

Featured Volunteer - Jackie Emerson

By Shauna Hill



Being a Mickaboo volunteer is a labor of love for many. Sometimes a volunteer reaches out in LOTS of ways to lend a hand. Our volunteers are vital to our organization and they are the reason we can help so many birds in need. Our featured volunteer this time is an excellent example of that. She not only is one of the coordinators for several different species but also assists with two other very important areas. Let's take some time to get to know *Jackie Emerson!*

S: Jackie, tell us a little about yourself.

J: I live in Alameda with my family: my husband, two sons, and my mother-in-law. I have worked with the Oakland Fire Department as a dispatch supervisor for the last 22 years. Growing up I was not allowed to have pets. One time though when I was about 7 years old, I had a very bad hamster that would bite me all the time and escape its cage daily. One time it never came back. Then when I was about 11 years old I found a 6-week-old puppy covered in fleas and brought it home crying and begging to keep her. She was so pathetic my parents felt sorry for her and we took it to the vet (my parents thinking she would not survive the night). She did survive and we kept her.

Once I moved out on my own I started with cats. My first cat Murphy lived to be 18. My first dog Kindle lived to be 14. Most of my animals crossed my path while working at the fire department. People would leave kittens and puppies in boxes at the firehouse doors. Or drop off adult dogs and leave them tied up outside the firehouses. I would get the call to come pick them up. I would foster them and get them adopted through various rescues in the Bay Area. Friends and neighbors who found animals would call me up or drop them off to me. At the fire department they have given me a call sign all my own as a joke - 25K9.

I would say my hobbies are animals. Rescue groups tend to call me up when they have a mom and babies (cats or dogs).

Right now I have 4 chickens, 3 dogs, 3 cats, 1 bunny, 1 small rosy boa snake, 1 severe macaw, and 2 foster birds (a bluefront amazon and a lilac crowned amazon).

S: Wow, how awesome is that to have your own call sign!!!! You're wonderful to have opened your heart to so many animals in need. How did you hear about Mickaboo?

J: I heard about Mickaboo when I was thinking of buying a bird. When I started thinking about it I thought I bet there is a bird rescue group out there. Sure enough I looked online and Mickaboo popped up. So I went through the process to foster or adopt a bird in need. I fell in love with the sometimes-difficult Pokie. He was plucked but I didn't care. He turned out to give the best cuddles (when he wants of course).

S: So what other areas of volunteering did you venture into?

J: I worked with Mickaboo's Amazon coordinator and started fostering Amazons. Of course I fostered other species as well, whoever needed me at the time, if I had room. I learned to do home visits and phone screens. Then I started helping the Amazon coordinator with her workflow queue. Then the volunteer action list, I saw other requests being made for more help. So now I help the Well Bird program, Amazon coordinator, Caique coordinator, Pionus and Poicephalus coordinator, and Rosella coordinator, and am the equipment coordinator.

S: Tell us more about the Well Bird Program as that's a relatively new program.

[Editor's Note: Mickaboo has grant money to cover initial vet visits and tests for 50 birds in a pilot program. If the

bird comes to Mickaboo looking healthy, then the bird sees one of the approved vets in the area.

While Mickaboo sends all ill-looking birds to vet clinics, Mickaboo does not ordinarily send “well” birds to a vet due to fiscal constraints. So newly-rescued birds we think are well may actually be ill and we find out about the illness when symptoms are more acute. The objective of the program is to see whether Mickaboo would save money and lives over the long term by sending all new birds to vets on intake.]

S: What can you tell me about what the equipment coordinator does?

J: The equipment coordinator gets all emails or voicemail for folks who want to donate anything (other than money). Once I get a donation request I often have to reply to the donor asking for more specifics. For cages I need the following information:

-What city is the cage in?

-Is the donor willing or able to transport the cage?

-What are the dimensions of the cage inside living area (height, width, depth). Overall dimensions from floor to top / dome / playtop.

-Bar spacing?

-Is there any damage, rust, paint chipping ect?

-An overall picture of the cage.

-Close-up pictures of any damaged areas.

Once I get all of the above information, I email the volunteer list with the information and pictures. If a volunteer needs the cage for foster birds, I put them in contact with the donor. They set up a time to pick up the cage or have the donor deliver it.

On occasion the cage donor will ask for a donation receipt. Then I give their contact info to our finance volunteer.

For food and toy donations, I ask for a picture and attach it to the email sent to our volunteers.

If no volunteer wants the cage or supplies, then I tell the donor that we cannot take the items. If the cages are in decent condition or if there are multiple cages I will often pick the cages up and deliver them to the Oakland storage facility.

Recently, someone had four cages she wanted to donate. The delivery person who was to bring them to Oakland storage flaked so I am going to San Jose on Thursday to pick up cages. Once I get them to Oakland storage I will take pictures and send emails to our volunteer list. This donor is moving and trying to schedule four different people to pick up cages by a certain date would be too much so I am just picking them up.

S: All good things to know and consider for those who have supplies they would like to donate to Mickaboo.

Huge thank you for taking the time out of your incredibly busy schedule to answer these questions, Jackie. We sure appreciate ALL that you do for this organization!!!

Update: Two situations occurred after this interview to demonstrate further how awesome Jackie is.

A good Samaritan noticed an African Ringneck (ARN) parrot feeding from her birdfeeder. Her Craigslist ad came to Mickaboo's attention and I went over to help. The loose bird was in a precarious position as a pair of predator birds (falcons or hawks) had started building a nest in the nearby park's trees. A day after putting a “capture cage” up, the ARN decided to eat out of the food bowls on top of the cage. Before long, the female ARN, now named Lucy, ventured into the cage and the door was closed. Now the problem was to find a foster home for her. No owner had come forward to claim Lucy so we had to quickly find some place for her to go. Enter Jackie...she opened up her home and heart to let this survivor in and now she is safe and sound.



Lucy



The Eight Cockatiels

Soon after the ARN incident, a call for help came in about eight cockatiels needing new homes. These birds were not in the best of shape and needed veterinary attention. Jackie stepped up again, and not only went to survey the situation but rounded up all of these aviary birds and got them the help they needed. She is temporarily fostering them as well. Whew...this is one busy lady and we are ever grateful to have her as part of the Mickaboo family.