We Love Softie
The Story Behind Iraq's Happy House Rabbit
by Tarza Taimur

Home Bunny Health Check
by Joy Gioia, Chapter Manager, Missouri HRS, St. Louis

Amy Espie Rabbit Hero Award
by June Booth, HRS Educator

$4.99
CONTENTS
Summer 2017

Teaching Old Rabbits New Tricks 4
by Ashley Atkinson

Home Bunny Health Check 6
by Joy Gioia, Chapter Manager, Missouri HRS, St. Louis

When Junie Met Herbie 8
by Gwynn Gacosta

We Love Softie: The Story Behind Iraq’s Happy House Rabbit 10
by Tarza Taimur

Cards and Dice, Furry Tails and Hairy Tales 12
by David Moskowitz

Superbunny’s Girlfriend 14
by Lulu James

Belle 14
by Hunter Allison

The Brave Bunny From Brooklyn 16
by Keely Mangeno

Old Guardian Learns New Tricks 17
by Alexey W. Root, PhD

Tropical Bunnies 18
by Stacey Cook

Amy Espie Rabbit Hero Award 19
by June Booth, HRS Educator
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 $1000) to animal rescue organizations that 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 our grant recipients for the first half of 2017. Congratulations to these great rescues and HRS chapters!

To see past winners and apply, visit: rabbit.org/the-hrs-emergency-grant-program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rescue Name</th>
<th>City/State</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas House Rabbit Sanctuary, Las Vegas, NV</td>
<td>$1500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this chapter grant helped 14 special needs sanctuary rabbits in Las Vegas HRS’ care, including dental and other surgeries, plus medications. lv-hrs.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost Home Rescue, Bohemia, NY</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped provide spay/neuter and supplies for 27 rabbits who were abandoned in a field. almosthomeli.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother Wolf Animal Rescue, Asheville, NC</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped 50 rabbits who were abandoned and reproducing in a barn in Asheville, NC. bwar.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunny Bunch, Montclair, CA</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped spay/neuter and care for 59 rabbits who were confiscated from a hoarder. bunnybunch.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey’s House, Louisville, KY</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped rescue 20 rabbits from a high risk shelter and provide them spay/neuter and other care. harveyshouse.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana House Rabbit Society, Indianapolis, IN</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped provide spay/neuter to more than 30 rabbits who were dumped in a nearby park. indianahrs.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Animal Rescue, Kingston, ON, Canada</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped provide care for 16 rabbits who were rescued from high-risk shelters. kingstonanimalrescue.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reenie’s Rabbit Rescue, Salisbury Mills, NY</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped provide spay/neuter to 20 rabbits who were part of a seizure of 250 rabbits. ReeniesRabbitRescue.weebly.com</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering Ruby Rabbit Rescue, Idaho Falls, ID</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped rescue and care for 17 rabbits who were part of a hoarding case. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/rememberingruby">https://www.facebook.com/rememberingruby</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Peace, Oyama, BC, Canada</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds from this emergency grant helped rescue and provide medical and other care for 23 bunnies from a wilderness area. facebook.com/wpbssanctuary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is commonly said, "You can’t teach an old dog new tricks." Yet, as applied behavior analysis demonstrates, you can teach old dogs new tricks. As an animal behavior consultant and certified professional dog trainer, my job involves teaching dogs—and their humans—new tricks. By using behavior science principles, we can facilitate emotional and behavioral changes: a dog who growls when people come near his food can learn to eagerly anticipate someone approaching his food bowl; a dog who loves to greet people by flying through the air and slamming into them can learn to sit quietly when people approach and then greet in more human-preferred manners; and a dog who is so afraid of people that he runs and hides whenever they approach can learn that humans can be wonderful, fun, and safe creatures. All of this and so much more can be done by using classical and operant conditioning.

At this point, you might be wondering why discussing dog training is at all relevant to working with rabbits. Here’s why: the same underlying behavior science principles used to modify dog behavior can be used to bring about behavior change in rabbits!

General knowledge of rabbit care, behavior, and personality is rife with common misconceptions. I have been lucky enough to share my home with several rabbits over the years and, as an avid animal lover, any new human visiting my home has the opportunity to meet all of my animals, including my rabbits. I frequently encounter these misconceptions when I introduce guests to Janeway and B’Elanna, who I rescued from a person who had become overwhelmed when their rabbit population grew out of control.

As soon as I approach my girls’ area with a new person, their heads raise, their ears go up, and they race over to the edge of their enclosure. They wait there, sometimes perched up on their back legs, excited to meet someone new. When my guests see this, I usually hear a remark along the lines of, “Wow! I had no idea bunnies could be so excited and show so much personality! I thought rabbits just sit there and do nothing.” I then smile and hand over two rabbit treats, one per girl, and ask the person to hand them to Janeway and B’Elanna.

The girls take the treats eagerly and then go lay back down, relaxed and content with a treat. While I love to brag about how much I lucked out with my girls, it’s possible for other rabbits to learn to have such a happy response to seeing people. All it takes is some behavior science—and really special treats (in limited amounts)!
For some rabbits, humans are scary. Maybe they had some traumatic experiences with people, but perhaps they also just had no previous experiences with people and new things are scary. Regardless of their history, you can still work on changing that emotional response. The process for changing a rabbit’s association with people from “Oh no, scary human!” to “Yay! Person is coming!” is called classical counterconditioning. This is a form of classical or respondent conditioning which is about forming a learned association between two events or stimuli.

The basic process for performing classical counterconditioning with rabbits is as follows:

**Before you start:**
- Get some small pieces of your rabbit’s favorite treat.
- Figure out your rabbit’s fear level or determine his or her reaction to human presence: does she run and hide when you walk into the room? Does she stay where she is but hops away when you get within a foot of her? Is he fine until you put your hand into his space? That bubble of space is called the “threshold”—that is the point at which he notices you and is okay, but gets nervous or scared if you get any closer. When you start, you’ll want to stay at the edge of his threshold.

**Getting started:**

**Scenario 1**
- Walk past your rabbit’s enclosure and calmly place a small piece of his favorite treat on the ground. You’ll want to stay right at his threshold; if you get too close and he becomes too scared, he won’t be noticing the food (his instincts kick in and he’s too scared to learn).
- If he is uncomfortable interacting with you, don’t force him; just let him notice your presence and then toss him his favorite snack. (Obviously you want to use very small pieces.)
- Keep walking past him and every day place a treat on the floor of his enclosure, right at that threshold of comfort. Over time (the amount of time varies for each rabbit) he will start getting excited when you pass by. He might look at you, his ears might go up excitedly, or he might even take a hop in your direction. This is your cue that you can go closer and repeat, this time just a foot or so closer.
- Over time, you can move closer and closer to your rabbit and he will learn that when the scary human comes by, that human isn’t so scary—a human’s presence actually means super yummy snacks appear! Just like that, you are helping change his associations! If you keep it up, eventually your rabbit might come up to you and take a treat from your hand!

**Scenario 2**
- While Scenario 1 only takes a few moments of your day, Scenario 2 requires a little bit more time and is easiest when you have a rabbit who is living in an exercise pen set up or has access to a bunny-proofed room. When it is time for your buns to eat their daily fruits or veggies, enter their enclosure, sit down on the floor nearby, and spread the food on the floor between you and your bun. Keep aware of that threshold of comfort. If you put the food too close to you, they might be too nervous to approach and eat it.
- Sit quietly while your bunnies come up and eat the food that was spread out on the floor. When the food is all gone, quietly get up and leave. Not only does spreading out the veggies encourage their natural foraging tendencies, it also helps encourage them to be comfortable moving around near you and approaching you.
- Repeat this each time you give them their fruits and veggies. You will notice them becoming more comfortable hopping about with you around and coming up closer and closer to you. As you notice they become more comfortable, you can place the food nearer to where you are seated.

**Tips for success:**
- Obviously, you can’t just ignore your rabbit while you are working on this process. He will need food and water and his cage cleaned. While doing this, try to keep your interactions to a minimum, especially things he might find scary (like handling/attention).
- Training rabbits is not the same as training dogs. You cannot give them lots of treats throughout the day or train with their hay/daily pellet allotment. Because you don’t want to over-do it with treats, you can substitute veggies during training for their daily fruit rations.
- You can have other family members practice this, too, as well as guests who come visit.
- Even when your rabbit has started associating you with good things, you’ll want to continue building a relationship with her and keep up that good association. With some time and patience (and good treats), rabbits can build safe, trusting relationships with humans. From there, more training can begin and even old rabbits can learn new tricks!
While not a replacement for a wellness exam by a knowledgeable rabbit veterinarian, being able to perform a basic wellness check for your bunny may help you catch potential problems earlier and know when your bunny really needs help!

by Joy Gioia, Chapter Manager, Missouri House Rabbit Society, St. Louis

Set your bunny on a table or place where you can view him from top, sides, and front. Use a towel for secure footing so bunny isn’t frightened or sliding around.

1. Just like with your own checkups, start with a weigh-in. Invest in a baby scale and keep a record of his baseline weight to detect any changes, up or down, that could indicate a problem. To assess a healthy weight for your bunny you should be able to feel his spine, but it should not stick out. He should be well muscled around the spine. If you have difficulty feeling the spine with your fingers, your bunny may be overweight.

2. Next, do the sniff test! Your rabbit should smell pleasant. Any sour or bad smell could indicate an infection or other problem.

3. Now, look down on your bunny from above to detect any asymmetrical appearances (lumps, bumps, bulges, bare spots, dandruff, flea dirt, scabs, etc.). Run your hands over his body to feel for these things. Look at your bunny from each side to look for the same things and run your hands over these areas.

4. Look at your bunny from the front. Look for slight head tilt, any asymmetrical appearances of the face, lip on one side pulling up, bulging eyes, mouth, or ears not held at their normal angle. Do a full face rub and feel for lumps, bumps, wet spots, sticky residue on the fur just under the nose, nasal discharge, and lumps under the jaw. Also check skin for flea dirt, dandruff, or scabs.

Discharge will be wiped off onto the insides of the legs and paws and that telltale sticky residue can be spotted there.

5. Check the insides of the front legs for crustiness or residue, which could indicate an upper respiratory infection. Rabbits are terrific groomers, so a nose may be kept quite spotless by your furry cleaning machine. Rabbits clean their faces using the insides of the front legs and front paws. The discharge will be wiped off onto the insides of the legs and paws and that telltale sticky residue can be spotted there.
6. Look at the eyes from each side. Is there redness around the rims? Is there any cloudiness in the eyes (indicative of a cataract and possible E. cuniculi: rabbit.org/encephalitozoon-cuniculi) or white spots (a potential infection)? Is there any discharge coming from the eyes? Is the fur around the eyes wet or is there fur loss from salty tears leaking onto his face?

7. Look as deeply as possible into the ear canal for wax, pus, or ear mites. Indications of ear mites include redness, lesions, and crustiness. Additionally, carefully feel and massage the base of the ear to detect any sensitivity which might also indicate infection. Your nose can help too: sniff in the ear canal. A strong odor most likely indicates infection that you may not be able to see. If there is an infection or ear mites he is very likely to shake his head and scratch at them. It helps to do a deeper check with the aid of a flashlight.

8. While cradled on his back, check each leg for potential problems. Check all paws and paw pads for swelling, sores, bumps, and check nails. Strings from rugs, towels or toys can wrap around a toe or limb, cutting off circulation. Sweep aside the fur on the heel of each foot (especially the hocks on the back legs) to look for inflamed or infected spots. Calluses (which are normal) can break open. Even bunnies not on wire floors can develop sore hocks or feet from hard surfaces or running on synthetic rugs. Mild fur loss on the heel may be normal in an older rabbit, but balking spots showing inflammation, weepiness, bleeding, or simply appearing red rather than a healthy pink is a reason to see your veterinarian.

9. Check your bunny’s throat, chest, abdomen, and genital area for lumps, mats, infection, urine scald, a messy bottom, or dirty scent glands (scent glands are easily cleaned with a Q-tip and baby or mineral oil). Dried/clumped cecotropes in the genital area can block the bunny’s anal opening, cause sores, infection, and tears to the skin. It is definitely indicative of a problem, be it diet, arthritis, molar spur or something else.

10. While still on his back, check your bunny’s front incisors for proper alignment. Over time, even previously healthy incisors can become maloccluded, which is a dangerous problem as incisors grow very quickly.

11. Back on his feet, especially when running around on his own, watch for abnormal movement, behavior, eating or drinking habits. Be observant of proper elimination, both in amounts and in posture during elimination.

12. Watch for weakness in his legs or reluctance to do the things he normally does (not jumping on favorite shelf, not getting in litter box all the time, not able to reach his cecotropes, or leaving them uneaten).

(DON’T FORGET THE TREAT!)

Be a good bunny parent and be fully aware of your bunny! Anything out of the ordinary means you should take your bunny to a rabbit-savvy veterinarian soon. You can find a list of rabbit-savvy veterinarians on House Rabbit Society’s website: rabbit.org/vet-listings
The year 2016 was, by many accounts, a terrible one. Personally, there was life-changing upheaval: both my husband and I were forced to change jobs, a good friend passed away suddenly, and I witnessed a few relationships fall apart. I felt a real urge to hunker down and tighten up a few things, including our family budget. Instead of taking a large family vacation, we took small, local ones. Long weekends away from chaos were just the antidote to all the unknown in our lives.

However, long weekends away meant leaving our rabbit, Juniper, alone at home with twice-a-day check-ins by my brother. Every time we left, she peered at us from the other side of the patio door with a certain look on her face. Was it indignation? Loneliness? Both? I followed House Rabbit Society on Facebook, and started noticing posts about rabbit pairs, explaining that rabbits are social animals and that a friend could ward off loneliness, boredom, and all-around bad behavior. Junie was a spectacularly mischievous bun: slipcovers, rugs, wood furniture redesign, and slicing electrical cords were her forte. Perhaps with a friend to play with, she would calm down. So, in the summer of 2016, in the midst of personal and professional changes, I became obsessed with the thought of finding Junie a friend.

But would she appreciate it? My husband and I always saw Junie as a single bun. She was fiercely independent, territorial, and demanding. My husband was her parent of choice—she loved me but clearly favored him, approaching him first for play and petting. Junie seemed so possessive of her dad that I was unsure if she would allow another bunny to get in the way of their bond. My sons were on board, promising the usual "We will help with the extra cleaning and feeding." My husband, an only child who continued to insist that Junie was an only bun, wasn’t so sure. Still, I emailed HRS for their suggestions as to how bonding is done.

The process was more emotionally overwhelming for me than I expected. We brought Junie to HRS two times to watch her interact with other bunnies. It was like taking your child to a playgroup hoping she would behave and be well-liked. The first time, Junie fell in

When Junie Met Herbie
A Bonding Story

by Gwynn Gacosta
like with a Netherland Dwarf who seemed dominant and assertive with her. I wasn’t so smitten. The second time, my son suggested Herbie, a tripod bunny who hadn’t been there very long, with whom she fell instantly in love. “Mom, look! He’s a tripod! He’s so cute!” Yes, and scrawny. But he was friendly and active, though his back leg and part of his tail had been amputated. He would be Junie’s sixth playdate.

The signs of a successful pairing were displayed right away by both parties: Junie groomed and sniffed as Herbie approached fearlessly, though eager to mount. Junie, hopped away playfully, then rested comfortably whenever Herbie rested. This went on for an hour. My son was convinced this was it. Again, I was hesitant. It is one thing to pity a homeless animal from afar and imagine bringing him home and giving him a full life. It is quite a different story when you are actually doing it. Suddenly your house is too small. Suddenly you think maybe Junie is fine and you are imagining her loneliness. What if they turn on each other? I was surprised by my apprehension. Would Herbie, being a tripod, need special care that I ultimately could not give? Would Junie feel invaded, annoyed that her routines will be disrupted indefinitely? Nevertheless, we took the plunge and Herbie was officially ours.

We took them both home and set up adjacent pens in our sunroom. As per instructions by the wonderful staff and volunteers at HRS, when we let them out of their pens at the same time, it was only for bonding sessions in the hallway, which was one of the only neutral spaces in our house. Another time we put them in the bathtub, which was covered with beach towels, and helped them get to know one another. Herbie kept following Junie, which she tolerated until he tried mounting her. When she became distressed, making squeaky noises, we pulled her out. Car rides were better: I put them in the same carrier and they huddled together for comfort as I drove them around the neighborhood. The first four days, Junie eyed Herbie warily from the opposite side of her pen, while Herbie always seemed eager to see what she was up to. Their bonding time was kept short, at first. I was prepared to outlast the weeks it might take.

A few days later, while I was as work, my husband texted me. He had let them out of their pens and allowed them to run freely around the sunroom. I was nervous. The sunroom was a large space and I was told to keep their meetings more confined. As usual, Herbie tried to follow Junie, but Junie hopped away. Because Herbie was, by nature, a patient and easygoing bun, he would grow tired of the chase game, and plop down for a snooze whenever he could. The first few times, Junie would settle elsewhere in the room, but after an hour, a breakthrough. She sought him out and settled herself. My husband, the one most reluctant to welcome the new addition to our family, helped the most with their bonding. Junie emerged the dominant one and, after a week, we combined their pens. They were, by all accounts, a match made in heaven.

Herbie was our pleasant surprise of 2016. He is the type B to Junie’s type A, the calm to Junie’s storm...I can’t imagine our lives without him.

“Herbie was our pleasant surprise of 2016. He is the type B to Junie’s type A, the calm to Junie’s storm...I can’t imagine our lives without him.”

We took them both home and set up adjacent pens in our sunroom. As per instructions by the wonderful staff and volunteers at HRS, when we let them out of their pens at the same time, it was only for bonding sessions in the hallway, which was one of the only neutral spaces in our house. Another time we put them in the bathtub, which was covered with beach towels, and helped them get to know one another. Herbie kept following Junie, which she tolerated until he tried mounting her. When she became distressed, making squeaky noises, we pulled her out. Car rides were better: I put them in the same carrier and they huddled together for comfort as I drove them around the neighborhood. The first four days, Junie eyed Herbie warily from the opposite side of her pen, while Herbie always seemed eager to see what she was up to. Their bonding time was kept short, at first. I was prepared to outlast the weeks it might take.
I’m Tarza Taimur, a twenty-six-year-old married woman with no human kids. I graduated from the English Department in the College of Basic Education, at the University of Sulaimani, and I am not yet employed. I live in the city of Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region, in North Iraq.

I have a beautiful bunny boy named Softie; we got him on January 14, 2016. He was neutered on February 9, 2017. Finding a veterinarian for his neutering took a lot of time. The same vet has also spayed and neutered my foster bunnies. He is a great vet, but the surgeries were still dangerous. He is not a vet who specializes in rabbits, but he has a doctorate in surgery.

I have loved animals since I was very little, and was only allowed to have birds. I always wanted to have cats and dogs but was never allowed to have them: many people in Kurdistan do not have pets. Some people have cats and dogs, but pet rabbits are very rare. Many people breed them for food or sale, and some people keep young rabbits but abandon them when they are grown. Many rabbits end up in fields, where they will be killed for food. I know the same thing happens in developed countries, but the difference is that nobody here rescues the rabbits from fields. Most people view rabbit breeding and slaughtering as something normal, even the ones who call themselves animal lovers. Too many people think it’s lovely and cute to take a rabbit to a field full of other rabbits, not knowing that only rabbit eaters or rabbit sellers have fields like that in Kurdistan.

I was crying for nights to rescue an animal but rabbits never came into my mind. I didn’t like rabbits before Softie. All I ever heard about them was that they are dirty animals and they bring bad luck. I had never before heard of or seen anyone with an indoor rabbit. There might have been people who had indoor rabbits in Kurdistan, but I never knew them.

I was cleaning the house one day when my dear husband, Adel, came home with a baby bunny in a box. The...
bunny was so tiny and cute, but I wasn’t happy about it and asked my husband, “Where are we going to keep him? We have no garden.” He told me that he fell in love with the baby bunny and he couldn’t leave him. My dear husband is the one who started it all. None of this would be possible without him. Now, because of Softie, I try to help other bunnies by raising awareness on Facebook and creating educational videos about house rabbits in Kurdish.

For two months Softie was on an improper diet; he ate only veggies, fruits, and grains. I asked many rabbit breeders about rabbit diet and all of them said that rabbits eat anything; that veggies, fruits, and grains are enough.

One day I casually started searching for “rabbit diet” on Google and YouTube, and I saw many articles and videos talking about the importance of hay for rabbits. We started searching for hay everywhere but we couldn’t find anything suitable. We had no garden to grow grass. In the springtime I cut a lot of grass and dried it out for my bunny, but all I could find was foxtail grass. I had to spend a lot of time separating the safe part from the dangerous part. Once Softie accidentally ate the thorny end of the grass and nearly choked. It is a terrible flashback, and I don’t know how he survived.

Most Kurdish people don’t give hay to rabbits. I have asked many people who have rabbits about hay and where they find hay, yet all of them have difficulty finding it. Our country is very green in the spring, but we only have grass for two months and then it turns yellow. It’s very difficult to make enough hay for the whole year by yourself, and the grass around my city is mostly foxtail. Farmers give hay to livestock animals, like goats and cows, but it’s powdered hay, which I believe is smashed up by a machine. I am still hoping to find good rabbit hay in my country, and I hope I can find it one day, because hay is so very important in a rabbit’s diet.

I read and watched as many articles and videos about house rabbits as I could. To be honest, I couldn’t believe that rabbits could be litter-trained. Soon I started litter training Softie; he’s been using a do-it-yourself litter box that consists of two parts: a plastic base box and a filter box. He learned to use his litter box in a week for all his urine and most of his pellets. Rabbit supplies aren’t sold in pet shops at this time; all you can find in pet shops are supplies for cats, dogs, and birds. I fell deeply in love with rabbits once I realized that they could be pets and be litter-trained. Knowing that they are such amazing creatures but that everywhere on our planet people still see them as livestock, and many people throw them away and abandon them, even in developed countries (where getting rabbit supplies is very easy), breaks my heart into pieces.

Once I realized that rabbits can be house pets, I decided to keep Softie forever and never give up on him. I give thanks to my dear husband, who has helped a lot with setting up a cage and things for rabbit-proofing the house, and so much more. He is an angel and, without him, none of this would be even possible. He is a really good bunny dad.

I tried hard to get rabbit hay, pellets, and other supplies in my country, but I couldn’t find them anywhere. I tried to order rabbit food from Amazon, but getting ten pounds would cost $100. With the huge financial crisis going on in Kurdistan, it wasn’t possible for us. Once, my brother-in-law asked for rabbit food in a big market in the city of Arbil, where food for cats and dogs is sold. The man he asked laughed and said, “Yes, we have rabbit food. It’s cilantro and lettuce. What else do rabbits eat? Wait, we also have barley grains.” Well, that’s what everyone feeds their rabbits.

There was a time when I felt like all doors were closed to me. There is a Kurdish proverb that says: “When God closes one door on you, He will open many others.” And that happened to me when I searched for “house rabbit” on Facebook and I found the House Rabbit Society group and joined it. There, I met some good and kind people; they were touched by my love for bunnies and all the efforts I’ve made to get Softie’s supplies in a country like Iraq. So they made a special group for Softie under the name “We Love Softie.” What my friends do for me is amazing. Bunny people are the best. There is a shipping company in Bonn, Germany that brings mail from Bonn to Kurdistan by truck. My brother lives in Bonn, so they send packages to his address and he sends them to my city. That’s mostly how I get what I need for my bunnies. They tried to send things directly to my city by DHL, but the restrictions are too tight and what I need can’t be transported by them.

(continued on page 15)
Why rabbits? I hear this from people at tabletop gaming conventions as they look through my custom dice and cards, both covered with bunnies. Why not zombies, aliens, tanks, or even cats—why make a game about rabbits?

Because everything is better with bunnies, I tell them, but that answer rarely cuts it—even with rabbit people. So, I then explain the allure of the challenge of working with an atypical motif and the added challenge of designing products with gameplay that zombie/alien/tycoon/tank/cat enthusiasts can embrace and a message that’s consistent with our principles but not preachy. While my roles as game designer and HRS Educator may not seem to have much in common, they both involve teaching concepts that are not self-evident or necessarily intuitive, and the act of designing Rabbit Match and Rolling for Bunnies has provided lessons applicable to my role as Educator.

Lesson 0: An Overview of the Two Games

With plans to donate all proceeds to HRS chaper, Los Angeles Rabbit Foundation’s (LARF) spay/neuter fund, I enlisted LARF president and HRS Educator to design two games. Rabbit Match, which is targeted toward the hobbyist market (e.g., Dungeons & Dragons), is a complex card game in which each player takes the role of a rescuer maintaining a small facility, dealing with crises (heat waves, backyard breeder arrests, medical issues), limited assets (quality adopters, space, good help), and a variable, but unceasing, influx of rabbits. As the name suggests, the primary task involves matching (i.e., bonding) rabbit to rabbit and rabbit to adopter by looking at graphic icons on the cards. Rolling for Bunnies is a much simpler game—closer to Yahtzee than Monopoly or Risk—aimed for families, casual gamers, and, of course, rabbit people (we play it
at LARF events, and Columbus HRS played it at its winter holiday party). Players show rabbits affection, make them ready for adoption, and find adopters for them by rolling dice.

**Lesson 1: Names Lead to Investment and Immersion**

One of the first assumptions rescuers encounter is that dogs and cats have individual personalities, while rabbits, especially given their frequent placement in classroom cages, are just mindless decorations. This mindset, that rabbits are effectively interchangeable, does not make for a good home. By giving all the rabbits unique names and unique images we have made the game more than simply a math puzzle. The more invested players are in the theme, in our case, rescuing rabbits, the more fulfilling the gameplay experience.

Case in point: During one Rolling for Bunnies playtest, one hardcore gamer rolled the dice and, instead of taking her normal three to five minutes to calculate odds and evaluate other players’ positions, immediately snapped up Peanut, her least effective move.

"Why did you do that?" I asked.

"Because she was cute," she said, "and I have a dog named Peanut."

She was happy she got her Peanut. That’s winning.

**Lesson 2: No Means No: the Value of Boundaries**

Ever have a rabbit who’s an escape artist, finding the way out of any ex-pen, over the baby gate, and in and around the furniture? One who always looks at you as if she’s starving? If so, you’ll also notice that if there is nothing that looks like a potential exit or a potential food source she’ll go about her business.

Similarly, the Educator and rescuer must seal off potential exits from good care, meeting adopters’ “I’ll feed him X only on special occasions” or “I have a secure backyard and there will be someone to look after him” with “What you’ve suggested is not safe.”

It is in the game player’s nature to test the rules and push boundaries, but also to respect them. The play experience will collapse without concrete rules. No means no is a core element of Rabbit Match. To see if rabbits bond, players line up bunny cards side-by-side, matching halves of prohibition signs and hearts. A complete prohibition sign invalidates any number of complete hearts. No respectable rescuer signs off on a dangerous love/hate relationship or separates bonded pairs.

**Lesson 3: Fun Demands Freedom**

It’s the bunny’s homecoming and you think you’ve got the perfect setup: the room is rabbit-proofed, the vet is on speed dial, fresh hay is in a bin, and greens are in the fridge. But the rabbit refuses to poop in the litterbox; she prefers the opposite corner. You try putting treats in the box. Nope. So, you move the box if she hasn’t already (toys in the water dish, anyone?). It’s not about your personal design aesthetic or convenience; it’s about her happiness and health.

The same applies to game design: you have the ideal picture of how the game should be played. Your game testers take your prototype and start doing things differently. They prefer strategies you didn’t see or intend. They rearrange substitute components. Are they engaged? Having fun? Let them be.

**Lesson 4: You Can Have Too Many Choices**

A design lesson I learned from a foster bun: When Tiny Tuft, an eight-pound New Zealand girl, was between foster homes, she stayed with us. I filled her pen with stuff I’d seen her play with before: plywood ramps and platforms and boxes with holes.

But when the bunny sat in the corner all day, I sought Michelle’s advice. “Of course she’s depressed,” Michelle said. “She’s got all of that junk crammed in with her and no room to dance.” Half the furniture went, and our guest became a happy motion machine.

All game designers tend to overload their initial designs. In the case of Rabbit Match, I found that removing options for fundraising, custom foster homes, marriage counseling for pairs with bonds, and more, did not elicit a single complaint, even from gamers who equate fun with complexity.

(continued on page 15)
Is it an otter?
Is it a brown furry slipper?
No! It's Superbunny's girlfriend,
the beautiful Peanut.
This sweet "cottontail"
is the Lois Lane
of the rabbit world.

There's no greater bunny love than this:
He licks her soft brown ears
and shares his dinner.
She keeps him warm in winter.
Where Peanut goes
Sweetpea* always follows—even Superbunny
needs somebody to love.

Peanut and her action bunny
spend most of the day
helping Mrs. James
feed the foster bunnies
and run the house,
keeping everybunny safe and sound
and making Mrs. James proud.

And after many good deeds
and countless little gifts**
the bunny superheroes fall asleep
in front of the TV.

*Sweetpea is Superbunny's name in real life.
**bunny droppings

My pet has fur as white as snow.
My pet's nose has a BAT-A-RANG on it. (Think Batman)
My pet's ears are as droopy as a flag with no wind.
My pet's mouth is as small as a gnat.
My pet's teeth are as flat as paper.
My pet's tail is as soft as silk.
My pet's feet are like small snowshoes.
My pet sounds like she's whimpering when she snores.
MY PET IS MY FRIEND.
What kind of pet is she?

WRITE FOR US!

We're seeking submissions for *House Rabbit Journal* and we would love to have your contribution! You can find out more information, including submission deadlines, on our website:

*rabbit.org/hrjsubmissions*
(continued from page 11)

I have two foster bunnies now. They were about to be taken unsupervised to a garden near a village in the freezing winter, because the woman who had them didn’t want them anymore. They were so little and I knew that they would probably freeze to death, so I took them in. However, I have had so much struggle keeping them. Only I know what I have been through to save them. My house is very small and I couldn’t keep them for very long. I took them to my parents’ house (even though my dad strongly disapproves), but I will not give up on Jerry and Panda until I find them a forever home. I do my best not to separate them, so they will only go to their forever home if someone adopts them together. If I can find a home for them, I will surely foster other abandoned rabbits.

Yet finding a good home for them hasn’t been easy at all. Several people wanted them, but some wanted them for food, and others changed their minds once they realized that Panda and Jerry are spayed and neutered, because they wanted to breed them. One person told me that she could only keep them under one condition, which was that she would eat them once they were fully grown.

I have also taken care of two other bunnies who had coccidia. I haven’t found any rabbit-savvy vets in Kurdistan and rabbits can get misdiagnosed. Sadly, one of the rabbits with coccidia died from being given the wrong medicine. The other one survived because I was able to get advice about his illness from a friend on Facebook.

My friend Lanja is the only other person I know with a house rabbit in my city. She has faced a lot of difficulty keeping Kadila, as her parents say that she has to put him outside. But Kadila is now a happy, neutered bunny. He also has a girl-friend; her name is Mina. Lanja listens to all my advice very carefully. Within a year of working hard, she is the first person in Kurdistan I have convinced about how wonderful house rabbits are.

I see daily posts on Facebook in Kurdish pet groups about people fostering and finding homes for cats and dogs, but I have never seen or heard of anyone who fosters rabbits in my country. I never thought that one day I would be writing for an American journal. Yet here I am, because of a rabbit. This is more than a dream come true! This is more than I ever wished for.

I want to thank the House Rabbit Society staff for your blessed efforts. Thanks to those who spread amazing information about rabbits on YouTube and other websites. House Rabbit Society has saved many lives. I want to thank each dear member of the Facebook group “We Love Softie” for their support, donations, and participation in getting us supplies and rabbit food, especially the two administrators, Emily and Tria. What they do for my bunnies restores my faith in humanity and makes me stronger every day of my life.

My online friends from the United States and Europe make me want to save and rescue bunnies even more. The majority of people I interact with in my daily life are not interested in animals at all. I would have felt so lonely if I hadn’t gotten to know my bunny-lover friends online! They always have my back.

At the end, I also want to thank technology. I believe that one of the benefits of technology is raising awareness and educating people everywhere on the planet, and thus we all become closer and can be like one big family. We all share the same beautiful planet.

Love, Tarza Taimur!

Lesson Last: Accept Limitations and Acknowledge Differences

As a rescuer and Educator, you learn that a rabbit is not for everyone, nor is every game perfect for every player. And there are limits to what you can teach or simulate in a game. If you lose, nothing bad happens. If everyone agrees to end the game prematurely, no problem. Your experience is what matters. Games are your chocolate or stuffed bunnies: something you can put on a shelf and play with or neglect at will. How long rabbits live is usually what potential adopters want to know, in addition to whether they have personalities. While it’s disturbing to see adopters thinking about their rabbit’s demise, it’s a sign that they’re aware that a rabbit is not a toy, a game, or a confection, but a commitment. As for our commitment, we are going to keep teaching, keep learning, keep developing our games. There’s one more planned. Inspired by our escape artist Pumpkin, it will focus on home preparation: imagine little bunny figurines in a maze of domino-like tiles decorated with furniture, walls, and, of course, electrical cords.

We’re committed to sending out prototypes and getting playtester feedback. Interested? Contact us at info@rabbitmatchthegame.com or fill out the form at rabbitmatchthegame.com/contactandplaytesting.

HRS Chapter and rescue managers are encouraged to inquire about printing reasonably priced custom cards with your own bunnies and chapter logos.

(continued from page 13)

Lesson 5: People are More Balanced and Caring Than You Think

Tested by gamers, approved by rescuers may be our slogan but, of course, we tested with rescuers as well. The first time out, our rabbit people looked at the cards featuring photos of rabbits they knew and cared for and then played with an intensity that was beyond competitive; it was cutthroat. We were unsure what to make of this and were unsettled. Were they simply processing the rabbits as pieces of cardboard and data, compartmentalizing their feelings, or had we failed to achieve the requisite immersion? And would those not in the rescue world treat our photorealistic pets with less care than a zombie horde or an alien planet in the way of their galactic fleet?

Our concerns were unfounded. It turned out that, for the rabbit people, the game was liberating in a way that only those intimately familiar with rabbit rescue could experience. They were engaged in the game, but they were free: no tears shed over the fate of cardboard bunnies and no need to raise money or find good foster homes. And the gamers, who might regularly launch cardboard nukes at one another in other games, acted as if putting unadopted rabbits in the pile marked “sanctuary” was akin to abandoning them. During one Rabbit Match playtest, a player drew a card declaring that, for a time, adopters were more willing to adopt large rabbits to save them from the latest culinary fad. The player looked at the chef silhouette on the card and shrieked. We changed the design.

Tested by gamers, approved by rescuers may be our slogan but, of course, we tested with rescuers as well. The first time out, our rabbit people looked at the cards featuring photos of rabbits they knew and cared for and then played with an intensity that was beyond competitive; it was cutthroat. We were unsure what to make of this and were unsettled. Were they simply processing the rabbits as pieces of cardboard and data, compartmentalizing their feelings, or had we failed to achieve the requisite immersion? And would those not in the rescue world treat our photorealistic pets with less care than a zombie horde or an alien planet in the way of their galactic fleet?

Our concerns were unfounded. It turned out that, for the rabbit people, the game was liberating in a way that only those intimately familiar with rabbit rescue could experience. They were engaged in the game, but they were free: no tears shed over the fate of cardboard bunnies and no need to raise money or find good foster homes. And the gamers, who might regularly launch cardboard nukes at one another in other games, acted as if putting unadopted rabbits in the pile marked “sanctuary” was akin to abandoning them. During one Rabbit Match playtest, a player drew a card declaring that, for a time, adopters were more willing to adopt large rabbits to save them from the latest culinary fad. The player looked at the chef silhouette on the card and shrieked. We changed the design.

Lesson Last: Accept Limitations and Acknowledge Differences

As a rescuer and Educator, you learn that a rabbit is not for everyone, nor is every game perfect for every player. And there are limits to what you can teach or simulate in a game. If you lose, nothing bad happens. If everyone agrees to end the game prematurely, no problem. Your experience is what matters. Games are your chocolate or stuffed bunnies: something you can put on a shelf and play with or neglect at will. How long rabbits live is usually what potential adopters want to know, in addition to whether they have personalities. While it’s disturbing to see adopters thinking about their rabbit’s demise, it’s a sign that they’re aware that a rabbit is not a toy, a game, or a confection, but a commitment. As for our commitment, we are going to keep teaching, keep learning, keep developing our games. There’s one more planned. Inspired by our escape artist Pumpkin, it will focus on home preparation: imagine little bunny figurines in a maze of domino-like tiles decorated with furniture, walls, and, of course, electrical cords.

We’re committed to sending out prototypes and getting playtester feedback. Interested? Contact us at info@rabbitmatchthegame.com or fill out the form at rabbitmatchthegame.com/contactandplaytesting.

HRS Chapter and rescue managers are encouraged to inquire about printing reasonably priced custom cards with your own bunnies and chapter logos.

(continued from page 13)
I was a self-proclaimed dog person for the first twenty-five years of my life, having grown up with two energetic English Springer Spaniels. But, four years ago, I entered the rabbit warren when I adopted Kannoli and became a rabbit mom and rabbit advocate. And I never looked back.

I was still a fresh New York City resident and was interested in adopting an animal to share my very first home. Knowing my Astoria, Queens apartment was far too small for a dog, I decided on a rabbit. One night I was on the Animal Care Centers of NYC website reading about each of the rabbits. It was shocking and appalling. How many homeless rabbits were there in this city? As I read through the profiles, I was even more haunted by a common denominator noted in nearly every description: most of the rabbits had been abandoned outside. It was clear to me at that moment that an overwhelming number of New Yorkers cared more about disposing of their recyclables properly than they did caring for their pets.

Profile after profile included descriptions such as, “found on street in Manhattan,” “found in yard in Queens,” “found near intersection in Brooklyn.” My stomach dropped each time in utter disappointment. Are New Yorkers staying true to the incredibly barbaric and archaic tradition of gifting pet shop rabbits on Easter and discarding them when they realize rabbit care involves actual effort and money? Do they honestly believe domestic rabbits can survive outdoors and fend for themselves in the city?

I will be forever mystified at the sheer failure and ignorance of some people when it comes to the treatment and welfare of animals, especially rabbits. Knowing that millions of rabbits already face the plight of meat and fur farms and pharmaceutical and cosmetic testing every year, I was still taken aback by the abuse some of my New York City neighbors were inflicting upon these gentle souls.

After doing thorough research (thank you, rabbit.org!) and shopping for rabbit supplies, I decided it was time to adopt my new friend. It happened to be 90°F with 100% humidity that day, but that didn’t stop me; it just made me more determined to share my air-conditioned apartment with a rabbit in need. I still wasn’t
Old Guardian Learns New Tricks
by Alexey W. Root, PhD

Through I had a dog as a child, for the last thirty years I have been the guardian for four rabbits and one guinea pig. So, I thought I knew most “tricks” for caring for rabbits. On February 19, 2017, I attended the Small Pets 101 seminar, a free event sponsored by Oxbow Animal Health at Texas A&M University’s College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, where my daughter attended veterinary school and was the Oxbow Student Representative. Before the seminar, I already knew that my four-and-a-half-year-old rabbit Denis should have unlimited access to Timothy hay and to water as the main part of his daily diet. But veterinarians Micah Kohles, J. Jill Heatley, and Sharman M. Hoppes changed my feeding and watering practices, improved my care practices, and helped me learn new tricks.

Dr. Kohles presented first. His talk was “It’s a Gut Thing. Small Herbivore Nutrition and Gastrointestinal Physiology.” He explained that rabbits are concentrate selectors, because they select the more nutritious, low-fiber parts of vegetation, like leaves, fruit, and shoots. Rabbits prefer sugary, high-calorie but low-fiber foods like grapes over high-fiber foods like hay, but these can be very bad for them. In other words, rabbits essentially have poor judgment. We need to provide the foods that will ensure gut health. Their gastrointestinal systems are designed to handle and digest significant amounts of fibrous and low nutritional density materials. Moreover, the (indigestible) dietary fiber in hay stimulates gut motility and is key to proper gastrointestinal function. While foraging in the wild, rabbits eat many types of grasses, but many rabbit guardians feed only Timothy hay, because that is the hay that was first developed from dried grass for pet rabbits. However, like wild rabbits, pet rabbits enjoy foraging and variety. So I learned to feed a variety of grass hays, such as orchard grass, oat, and botanical, in addition to Denis’s usual Timothy hay. Alfalfa hay is actually not a grass hay but a legume and should be reserved for special cases such as very young rabbits and some senior rabbits. To make eating hay more of a foraging adventure for Denis, he suggested I hide some of his hay and construct hay “tunnels” for him to explore.

Dr. Heatley’s talk was “Exotic Mammal Health Maintenance.” Dr. Heatley recommends a complete blood count (CBC), serum blood chemistry, and urinalysis annually after two years of age. I asked if those tests were for baseline purposes. Dr. Heatley responded that those tests are to see if anything is wrong with my rabbit. Veterinarians may recommend such tests to monitor for any potential health problems. Talk to your veterinarian to determine what tests are recommended for your rabbit.

Dr. Hoppes presented on “Rabbit and Rodent Dental Disease.” None of my rabbits have ever had dental problems. Maybe part of my luck is that I provide unlimited hay. I learned that when rabbits eat hay they chew differently than when they eat other foods, such as pellets and fresh vegetables. Grass hay results in a longer duration of chewing and a lateral grinding motion which helps grind down teeth. However, my luck regarding dental problems may run out with Denis, as he is a flat-faced rabbit. Although some dental problems can be prevented by feeding grass hay, congenital jaw malformation is common in breeds with short noses. And, of course, jaw problems can lead to problems with incisors (front teeth) and/or molars (back teeth). When teeth problems occur, do not clip the teeth yourself. Veterinarians will use a variable speed Dremel with a cutting wheel or a dental burr for trimming or filing rabbit teeth if they are overgrowing or developing points. Once dental problems arise, routine dental trimming or filing may be needed every six to twelve weeks. Additionally, tooth root abscesses require surgery. All breeds of rabbits can be susceptible to dental problems. Hay and the shape of a rabbit’s face are not the only issues affecting teeth.

The seminar allowed for questions, and I asked several. My last question was to Dr. Kohles. He had mentioned providing both a water bottle and a crock of water for one’s pet rabbit. I asked why both, as Denis drinks from his water bottle just fine. Dr. Kohles answered that when both a water bottle and a crock are present, animals drink 20% more water. Since hydration is important, setting both out for one’s pet rabbit is a good idea. Dr. Kohles added that fresh greens also contain water, and that I can find a list of greens suitable for rabbits at rabbit.org. I already knew about rabbit.org, House Rabbit Society’s website. It’s one of the best “tricks” this old rabbit guardian has!
When I was growing up, my siblings and I never had any mammalian pets—only fish. So, at the age of twenty-four I decided it was time to give in to my love of animals and get myself a furry companion.

Because I did not have room for a dog or the affinity for cats, I decided on a bunny. When I went to pick up my new pet, I didn’t even have a carrier or a hutch for the little dear. She spent her first night in a laundry basket in my bedroom. I named her Muffin. Her arrival was one of the best moments in my life.

Luckily for Muffin, I am a scientist and inquisitive by nature. Considering I was raised in Queensland (the only place in the world where rabbits are considered to be illegal as pets), I didn’t actually know much about these beautiful little creatures. So I began to research them.

As I learned more and more about these amazing creatures, Muffin’s diet evolved, as did her living arrangements. She’s now a fully indoor bunny. She’s on the perfect bunny diet and she has a lovely bunny boyfriend, Hubble. Hubble was once a “free to good home” bun and the start of what I now call my adopt don’t shop motto.

Muffin, Hubble, and I live in Darwin, Australia, which has a tropical climate similar to Cancun, Mexico, or Naples, Florida. This presents a few challenges in keeping my bunnies happy and healthy. I like to garden, which means my bunnies can enjoy fresh greens straight from the yard, but it has been quite a challenge to compile a list of bunny-safe plants that will grow in our harsh, tropical climate. Most plants, such as Asian greens, lettuces, and herbs like mint, oregano, rosemary, and thyme will grow only in our dry season. But some plants will grow all year, and, as far as I know, are bunny-friendly.

Basil grows well and it’s always a hit. My two buns love the leaves and recently demolished a few plants we had in the yard. I had to create a small plantation of them in a place where the bunnies couldn’t get to. Other greens I can plant in my garden include mango leaves, some fruit tree leaves, banana leaves, water spinach, and Ceylon spinach. I supplement with store-bought greens to keep the variety but I have a decent little list of edible plants I can source from the garden if I’m too lazy to go to the store. When I started reading about what to feed rabbits, I kept seeing the word “Timothy” everywhere. I looked for it everywhere and asked around at the local rural feed stores and no one else had heard of it, either. Then I saw it one day in a pet store but the hay in the bag looked brown and shrivelled. I gave the pet store Timothy hay a miss and stuck with the (much fresher) oaten from the feed store. I still couldn’t get Timothy out of my head, though. One day, after perusing the internet, I found a great Australian site that imports Timothy hay at a reasonable price. The picture showed beautiful green hay, so I bought some.

I eagerly brought it home from the post office. The fresh smell filled my car. As I expected, my bunnies went insane for it. It took only a few months for my buns to consume what I ordered (unfortunately, I haven’t been able to source it for more than a year). I’ve come across other hay varieties like meadow and pasture, but they are contained in those sad, expensive, pet store bags—all dry and shrivelled. My poor tropical buns have to make do with their oaten. It would be nice if they could have a variety.

Twigs are another hard-to-source bunny treat. None of the bunny-safe twigs are available in my area. Apparently citrus twigs are safe, but my two will touch only the leaves. Because of strict interstate bio-security laws, I can’t bring any twigs up from the southern states. After years of trying to find a way to get my buns some delicious twigs, I tracked down some tropical varieties of apple that I recently purchased from a local nursery. One of the biggest challenges of having bunnies in this climate is the heat. Most summer days are 35°C (95°F) with more than 80% humidity. On these days my bunnies are fine in their room with the fan. Occasionally we get heat waves with temperatures reaching 40°C (104°F) and the air is so humid and still. On these days the bunnies get the air conditioner in their little room. When people laugh at me, call me ridiculous and remind me that wild rabbits have done quite well in the Australian desert, I quickly remind them that wild rabbits retreat to their burrows because the heat of the day will kill them. Supervised outdoor play time is limited to sunrise and sunset, especially in summer. The tropical life is okay for my bunnies and me for now, but I definitely desire to live in a place where I can grow all the temperate foods my bunnies and I love. However, my bunnies do seem content with fresh mangoes, bananas straight from the tree, and year-round warm evenings to binky around the yard. I guess it’s not so bad for a bunny in the tropics!
The 2017 award was proudly given to Captain Ross Hennessey, a firefighter and first officer with the New Orleans Fire Department, in recognition of his heroism in saving a family whose house was on fire—including the family’s beloved lop rabbit, Pierre, on November 28, 2016. After Captain Hennessey performed the rescue, Pierre was taken to the Avian & Exotic Animal Hospital of Louisiana, where he was given oxygen and supportive care. Captain Hennessey was equipped with animal masks for oxygen, which were a gift from the Louisiana SPCA, instead of having to use a human mask. Upon examination by a veterinarian, Pierre had corneal abrasions from the smoke, and congestion of his lungs. Pierre recovered from smoke inhalation and corneal ulcers, and is now back with his grateful family.

June Booth, a House Rabbit Society educator since 1995, presented Captain Hennessey with the award at the New Orleans Fire Department in March. Captain Hennessey was born and raised in New Orleans and graduated from the University of New Orleans with a degree in sociology in 1988. He joined the New Orleans Fire Department in 1983 and was promoted to Captain in 1996. He became an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in 1999 and was awarded EMT of the year by the Louisiana Association of Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technicians in 2000. Captain Hennessey has two children, two dogs, two cats, four turtles, a tortoise, three snakes, a bearded dragon, and several fish. Captain Hennessey says, “I’ve always been an animal person; I honestly like animals more than most people!” House Rabbit Society’s President, Margo DeMello, said, “Captain Hennessey’s brave and compassionate act make him the obvious candidate for our first-ever Amy Espie Rabbit Hero Award, named after Amy Espie, one of House Rabbit Society’s founding directors, who worked tirelessly to promote the best interest of animals in all that she did, and who passed away in 2009.”

Please join us in thanking Captain Hennessey and congratulating him on being the recipient of this very special award!

House Rabbit Society has a truly international reach...

including 3 International Chapters, educators in 9 additional countries, 30 US Chapters, and educators in 41 US States. House Rabbit Society’s second Educator Conference, “Growing Your Knowledge of Rabbit Care and Welfare,” will be held October 20-22, 2017, and will feature talks by representatives from both HRS and other major animal advocacy organizations. We would love for every HRS volunteer to attend the conference; unfortunately, not everyone can afford to attend.

To enable the greatest number of volunteers to attend the conference, we have created the HRS Educators Conference Scholarship Fund. Your donation to the Scholarship Fund will help bring HRS volunteers to the conference to further their education. No donation is too small.

rabit.org/help-support-hrs-educators

To find out more information about our conference, please visit: rabbit.org/2017-hrs-educational-conference

Thank you very much for continuing our Educators’ knowledge and helping rabbits around the world!
LEAVE A LEGACY FOR THE RABBITS
PLEASE CONSIDER HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING

Please contact Margo DeMello at margo@rabbit.org for more information