

Article from "The Mickaboo Bird Rescue Companion"
Published January, 2017

Challenge for the New Year

By Michelle S. Yesney, Chief Executive Officer



Well, it's time for the end-of-year summary **and** the time to look forward into Mickaboo's future.

It's been a pretty busy year for Mickaboo - our intake numbers exceeded last year's numbers by 64 birds. What made this a particularly difficult year was the incoming flocks - birds coming in bunches. Often these flocks are small birds - budgies, cockatiels and finches. The last group of 43 was a mixed flock ranging from finches to large rosellas.

When birds come in groups like this, it is a heavy burden on the species coordinators who try desperately to find foster space for so many birds in what is usually a very tight time frame. It also

places pressure on our generous and compassionate volunteers who cannot bear to think that a bird will suffer for lack of a home. Ever notice how rarely we get a large group surrender with no time pressure? Often group surrenders occur because the owner(s) is dead or no longer capable of caring for the birds. Please, everyone, keep this in mind as we all age. Make arrangements in advance for where your birds should go and be sure the recipient/beneficiary knows what needs to be done.

The other significant fact related to the number of incoming birds is the number of outgoing birds. Like last year, we adopted out many fewer birds than we took in. We accepted 260 birds this year but we only adopted out 165. There were, sadly, a few deaths. But the bottom line is that we ended up this year with more birds in our foster care than when we started the year. And the same was true last year, and the year before. We have 539 birds in foster care, and of those, 337 came in before 2015.

This is not sustainable. We cannot survive as a rescue if we cannot adopt out most of the birds we take in within a reasonable time frame. So my message for 2017 is to plead with all of you to help us change this pattern.

What I told everyone at our Holiday Party was there are two things I can think of to make a big enough difference to change this trend.

FIRST THING: We **have to** hold more adoption fairs. As many of you already know, these are not events at which actual adoptions are finalized. They are events at which actual adoptions start! They are events that bring in crowds of people to look at our birds. **We know that seeing live birds in person works.** A connection is made with someone and people realize that they really **do** want to have a living breathing feathered creature in their lives!

We should be having an adoption fair at least every other month somewhere in our service area. Even if they are not huge, getting people in contact with our birds makes a difference. These events require some effort from a lot of people, and they need to happen all the time somewhere. Our adoption rates were much higher when we had frequent adoption fairs, and we have had virtually none in the last two years.

We need at least three volunteers to step up immediately and promise to be the point person for an adoption fair to happen in the next three months. To make it easier, we already have one volunteer -

Shelley Butler is organizing an adoption fair in Sacramento in late January. PLEASE - contact Shelley right away at SDButtler.Mickaboo@aol.com and offer to help and to bring birds.

So then...we need two more volunteers. You will have lots of help; people volunteer for these events. But somebody has to be on point. If you can help, contact me at michelle@mickaboo.org.

SECOND THING: The one single thing that every single one of you can do to move Mickaboo out of this terrible situation is - get a bird adopted. You. Personally. Can Do This.

If every single one of you will find someone to adopt one bird this coming year, we will made a big dent in our negative adoption rates. One bird. That means you can adopt another bird yourself or you can find a friend, or relative, or perfect stranger and persuade them to adopt a bird. Then, make sure it happens. You might need to help them along - put them into contact with a species coordinator, help them if the Mickaboo process bogs down. That could mean making a phone call or sending an email to find out what is happening. It could mean doing a home visit or phone screen yourself. It might mean setting up a visit with a particular bird, or even driving the potential adopter to the visit.

If all of you, who already care about Mickaboo, can each make a specific and targeted effort to **get one bird adopted this year**, one bird who would otherwise not have been adopted, we will start to change the pattern we're falling into. **YOU HAVE AN ENTIRE YEAR TO FIND A FOREVER HOME FOR ONE SINGLE BIRD.** You can do this.

...and feel free to brag about it when you hit your target - tell everyone you know, every Mickaboo volunteer you see, that one bird has a forever home because **you personally wanted it to happen.**

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As 2016 draws to its close, I hope all of you are safe and warm, and looking forward to a healthy, happy new year. As I have discussed in recent emails to our active volunteer base, I know that many in the Mickaboo family have had difficulties this year. Some have had to deal with tragedies. Because what draws us together is our love for birds that need to be rescued, I know that all of you are kind, compassionate, generous human beings. It saddens all of us that many of you were suffering this year.

I hope that the troubles that have beset you are past. May you and your flock have a bright and prosperous 2017.