

Featured Volunteer: Walt Boeninger

By Shauna Hill



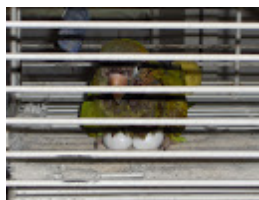
Here's Walt, at left.

Every organization needs a good information technology ("IT") team to keep work flowing. Mickaboo is no different, with the need to track hundreds of birds, applications for adoption/fostering, bird care class attendees, phone interviews, and home visits, just to name a few of the items volunteers must enter and access in our databases. That's why it is a pleasure to highlight one of our IT support volunteers in this article.

His name is Walt Boeninger, who lives in the South Bay with his wife and flock. Walt retired after working for 26 years for Hewlett Packard in customer support. His interest in technology goes back to his younger days in the mid 70's when he landed his first real job with a small CB company. He kept his CB collection and recently sold it to a collector for \$2,000! Who says there's no market for CB equipment??

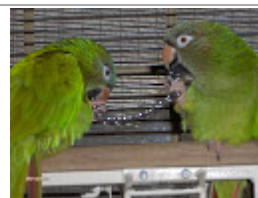
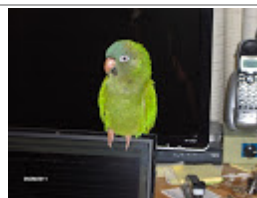
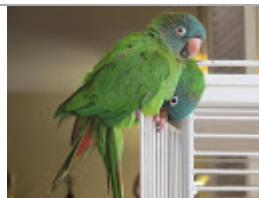
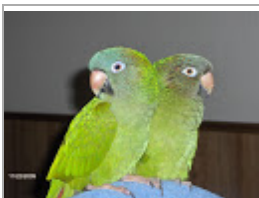
Walt's experience with birds goes back to the early 60's when his older sister left her parakeet in his care when she went to college. After this little bird passed away, another parakeet entered his life named Tweety. Tweety was one smart bird; he learned to recognize Walt's call and would call back to him. He also knew when it was time to go back to his cage for the night; when Walt took off the cage top Tweety would happily hop right back into the cage and settle in for the night. Walt also had another parakeet that passed away while he was in college.

Fast forward to after he married his lovely wife and settled into the South Bay with their German Shepherd! Walt received a call in 1980 from a friend who was moving to Idaho and needed a home for his three-year-old cockatiel. This tiel became a faithful companion to Walt's family until his death in 2009. Walt first heard of Mickaboo at Andy's Pet Shop and attended a Mickaboo basic bird care class. Three months later he welcomed some foster birds to his home – two beautiful blue crown conures named Gracie and Jayden. These two were very bonded but Walt found that potential adopters only wanted one or the other. He did not want to see them separated so he made the decision to adopt them and they

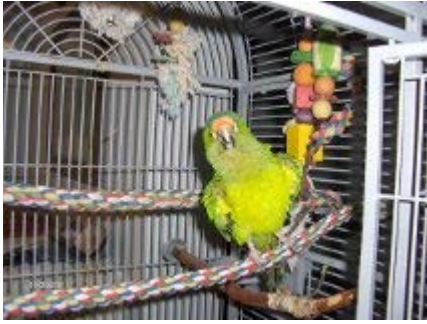


Jayden showing what a proficient egg-layer she is!

have been happy in their forever home since. Interestingly it was discovered over time that these two were misnamed...Jayden was actually a female and Gracie was a male. This became evident during the first spring they had at the Boeninger home when Jayden proceeded to lay 13 eggs! That's one busy gal. After some adjustments using fake eggs Jayden has stopped laying eggs (except once when Walt found her hiding under the couch and would not come out...he peered under the couch to find her laying on an egg, sneaky girl). These two blue conures remain very close and prefer each other's company but will still come hang out with Walt and his wife on the sofa.



Next to join the flock was a handsome half moon conure named Buddy. He was a stray flying around San Jose with the wild flock. This cute tag-along flew into a friend of Walt's car repair shop and would not leave. Buddy was kept by the shop owner until the owner passed away. His wife could not care for the bird and asked Walt to take him in 2010. Buddy is a good talker and must have been in a home with a cat as he says "here kitty, kitty". He has lots of personality.



Last but not least is a cockatiel named Milo. He was part of a group of five cockatiels surrendered to Mickaboo when their caregiver had health issues with their dander. Three of these birds were Mickaboo alumni and two were not. Milo came to live with Walt and is now very bonded to him.



Walt only started volunteering with Mickaboo in 2009 so he's a fairly new addition to the organization, but he sure has been making a difference! He started off doing home visits and phone screens for potential adopters/fosters. His IT background and experience led him to join the Mickaboo IT team. Walt has been a welcome addition to that team and helps with tech support in various ways, such as setting up user accounts for our two major database systems and preparing the wonderful newsletter you are reading. (Thank you, Walt!) Most recently he has also joined the cockatiel specialist/coordinator team.

Walt's most memorable rescue experience came when Mickaboo received a call about a homeowner who had received a foreclosure notice; the property had an aviary. The birds had been released and there was concern that these birds would not survive being suddenly left on their own. Some had remained close to the aviary searching for food. Another volunteer, Katie Slider, and Walt rallied to aid these birds in an amazing rescue effort. You can imagine how challenging it can be to try to round up scared and stressed-out birds. These birds turned out to be a rare species of parakeet, called Mallee ringnecks. It took much patience and Katie's skillful technique, but armed with cloths, carriers, and food they were able to get some of these birds into carriers. Look at the pictures below to give you a sense of the rescue, and an introduction to this gorgeous species.



Aviary with doors open



Escapees awaiting rescue



Rescue in progress!



One bird safe!



Success!



Enjoying rest time and a good meal.

The story even made the local KTVU news! Click on [this link](#) to see the video Katie created to document the rescue...it gives you an even better idea of what went into this amazing effort.



For anyone reading this newsletter and thinking about volunteering, I asked Walt why one should volunteer for Mickaboo. He answered "It's rewarding and you get to do things you may never have an opportunity to do otherwise."