



Thoughts on Fostering

Spring 2007

It Hurts So Good !!! ***By Barbara Bruyer***



I will honestly admit that the first time I heard the expression "It hurts so good" I was quite confused. It reminds me of other famous sayings such as "you'll thank me when you grow up" and "this is going to hurt me more than it will hurt you." How could anything hurtful possibly make you feel good? When a doctor gives you a needle, it may cure your illness. . .but it doesn't feel good. If you touch something hot, your hand recoils which prevents a bad burn . . .but it doesn't feel good.

A foster caregiver knows what it means!! There aren't many things that make you feel as good as being a foster caregiver. Helping a frightened little rabbit feel loved and safe, perhaps for the first time in her life is almost too fantastic to describe.

Once any medical issues have been addressed, the socialization process can begin. It's the little victories that would normally go unnoticed that are giant steps for these abused/neglected little ones. Eating normally instead of attacking the food and gobbling it down, coming to see you instead of hiding in the corner, sniffing your hand and not running away from it, allowing you to pick them up for some cuddles without fighting and trying to escape in fear, and learning to use the litterbox are great milestones of achievement for those who have not been in a loving environment. Some rabbits have an easy time; others will take many months to feel relaxed and confident that they are safe.

Once starting to feel secure, its time to learn to play!! Running through a tube, digging in a box of shredded newspaper, rolling a ball, and playing in a paper bag means they are on their way. The hours are too many to count. The constant, persistent promises that they are OK and that you love them have allowed them to once again trust a human and be a happy bunny.

Then it happens. You get that call which says a person wants to come see YOUR bunny for a possible adoption. How can that be? He is just starting to enjoy being a happy bunny! Will they love you as much as I do? Will they take you to the vet immediately if there is a problem? Will they pet your nose in just the right place that you like so much? Will they let you sit on their chest instead of holding you on their lap cause you don't like that? Will they give you the right food? Will they get angry with you if you miss the litterbox? Will they give you too many snacks. . . .or heaven forbid, not any? You start to get a mild panicky feeling and think "no, he is just not ready yet." Or is it YOU that isn't ready to let go?

The potential new family comes to see the bunny and you talk 1000 miles per hour telling everything there is to tell about your little friend. You know in your heart that they aren't listening, but are focusing on YOUR bunny. They seem nice, they seem

gentle, they say they are patient, they say YOUR bunny will have lots of play time outside the cage in a safe play area, and they say "yes" to this and "yes" to that.

Suddenly you relax just a bit and stop thinking of yourself and watch the interaction of your bunny with the other people. Hey, he isn't afraid of them. They speak softly and move slowly. No one is grabbing for your bunny. They are respectful of his wishes and get down on the floor eye-to-eye. Perhaps they aren't too bad after all.

Yes, the little bunny you've fostered is going to have a new home. Yes, a new family of his very own who will love him and care for him for the rest of his life. Yes, you will never see this little bunny again. . . . and yes

It hurts so good!!!!



Loving them all, ***By Beverly Kistler***

It has been a year and a half ago since I first visited Safe Haven's website. I was instantly hooked. Now, after 10 fosters behind me, and soon to get my 11th, I would like to express how rewarding it is to foster these buns. Sometimes we know their background and sometimes they are strays, but ultimately the goal is the same. . . .fostering them until their "fur-ever" home is found. In the beginning of my "rabbit fostering career", I fell in love with each and every rabbit. Soon you realize by letting them go. . .they have an opportunity for a wonderful life with their new family. Each applicant is screened to make sure bunny and family are a good match. I am thankful I had the opportunity to foster and care for Ryan (my 1st), Tina, Benji (couldn't help myself, I adopted him), Puzzle, Candi (Nibbles), Greta, Max, Bridget, Harley and Brodie. And now, I welcome Ms. Raeline the mother of Harley and Brodie.

Would you like to foster for Safe Haven? As the saying goes. . . .It is the toughest job you'll ever love!

Foster homes are always needed.

There are always many more bunnies who need us than we have foster homes for. For more information, please call 908-238-0814 or email adopt@SafeHavenRR.org

The bunnies do need you!

Amber's Story

contributed by Linda Guarino

She's only 3.5 pounds, soft heather gray, very gentle with the face of an angel. Why then would someone dump her at a park thinking she could live happily ever after? Why would someone discard her as carelessly as they would a candy bar wrapper?

I received a call from Safe Haven and was asked if I would foster a rabbit that was found abandoned in a local community park. The people who found her were not "rabbit people" and were doing their best to find her a home while they cared for her. They named her Amber because she has a small splotch of amber colored fur on the nape of her neck. Amber was being housed outside, alone and exposed. The summer heat was intensifying and a heat wave warning went into effect. I opened my doors with-

out hesitation and welcomed her into my home to be cared for as she should be.



At first, Amber was very timid and fearful. She appeared unsure of what was

happening and was cage aggressive. Her eating habits were terrible and she dug constantly in her litter making quite a mess. Soon enough though she began to trust me and knew I was on her side, to help her and care for her. I made an appointment with my vet to have her health checked and then to have her spayed. I set up a nice cage for her that she could call her own, bought her new toys and helped her develop better eating habits.

It's been 3 months now and Amber has adapted well and is a very happy bunny. Amber's personality and telltale signs indicate she might do well bonded. Amber does not like to be held or picked up and is still apprehensive towards being handled. She does enjoy being petted, brushed and kissed and loves to be out and in the company of someone. I feel she would do best in an adult home in that she has come to trust again in an adult environment. If your home sounds ideal for Amber, please contact Safe Haven to adopt this beautiful and wonderful little girl!

Thoughts on Fostering Michelle Manderski, Safe Haven Foster Parent

The Tortures and Rewards of Fostering

By Michelle Manderski

I entered my first rabbit fostering experience with excitement and optimism. I was eager to help out rescued rabbits and couldn't wait to get started. Naively, I swore that I would not get attached to my temporary pets... but as soon as Chase and Zoey hopped into my life, I knew that would be impossible! Chase, with his outgoing and inquisitive nature, and Zoey, shy but sweet with an adorable lionhead mane, made the perfect rabbit couple. During their 7 months with me, they learned how to be house rabbits. They perfected their litter box skills, figured out what "petting" was all about, discovered a love for fresh greens, and would contently sit on my lap during TV time. It didn't take long to begin loving them as my own, and I seriously considered adopting into my family.

When an adoption inquiry was made for my furry friends, I had to decide whether or not I should adopt them. Already having 2 rabbits of my own, I knew that finding room for 2 more in our home's main living space would be a challenge. I also knew that it would be difficult to give Chase and Zoey the attention they deserved without neglecting my other pets. After all, adoption means including them as part of the family, not just providing food, litter and an occasional petting. Still, I couldn't bear the thought of giving them away. To say that I struggled with this decision would be an understatement – it was torture! However, after much deliberation, I decided that I loved them too much to NOT let them go. If they could find a home where they could have lots of space to play and all the attention they want, I didn't want to stand in the way of that.

Soon after I reached my decision, Chase and Zoey were adopted by a wonderful family. They have their own room to play in and get to be the center of attention. Adoption Day wasn't easy for me – I cried like a baby upon returning home to their empty enclosure – but I still knew it was the right thing to do. Their new family stays in touch, and during my follow-up visit I was happy to see them dashing around and doing binkies with joy in their forever home. Now, I look back fondly on my experience with Chase and Zoey, ready to start the process again with another rabbit in need.

Fostering turned out to be a lot harder than I anticipated, but the rewards are incalculable.