

Article from "The Mickaboo Bird Rescue Companion"
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Featured Volunteer: Matt Linton By Shauna Hill



For this newsletter's featured volunteer we wanted to go behind the scenes to one of our tech experts who keep us online and up to date. He is Matt Linton and as you will hear he keeps our databases running and updated. Our many volunteers - not to mention our birds, equipment and other important data - would be **impossible** to keep organized if it were not for folks like Matt. He fields our pleas for help and gives generously of his time and effort to help when there are problems. Take a few minutes and get to know this VIP here at Mickaboo!

SH: Tell us about yourself. Did you always have a love for animals?

ML: I was raised mostly on the east coast. I'm currently a computer incident response and forensics specialist for Google - prior to that I performed the same work for NASA for about 14 years but I recently decided I needed a change of pace :) My career field involves investigating computer intrusions and computer crime (hacking, digital identity theft, etc.) and attempting to resolve issues and harden systems to prevent future issues.

I've **always** loved parrots and wanted a parrot as early as I can recall, when I was 6 years old. Fortunately my parents had the good sense not to get a large parrot as a pet which would outlive my "staying at home" years. I had budgies and a cockatiel when I was young but didn't get a big parrot (my Umbrella Cockatoo, Socrates) until I was out of college and out on my own.

SH: Wow...interesting occupation and your experience definitely brings much to our organization! What other birds do you have now?

ML: Aside from Socrates, I have two conures who are a bonded pair (both rescues) and our daughter is in charge of the family Cockatiel, Kitten.

SH: How did you hear about Mickaboo?

ML: I had no idea what Mickaboo was until I was at a vet appointment with Socrates at Wildwood, and ran into Jennifer Erlichmann who was there for an appointment. She introduced me to the organization and I began just sitting around on the mailing list chatting with people.

I had originally intended to volunteer working with the birds (don't we all!?) but around 2006 Mickaboo woke up one day to find that our website had been hacked by some [individuals] with lots of time on their hands, who were posting hardcore pornography in place of our bird photos. After some panicked discussion on the mailing list, I volunteered to help fix things.

The "fix" ended up looking like a whole new website was needed from scratch. And then while I was working on that I discovered that our means of tracking birds and owners at the time (emailed spreadsheets) was wholly inadequate for our needs, so I decided to fix that too. Then we had email delivery problems from Yahoo accounts and I decided to replace that TOO, and at some point I became the "de facto" tech guy for Mickaboo because I couldn't stand NOT improving things.



Matt & Socrates having fun teaching young students about companion birds

SH: Which leads to the next question: What volunteer work are you doing for Mickaboo?

ML: I'm currently the "Technical Director" -- my life has gotten too busy to do it all myself and we have a few extremely capable and dedicated volunteers on the technical team who help with day-to-day issues. So, I keep an eye on Mickaboo's long-term health from a technical angle. Can we get our jobs done easily as a distributed rescue? Are there tools we lack that would make our lives easier? Is our data secure yet accessible to the volunteers who need it? Can we communicate in a timely and simple manner when we need to? Etc. I also put special effort into making sure we do things as low-cost as possible. Mickaboo spends only about 1% of its income on Information Technology, compared to about 10% for similarly sized organizations with similar missions, because I make sure we focus on free and open-source solutions to our needs wherever possible.

That other 9% goes to the birds :)

SH: Yes, that statistic has always impressed me about this organization...the amount that goes directly towards helping the birds. Finally...why would you recommend volunteering with Mickaboo?

ML: I recommend volunteering for Mickaboo because the birds need it, plain and simple! Even if there were NO parrots needing re-homing (sadly that's not the case), Mickaboo's educational mission is extremely valuable to enrich the lives of parrot owners. When I got Socrates I had no idea how challenging and potentially troublesome a long-term relationship with an Umbrella Cockatoo could be - but fortunately I found Mickaboo when our relationship together was very new, and learned a lot about mistakes I could avoid making. Because of this I have a much more successful relationship with my parrot (14 years and counting!) than I otherwise would have.

SH: Thank you Matt for taking the time to do this interview. We are deeply indebted to you for your hard work and appreciate your expertise. Our website and databases recently went through some much needed updating and the efforts were huge to accomplish this. So folks when you use our website or access one of our databases to gain needed information, think about the efforts that go on behind the scenes to make it all possible. You can thank Matt and the rest of the tech team for that.