

Article from "The Mickaboo Bird Rescue Companion"
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Featured Volunteer: Doris Muller By Shauna Hill



If you have ever watched the 1970's television show "Baretta", you may have admired a handsome Triton Sulphur Crested Cockatoo named Fred who stole the scene many times from the show's star, Robert Blake. That was my first cockatoo crush and I have admired them since. Incredibly intelligent, playful and energetic, there is much to love about them. That's why I was excited to have a chance to interview this newsletter's featured volunteer, who happens to be our cockatoo coordinator – Doris Muller.

Doris was born in South Africa, moving to Toronto with her family when she was 5. Moving from such a warm country to Canada was quite the challenge. Once when watching the Rose Bowl Parade her father asked "where is this wonderful place where people are dressed in shorts in January?" This led to a move to California and eventually one more move to the San Francisco Bay Area. Doris made yet another major move in her life when she moved to Germany for four years before returning to the Bay Area. She currently lives in Vacaville and has a son, Eric, who will soon be going to college. (He asked his mom, "What are you going to do when it's just you and the birds?" – which has to be teenager talk for "I know you'll miss me and I'll miss you too.") Doris also has a daughter, Nicole, a registered nurse, and two beautiful grandchildren, Taylor and Nathan.

After working for Campbell's Soup in quality control and other jobs, Doris decided to change her career and follow her passion for animals, starting her own petsitting business. Her vision took flight and "[The Pet Nanny](#)" was born. For the past seven years she has been providing petsitting services to her clients. Caring for animals has always come naturally for Doris and she has watched other people's pets since she was a little girl. Her love for animals can certainly be seen in the feathery, furry, and shell-wearing companions with whom she shares her home.

Sebastian is a cockatoo she rescued in the 1970's from a landscaping business that was not taking proper care of him. She also fostered cockatoos and a macaw who found their forever homes with her. One day in 2008, she came across Mickaboo's website. She was drawn to a gorgeous Citron Cockatoo named Samantha. Doris sent her adoption application to Mickaboo and was told Samantha was a needy cockatoo who screamed all day, and she would probably be going to a sanctuary. Doris just could not get Samantha out of her mind and soon Samantha joined her family. Doris later adopted Samantha and she's been a part of the family since then.

The next Mickaboo bird fostered by Doris was Gus, who had been surrendered to the Santa Cruz animal shelter. Gus had a cone to keep him from mutilating himself and his wounds had been stitched up. He thrived under her care and grew back his beautiful feathers. Gus was adopted out to a forever home – that day was a very bittersweet day for Doris; it was hard to see him go, albeit to a permanent home.

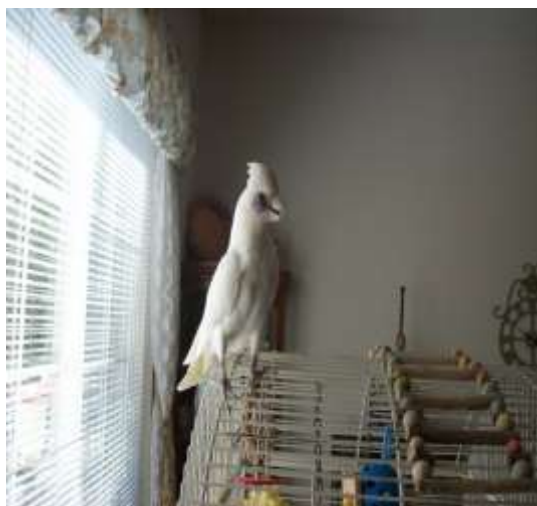
Francie, who was then the cockatoo coordinator, asked Doris if she would then foster Ernie, a bare-eyed cockatoo who did not take well to strangers and had difficulty adjusting to changes. Mickaboo found him an adopter but unfortunately he did not settle in well, and ended up back with Mickaboo and Doris where he has remained and is happy. Another call from Francie came later when more help was needed with cockatoos needing foster homes. One was a stray Sulphur Crested cockatoo at the Marin County SPCA. After a volunteer picked up the bird, the shelter advised Doris that the bird's owner had been found and provided contact information. Thinking this would be a happy reunion Doris called the person; to her

surprise, the owner started asking about Mickaboo and said she thought it must have been the bird's destiny to go to Mickaboo - she thought the bird had died. The owner then proceeded to surrender the cockatoo, now named Lola, to Mickaboo.

Doris also has Chewy (Goffins cockatoo) and Taz (Bare Eyed Cockatoo) who she adopted through friends. A beautiful Eclectus parrot named Nova is also part of the flock. Doris' love is limitless!



The Bird Room



Ernie



Samantha



Gus



Nova



Ernie and Chewy



This is the small bird aviary which Doris has had for twenty years. It has been home to many finches, budgies, cockatiels, and pigeons. There are currently two crested pigeons that she has had since 1991. Some of her finches are 12 years old, so her birds are certainly enjoying a nice long life in the fresh air and plentiful exercise space. The aviary is 15 feet long; Plexiglas panels provide winter protection and misters mitigate the summer heat.

This is her awesome large bird aviary where the big guys and gals can have fun hanging out. Sebastian and Samantha are shown in this picture.



Doris' furry companions include two older dogs: Joey, an 8-year-old Tibetan spaniel mix, and Benny, a 15-year-old Chihuahua.

She has also provided a safe haven for some turtles/tortoises.

This started with a friend who asked if she wanted to take in three little box turtles. Hmm, Doris thought, they hibernate in the winter and are quiet. Why not! Well, the same friend asked for her help taking in a tortoise she named Humphrey, who had been hit by a car on Highway 50. His injuries had been treated by a veterinarian and he had spent a year with a rescue group; he was ready for a forever home. Doris asked a volunteer if she could pick up the tortoise and meet her to hand it off. She was thinking it would be small like her box turtles. When they met, the volunteer brought out a huge box. She looked inside and saw the tortoise was huge and was quite grumpy. She then had to quickly build a new enclosure for him! Her love for these reptiles continues. She has since adopted a giant Sulcata tortoise named Pebbles and two smaller ones that will grow to be as big as Pebbles. These two came from a Southern California friend who had adopted one of Doris's foster birds.



The Tortoise Enclosure



Pebbles



Humphrey



Doris's beautiful and spacious backyard is home to a lovely koi pond.

As mentioned earlier, Doris is currently Mickaboo's Cockatoo Coordinator. When she started in this volunteer role in 2010, there was a team of three. Now Doris is the primary coordinator, with Sophia Johnston providing part-time help writing bird biographies. For you Mickaboo volunteers and supporters who have been contemplating new ways to help Mickaboo's foster birds, I'm sure she could use some extra team members to lighten the load. You could not ask for a better mentor than Doris if you don't have cockatoo experience!

When I asked Doris what her most memorable experience has been with Mickaboo she said there was no specific event, but she has always been impressed seeing how all volunteers come together to get the job done and what a difference they make in the birds' lives they touch. It warms her heart to see those who open their hearts and homes to make room for "just one more cage" when the call for help goes out. Many of these birds have been neglected or abused and difficult to work with. Because of the diligent efforts and patience of these foster parents, many of these birds are now socialized and have found wonderful forever homes.

She also appreciates those who go to the adoption fairs and other events and work so hard to educate the public about birds. It's also touching when you can work with someone who at first wants to surrender their bird but you just get a sense when they really don't want to do so and are willing to work hard and apply what you teach them about changing their bird's (undesirable) behaviors - and how happy they are when they tell you they no longer want to part with their beloved companion. It's the happy ending you hope for.

I asked Doris why she would recommend volunteering with Mickaboo. She said she has learned so much and had no idea how much overbreeding has impacted birds' lives. Where else can you meet others who

have the same interest as you and you get to talk about birds? You also get to be a voice for a rescued bird and make a difference in their lives. They come to us scared, confused, and stressed, and need someone who can help them.

[Editor's Note: To apply to become part of the Cockatoo Coordinator team, or any other role within Mickaboo, email volunteer@mickaboo.org and tell us how you're interested in helping. We can give community service credit to those who may want such for their academic or other purposes.]

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