

Rescue of the Mountain View Five  
By Martha Kudlacik



When his beloved cockatiel Whitley flew off, Christopher Hynes found himself on his way to becoming a bird hero.

The Mountain View resident was diligently searching for his bird in the neighborhood last September, posting on the local Nextdoor site to let people know to contact him if Whitley was seen. A woman living nearby told him she had an aviary, and would keep an eye out in case Whitley was attracted to the birds she had outside. Intrigued by the idea of an aviary for his own home, Chris went to take a look.

Unfortunately, the birds were living in less than optimal conditions. They had been allowed to breed, were living in too-small quarters, and were fed basically a junk food diet (millet and a low quality seed mix). They were amazingly hardy, living outdoors without supplemental heat or protection from the elements, and exposed to the rats that are widespread in even the best of neighborhoods in Silicon Valley. At least one had been killed by a rat, and others were injured.

Because the owners were retired and wished to travel, they were less interested in taking care of their birds. Chris was offered the chance to take any or all of them, but he didn't have the space.

By February of this year, Chris and his partner Eric had converted a chicken yard into a beautiful outdoor aviary using untreated wood and stainless steel wire. They provided a heat source for the birds' comfort and installed a webcam so they could keep an eye on the birds without disturbing them. Eric suggested that perhaps the first occupants could be the five cockatiels they had visited months earlier that so badly needed better living conditions. Chris agreed and they hauled the entire old cage with birds down the street to their home. After sawing off the top to get the cage into his garage, he placed a shower curtain over the top and wheeled the contraption into his aviary. Some of the birds readily flew out once the curtain was removed, and some needed coaxing. Two of the birds, Caleb and Robbie, went straight to For the Birds Veterinary Hospital in San Jose for treatment of rat bites and other injuries; now they are back home with Amber, Jasper and Wyatt, their flockmates. Robbie appears to have sustained permanent damage to his flight feathers on one side and is healing inside the home.



Chris, Eric, and four of the rescued tiels (in the background) in the new aviary



The previous owner has continued to be involved with her former birds, donating funds for their vet care and inquiring after them. She realizes that she was unable to give them the life and home they needed and is happy they now have so much room to fly.

Chris and Eric took Mickaboo's Bird Care class in October 2017, held during Mickaboo's Adoption Fair at For Other Living Things in Sunnyvale. Armed with that knowledge, and the support of Mickaboo's volunteers, they have rescued other birds in addition to these five. They are currently fostering the five cockatiels for Mickaboo and hope to find a good home for each and every one of them, though it will be tough to find a home as wonderful as the one Chris and Eric have given them!