exercise pen, my wonderful husband (a reluctant bunny guardian) built a combination two-story bunny condo and fish-tank stand. (We finally got the hang of helping goldfish survive.) The 20-gallon tank sits on top, with two drawers beneath it: one for bunny supplies and one for fish food and filters. Below the drawers is the two-level condo, with an indoor ramp.

The floors are covered with removable indoor/outdoor carpet. The top level holds the water dish and a little wooden hideaway house. The lower level holds the hay-filled litter box, wooden chew toys and a food dish. The back is solid wood and the sides and front are wood-framed wire panels from the dismantled exercise pen. The front panels slide open to allow entry and exit.

Beanie stayed in his condo at night and enjoyed free run of the family room during the day. He was quite the proper gentleman, never chewing furniture or baseboards. He used his litter box reliably, leaving just a few souvenir pellets scattered around the family room to remind us who was king of the castle.

He popped up in eager anticipation of a treat every time we came home. He became tame enough to allow us to pick him up, although he didn’t like being held for long. He hopped onto the couch in the evenings while we watched television to wait for a petting session. He loved being caressed around the ears and all over his face. He would close his eyes and melt into the sofa in bunny ecstacy.

I used to crawl after him in a circle while he hopped around the coffee table. I pretended to pounce, and Beanie flung his legs up in a happy dance. When he periodically shed his velvety soft fur, I would take him into the back yard and pluck out handfuls of loose hair, letting it fly into the breeze. He patiently endured this strange grooming session, relieved when we went back inside and he was given a treat.

Beanie reigned as king of the household for five years until his life was disrupted by the arrival of a sassy female intruder: a lionhead mix named Fiona.
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Please contact Margo DeMello at margo@rabbit.org for more information