

PETS and their People



Halo on her person couch

Companion animals. We loves 'em. What more is there to say in an intro to our first Pets issue?

Well, a couple of things. We're a protein-rich country, and that means we can afford to have pets and still feed people (or so the theory runs; people who are starving might not agree with that). People and animals attach deeply to each other: When Hurricane Katrina hit, we saw how intensely people wanted to take their pets along with them and how rescue workers rescued dogs and cats as well as humans.

We have a responsibility to deal as intelligently as possible with the animals that provide so much for us, and that means not owning more animals than we can provide for, usually getting our animals spayed and neutered so we don't add to the homeless pet population, belling our cats to save songbirds, walking our dogs on leashes except in leash-free zones and a variety of other things — *not* dumping our exotic fish into the sewers, for instance, as Deanna Uutela explains.

Camilla Mortensen explains why you should get your pet from a shelter or rescue society. Katie Cornell paints a picture of a cat show in Portland and explains that rescue societies can be for the birds. And what about raising a dog to help someone else in need? Katey Gries gives the lowdown on guide puppies. What if your sweet furry companion causes asthma attacks? Nicole Fancher explains what to do. In a web exclusive (www.eugeneweekly.com), James Johnston talks dog training.

A note on our cover: lolcats (LOL, or laugh out loud, cats — you can see many examples at www.icanhascheezburger.com) are a phenomenon on the web. Lolcat-speak is English with specific modifications; our text reflects a popular phrase that says "I'm in ur noun, verbin ur noun." Our cover kitty licks her chops; the Pets and their People section devours the paper this week. For more on lolcats, check out Michael Agger's slideshow on Slate (slate.com/id/2166338/) — *Suzi Steffen*



SHAKE YO' TAIL FEATHERS

Adopt a rescued bird **BY KATIE CORNELL**

Many times when people hear the word "adopt" only a few living creatures come to mind: children, dogs and cats. But have you ever considered adopting a parrot?

In 1994, Exotic Bird Rescue was founded after the discovery of a local parrot neglect situation. The only organization that could help at the time was a local bird club, The Emerald Exotic Bird Society, which decided to care for the injured and neglected birds in the Eugene community. However, bird lovers felt there needed to be another group to step in during feathery crises. In August of 2000, Exotic Bird Rescue received its official nonprofit status and has since been operating with the goal of finding permanent homes for abused and neglected exotic birds.

The EBR does not operate a facility; members care for the birds in their personal homes because they believe it is in the best interest of the birds to be treated like members of the family. EBR says the foster home care program is important because many of the birds it receives were companions in other households. The volunteers work from their own homes and pay for all of their expenses when caring for the beaked orphans.



Georgie

EBR encourages people to volunteer as a foster home before adopting so that they can be sure that a particular bird is right for the household. Foster homes receive priority to adopt a bird after they have completed the foster home care program. But don't expect to just sign up and get a talking parrot to play with. To become eligible to be a foster parent, you must complete a basic care and behavior class, fill out an application and agree to a home inspection conducted by foster home coordinators. Once you have been approved, you are given food and cage supplies and have to attend monthly training sessions.

EBR also offers a variety of other educational opportunities to maximize your foster home experience. Lastly, you have to live within a 45 minute radius of the Eugene/Springfield area. 🐦

If you are interested in learning more about Exotic Bird Rescue, please visit www.rescuebird.com

GIMME SHELTER

Local animal lovers urge you to rescue a shelter pet

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN



Lori Smith and her soulmate Sam

Wait! Don't buy that puppy in the window! There are hundreds of shelter animals in Eugene that need a home.

"Adopting a rescued animal rather than buying one from a breeder or pet store saves lives," says Lori Smith, president of Eugene-based Save the Pets.

Save the Pets has teamed up with Lane County's animal services and Greenhill Humane society as well as other local rescue groups to find "forever homes" for all of our area's pets. Their longterm goal is to create a storefront adoption center for adoptable animals.

"Nothing is sadder than looking into the eyes of a dog knowing its spirit has been crushed," says Smith of the lost and neglected animals she helps.

And once pets have a home, "they appreciate every bit of love you have to offer them," says Molly Sargent. Sargent is a pet groomer and an appointee to Lane County Commissioner's Save Adoptable Animals Task Force. Smith agrees and says there's nothing more rewarding than giving a shelter pet — which includes everything from dogs to bunnies and hamsters — a home.

But what about those people who really want a purebred animal? Sargent advises looking to one of the purebred rescues. Every breed, even the most exotic, from giant mastiffs to dinky hairless Chinese crested dogs, seems to have one. You can find anything from puppies to adults and seniors, she says.

These adult or senior animals have distinct advantages, according to the animal rescuers. Nicole West, a rescue coordinator for S.A.R.A. (Shelter Animal Resource Alliance), says, "What you see is what you get with an adult cat as far as size, looks and

personality. Despite your best efforts, that adorable kitten may grow up to be an aloof loner, not the lap cat you were looking for."

West also points out that an adult animal is often less energetic or destructive than a young one and fits better into a busy lifestyle. Also, adult animals are more at risk of euthanasia than puppies or kittens since they can be harder to place.

But what about that cute puppy in the window of the pet store? The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) cautions that pet store puppies often come from "puppy mills." Puppy mills are often cruel and churn out too many puppies with expensive medical problems, HSUS alleges.

Some stores, like the PetSmart chain, no longer sell dogs or cats but instead team up with local shelters to provide space for animal adoptions.

And purebred doesn't mean without problems, says Sargent. In her 42 years as a pet groomer, she says, "I have seen some of the worst examples of breeds that were purebred and had papers."

"Many times a mixed breed will have a genetically better makeup as far as health and immunity goes," she adds. This phenomenon is known as "hybrid vigor."

There are some good dog breeders out there. "I am not opposed to responsible breeders who do it solely for the love of the breed and not for monetary gain," says Smith.

But she says when you are dealing with rescue animals, "Some of the most amazing treasures are found when taking the time to look for them."

And she adds, "Nothing to me is more stunning than a beautiful soul." 🐾



Kelly Beale and her rescue pup, Wyatt

If you can't have a pet at your home, Greenhill, Lane County, Save the Pets and many other local shelters are happy to have volunteers come in and help out with the animals. Interested in adopting a pet? Almost all of Lane County's rescue groups are listed on Pet Finder (www.petfinder.com). You can also go directly to Greenhill (www.greenhill.org) or Lane County (www.lanecounty.org/animals/impound/). Save the Pets is having an adoption event Sunday, Aug. 26, at the Key Bank on the corner of Coburg and Cal Young Rd. from 10 am to 3 pm.