



# HARELINES



Volume 16 Number 2 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BUCKEYE HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY Spring/Summer 2012

## The Rabbit-Friendly Child

By Judith Pierce

*Reprinted with permission from the San Diego HRS*

### Teaching Children to Become "Rabbit People"

Whether you bring a baby home to your rabbit's home or are bringing a bunny home to your child's house, you must be mindful of the new dynamics this will create in your family.

Children and rabbits are not always a great mix. Naturally exuberant children can be frightening to rabbits, as can the young child's desire to hold, pull on ears, prod and poke, be a concern to your rabbit's safety.

Here are some quick tips to follow in teaching your



young children about living with a rabbit:

 Choose a time of day when your child is quieter to teach him about the rabbit and to play with your rabbit.

 Set both your child and the rabbit up for success by showing your child how to interact with bunny, and by giving your rabbit a place to hide away when she's had enough.

 Avoid using negative words to change the child's behavior with the rabbit. Instead, redirect the child's inappropriate activity to one that's better, such as petting bunny gently with a flat hand. Offer choices for behavior so your child is not always getting into trouble for interacting with the rabbit. Praise your child when he acts kindly and gently towards the rabbit.

 If your child refuses to stop a behavior that can be harmful to the rabbit, keep him away from the rabbit for a short time. Set up the rabbit's living area so she has a safe zone that cannot be accessed by small children. Turn the door towards the wall so it cannot be easily opened.

 If your child has friends over and the atmosphere is noisy, place bunny in a closed-off room where she cannot be seen or accessed by playmates. It's better they don't even know the rabbit is there.

 Refrain from introducing the rabbit to your children's playmates for at least a week or two. Show your children's friends where

### In this issue

- Ozzie and Jojo . . . . .4
- A Lifetime Commitment . .7
- Somebunny Needs YOU! . .8
- Dealing With The Loss Of A Beloved Bunny . . .10



*Continued on page 3*



*Harelines*, the Buckeye House Rabbit Society Newsletter, is published by the all-volunteer, non-profit Buckeye House Rabbit Society, Athens, OH.

**Chapter Manager:** Herta Rodina  
bhhs-herta@ohare.org  
740-797-7616

**Educators & Fosterers:**

Canton . . . . . Kristi Cole  
330-484-8416  
bhhs-kristi@ohare.org

Cleveland . . . . . Kristen Doherty  
440-543-4959  
bhhs-kristen@ohare.org

Stephanie Lodge  
bhhs-stephanie@ohare.org  
216-571-1088

Fremont . . . Keith & Sue Zimmerman  
419-355-8433  
bhhs-sue@ohare.org  
bhhs-keith@ohare.org

Cincinnati . . . . . Michele Roth Kerley  
859-261-0556  
bhhs-michele@ohare.org

Dayton . . . . . Jann Kuntavanish  
937-435-6899  
bhhs-jann@ohare.org

Debbi Braunschweiger  
bhhs-debbi@ohare.org  
937-293-7253

Jen Parks  
bhhs-jen@ohare.org  
937-770-1261

**Visit the House Rabbit Society at <http://www.rabbit.org> and the Buckeye House Rabbit Society at <http://www.ohare.org>**

The Buckeye HRS Respects Your Privacy  
We know our members value their privacy and that's why we never, ever, sell our mailing list or distribute it to any other party. All of our members' information is held in the strictest confidence.

## Special Thanks to:

**Tony Hackenberg**, for his thoughtful tribute to Kim Johnson's and Rob Lovicz's Siggy, who passed away in March.

**The Crossroads Animal Hospital**, for their kind donation in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Free's Tinkerbelle.

**J. L. Strainic**, for a most generous contribution in memory of dear Camille.

Our wonderful **igive.com supporters**, who help our foster rabbits every time they make a purchase.

**Matthew Hager**, for generously donating his time as our new layout expert. Welcome aboard, Matt!

The following members, whose monetary and in-kind donations allow us to meet our ongoing fostering and educational goals:

**Janet Reed, Clay and Nancy Pasternack, Kathy Kallay, Dawn Glanz, Jim and Laura Brown, Kim Johnson and Rob Lovicz, June Gates, Bonnie Hagerman, Annette Tait, Phyllis O'Beollain, Sue Milewski, Cynthia Slezak, Lisa Fresolone, David and Joyce Weaver, Dessi Donovan, Angel Creech, Marjorie Aleva, Liz Claytor, Stacie Hecht, Dawn Davis, Judy O'Neil.**

**Our new and continuing Sanctuary Rabbit Sponsors!** This program would not be possible without your compassion and generosity. These special rabbits, who must spend the rest of their lives in foster care due to serious medical conditions, have you to thank. We wish we could acknowledge each of you individually!

As always, the **Monks Copy Shop** of downtown Columbus, for their discount on printing our newsletter.

## OUR WINNER!



We have a winner for our fourth annual spring raffle – Bernda Bacani of Seattle! Congratulations to Bernda and a warm thank you to Stephanie Lodge for putting together this year's prizes. Thanks also to the generosity of our members and website visitors who purchased \$376 in tickets! You are directly improving the health and quality of life of our foster rabbits. Because of you, they are one hop closer to their forever home!



## Happy Spring to All!



a rabbit who's feeling trespassed upon.

**Bunny Rule No. 3:**

Don't touch droppings or litter. A rabbit's droppings are harmless, but you don't want your child digging through the box.

**Bunny Rule No. 4:**

We don't pick up the bunny. Teaching your children to interact with your rabbit on the floor, at her level, will promote trust and prevent bunny from being accidentally harmed.

Lastly, your children will follow your

the rabbit lives and how to pet him when only one or two children are visiting.

example, so be sure you implement these rules to ensure the happy co-existence of your rabbit and your children.

Some key "Bunny Rules" will teach children that bunny is to be respected and treated with care.

**Bunny Rule No. 1:**

Gentle petting only. Sit with your child on the floor and show him how to pet the bunny with a "soft hand." Using the back of the hand is a good method.

**Bunny Rule No. 2:**

Leave the rabbit alone when she hops away or goes into her "house." Rabbits need private time and can become territorial over their space. Prevent your child from getting bitten by





# Our Readers Write: Ozzie and Jojo

By Nancy and Clay Pasternack

For over 35 years we have had the pleasure of rabbits as our house pets. We went from apartment to rented home to owned home and wherever we've lived, our bunny family has been a part of our lives.

Since we're in northern Ohio, we have been fortunate to be a part of the Cleveland group of the Buckeye House Rabbit Society. Kristen Doherty has enriched our lives with four of our five bunnies over the last thirteen years. When Ginger, our Holland Lop, passed away in 2009, it left us with one bunny, Allie, a black Dutch girl who was eight years old at the time. Allie enjoyed being a solo bunny and bonded with us very well, but she had been without a mate for a few years. We felt it was time to get her a companion of her own species.

We contacted Kristen and told her our desire to find Allie a friend; in very short time, she contacted us about a baby black Dutch bun who had recently been rescued and would be available for adoption. We agreed to adopt him and in October 2009 Kristen brought him to our home. Having heard of his excellent litter box habits and his very outgoing personality, we were quite excited at having a baby boy bunny around the house. Well, when Ozzie, named for Ozzie Smith (acrobatic), Ozzie Newsome (speed), and Ozzie Guillen (crazy), arrived to tear up his new home, completely ignore Allie, and poop anywhere but even near his litter box, we were a bit skeptical. As we continued to expand Ozzie's world of activity, we continued to try to bond him with Allie. It took about two months to accomplish the bonding, but one day, they just started to groom each other and that was that! Ozzie continued to defy the litter box, but his speed and agility were like no other bunny's we had ever known.

Since our bunnies live in the basement of our home and have complete access to most of the area when supervised, they are very inquisitive. Ozzie has made a career out of trying to open the gate that separates the front of the basement from the back of the basement. He has also figured out how to open the door to the basement tool room, so he can try to play



"jungle explorer" under the work benches and shelving. Best of all, Ozzie has mastered the ability to climb up and down stairs, carpeted and otherwise. There have been many instances when we have been on the main floor of the house only to look over and find Ozzie staring right at us. This always results in a chase that we never win, and usually ends with Ozzie quickly climbing back down the stairs to the basement. Ozzie has also mastered the art of hopping onto the top of his cardboard house, which is approximately two and a half feet high. He will do this and stare at me from his cage until I pick him up and pet him (he cannot get enough holding and petting).

As Allie became a senior bunny and started to slow down, Ozzie watched over her as her ability to move around the cage, eat, and use her litter box began to deteriorate. When Allie passed away in May 2011 after seven years with us, Ozzie became a single bunny. While he enjoyed all the attention and clearly matured with his litter box habits, it was very clear that he needed a mate. During the evenings that summer, Ozzie would constantly groom me by licking my leg and cuddling up to me. While the mutual love between bunny and his "dad" was very apparent, Ozzie really needed a girlfriend! So trying to find him a mate became our summer task.



After much searching on the various HRS websites, I found a female black Dutch bunny in Columbus. Jojo, a recent rescue, was five months old at the time. After completing the adoption application, we drove to Columbus on a Sunday in late August 2011 and adopted Jojo. Danielle Patterson of the Columbus HRS was very helpful, as Kristen had been in the past, with some history and diet suggestions for Jojo. Jojo's ride home was rather peaceful and she was hardly unnerved by the long car ride.

When we arrived home, we immediately put both bunnies together to see what the reaction would be. Ozzie immediately began grooming Jojo, but she seemed indifferent to his advances. Then the fur flew – a major fight ensued, and we separated them immediately. Over the following four to five weeks, we set a time each day to slowly allow them to be together. Since they were living in separate quarters, Ozzie continued to try to groom Jojo through the side of their adjacent pens. In addition, we were working with Jojo and her less-than-stellar litter box habits. As we adjusted the locations of food, water, and litter box, her habits improved,

but she would often drag her litter box around the cage and not use it. Clearly there was a lot of work to do!

One day in October 2011, the light went on with Jojo. We put them together and she started very nicely to groom Ozzie. Ozzie returned the favor, and the bonding process had begun. Very shortly after the successful bonding episode, we left them together overnight as a test. No flying fur, no dumped food dishes. And, a reasonable use of the litter box was beginning to emerge. However, Jojo is a very high-strung bunny and is given to very quickly darting through her cage area at the slightest unexpected noise. One such episode right after cohabitation left

Jojo's baby bunny face stuck between the slats of the metal pen; we had a very delicate job removing her face from the cage.

Now that the bonding was successful, it was time to let them both wander around the basement area. Since Ozzie is a pro at trying to open doors, climb stairs, and get into forbidden things, he is a masterful leader for Jojo to follow. The two of them became inseparable, with Jojo imitating Ozzie in everything he did. Unfortunately one vacuum cleaner that had not been bunny-proofed was the victim of their joint assault on the electric cord (a word to all





bunny parents – always bunny proof anything electrical!). Both bunnies found the 50 lb. pellet bag, and companionably chewed a hole in the bottom, giving them unlimited pellets for about a week, until we found the damage. Nothing within reach of the two was safe! Jojo learned how to hop onto boxes so she could beg for attention, how to climb up a flight of stairs to the whole new world of the main floor, and how to explore all the various nooks and crannies that a basement can offer! Plus, Jojo’s appetite had exceeded even Ozzie’s when he was a baby. Jojo quickly grew to be approximately the same size as Ozzie. Most visitors to our house could not (and still cannot) tell them apart; they look like brother and sister.

Now that they have conquered the basement and live very happily together, Ozzie and Jojo seem to do everything in tandem. They are always grooming each other, sleeping together, eating together, begging for treats (and carrots) every morning. Cleaning their cage every day is a snap, as they are not fed until it’s cleaned. Ozzie comes over and supervises the cleaning and gets on his hind feet looking for his morning carrot. Jojo, who hates vacuum cleaners, is as far away as can be, but has a sixth sense when it comes to the carrots hitting the dish. Neither of us can go

into the basement refrigerator to get anything for ourselves without triggering a mad dash around the cage; every time the fridge is opened, they think it means something for them.

As we have just celebrated Jojo’s first (estimated) birthday and she is no longer a baby bunny, she experienced the maternal feelings that female bunnies sometimes go through after being spayed. She went through the nesting and the false pregnancy stages, which we have not experienced with a spayed bunny in many years. She soon became her old self, however, running around with reckless abandon and eating everything in sight.

Although it was a bit of a struggle initially to bond Ozzie and Jojo, the results have been all worthwhile. We have two affectionate Dutch bunnies who love each other very much and enjoy the attention we give them. They look identical and even we sometimes mistake one for the other. The joy and love that we attach to our “kids” is special and we would not trade it for anything!

*Have a bunny story you’d like to share with other readers? Send it to [bhrs-herta@ohare.org](mailto:bhrs-herta@ohare.org) for publication in a future issue of Harelines!*

# Keep An Eye On Us!

***Find the Buckeye House Rabbit Society on Facebook and Twitter!***



***Search for:  
Buckeye House Rabbit Society***



***[www.twitter.com/  
BuckeyeHRS](http://www.twitter.com/BuckeyeHRS)***





# A Lifetime Commitment

By Michele Roth Kerley

I have been a fosterer for the Buckeye House Rabbit Society for around ten years now. It has been a great experience and I really love placing these intelligent and social animals with permanent, loving families. It is an incredible feeling to know they have found their “forever” home. On the flip side, there is nothing more heartbreaking than getting a phone call or email from someone who has adopted a rabbit and, for whatever reason, wants to return him/her.



Our adoption application asks questions not only so that we can determine the best match for a possible adopter, but so that we can determine if the applicant can truly offer a forever home. Unforeseen events can, unfortunately, change circumstances and adopters may feel there's no solution but to find another home. With that in mind, I would like to go over the top three reasons why adopted bunnies are returned and remind everyone that these situations should be thoroughly and honestly considered before adopting.

**1. I don't have time for the rabbit anymore and so s/he is lonely.** To address this issue, we specifically ask how often the applicant is home. We also ask if the applicant would be willing to adopt a companion rabbit. It is just as easy to take care of two rabbits as it is one. As fosterers, we really press this question to ensure that applicants understand that rabbits are very social. If the adopter is not able to spend as much time with the rabbit as needed, a companion rabbit is a possible solution.

**2. I've developed allergies to my rabbit.** This is another issue that we specifically address on the application: Does anyone in your household have allergies? We need to remind prospective adopters that even if you don't have allergies now, they can develop over time. If you develop allergies, it is indeed possible to keep your rabbit. Ask the fosterer from whom you adopted your bunny to go over the steps

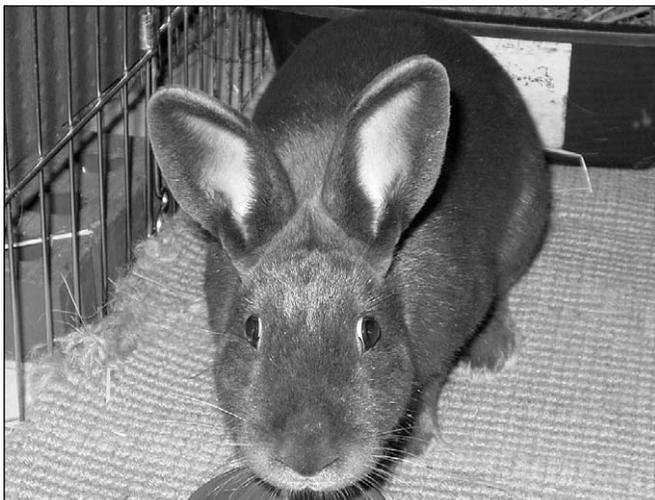
that can be taken if allergies arise. If you are an applicant, ask yourself if you'd really be willing to take these steps if you or someone in your home develops allergies.

**3. My children have lost interest and aren't taking care of the rabbit.** On our application we always ask if the rabbit is intended as a gift. On our contract, for families with children, we require that the parent understand and agree that s/he is the main caregiver. Don't sign the contract if you cannot commit to be the main caregiver for bunny's 10-12 year life.

As fosterers, we are anxious to find our rabbits their forever home. However, we always address these issues as thoroughly as possible before an adoption to make sure that everyone understands the responsibility and commitment required to provide a permanent home. Unfortunately, sometimes folks may not truly comprehend the extent or degree of their commitment until they've adopted their rabbit and some time has passed. If you find yourself in this position, please don't give up. Our fosterers and educators are here to answer questions and give advice in order to make the experience of having a companion rabbit the positive relationship it should be. It is rare to have an issue that can't be corrected with a little effort and time. If you're willing to make the proper adjustments and a lifetime commitment, then a companion rabbit may be the right choice for you.



# Somebunny Needs YOU!



This is **Pumpkin**! She is a very sweet young lady. Just look at her awesome blue/gray fur! What a beautiful bunny! Pumpkin enjoys playing with her toys and she especially loves to chomp on hay. Wouldn't you love to make Pumpkin a member of your family? **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (bhhs-sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**



Meet sisters **Luna** and **Matilda ("Mattie")**. They look a lot like little Siamese kittens. They are very, very curious and anxious to explore their surroundings. Both are friendly and good at being held. They've been spayed and are now ready for adoption. We prefer that they be adopted together. Make an appointment to meet these cuties today! **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (bhhs-sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**



"Izzy" cute and adorable or what? Yes, he is! Meet **Izzy**; this four-pound gray Dutch bunny is as sweet as he is cute and adorable. He has excellent litterbox habits too. "Izzy" going to be a part of your family? **Please contact Michele Roth Kerley (bhhs-michele@ohare.org) 859-261-0556.**

If you have a sweet tooth, you will love **Anise**. She is as black as licorice, but way sweeter. This special girl is waiting for a loving family to show off her excellent litterbox habits. Call today to make her a part of your home, but careful, she's so sweet she may cause cavities! **Please contact Michele Roth Kerley (bhhs-michele@ohare.org) 859-261-0556.**



**Chiqua** came all the way to Ohio from a large rescue in New Mexico. She is all black with velvety-soft fur and lots of curiosity. Make an appointment to meet her today! **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (bhhs-sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**



**Charlie** is a young mini-rabbit tan bunny. What a ball of energy! In his spare time he enjoys running laps, doing binkies, and standing on his back feet to look around. Always a member of the "Clean Plate Club", he finishes all his greens. With fur softer than velvet and a playful personality, Charlie's sure to make you fall in love. **Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare.org) 216-571-1088.**



Meet **Barley** and **Hops**, aka "The Beer Babies." Barley and Hops are a pair of super friendly "BWBs" (Big White Buns). They are six months old. Barley is a sweet boy and likes to be involved in whatever you are doing. Hops is a cute and curious little girl. We would like them to stay together. BWBs grow to be larger than average bunnies, but they have the sweetest temperaments. They are mostly laid back and easy going. BWBs are good for families with younger children. Come see for yourselves how wonderful these guys really are. **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (bhrs-sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**

**Addison** is a young and playful little girl who is always busy. She enjoys head pets, giving kisses, hopping through tunnels, and running the "Bunny 500." Her adventurous personality makes a large pen a necessity. Addison is a perfect example that small bunnies can have BIG personalities. **Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare.org) 216-571-1088.**



Have you ever wanted back into a time of innocence, when rabbits could be big and white and magic? This young lovely, born in spring '09, will take you there. Open your door to her, and come home to the land of **Honalee**. **Please contact Herta Rodina (bhrs-herta@ohare.org) 740-797-7616.**



## Adopted!

**Gabriella** has a new home with bunny friend Pumpkin and lives comfortably in her spacious surroundings with Raquel and James in Columbus. ♥ **Shorty** now resides with Amy Carpenter and her family in Toledo. ♥ **Jacki** is one happy bunny in her new home with Jen Zavaleta and family of Bellevue. ♥ Ryan and Christina Collins were happy to add **Jilli** as a new member of their family.



# Dealing With The Loss Of A Beloved Bunny

By Rob Lovicz

We lost our very special little boy, Siggy, early in March of this year and it has pressed me to write about pet loss and to share my personal experience.

Pet loss is a very sad topic, as we all know. With rabbits, death can be very sudden and very shocking because the pet owner never expected it or even saw it coming. Rabbits are prey animals and, consequently, try to hide any illnesses they may have. This is instinctive as they wish to disguise any weakness from potential predators.

Rabbits are wondrous creatures, but they can be so very fragile. They enter our lives and become members of our families; when they pass away the grief can be equal to losing any family member. All bunny owners need to be very vigilant at all times. Keep an eye on your rabbit and pay attention to his patterns. Rabbits are habitual and follow a specific personal schedule daily: they sleep at certain times, they eat at certain times, and so forth. Any deviation from that schedule may indicate a problem or it may be nothing at all.

The signs of illness can be obvious or very subtle. If your rabbit stops eating suddenly, that is an obvious sign to take him to the veterinarian as soon as possible, as he may be entering GI stasis. The subtle signs are more difficult to spot as a potential problem and they have to be monitored carefully. A subtle sign that may indicate a problem could be a slight loss in appetite. Or perhaps your bun has become a little lethargic

compared to his or her typical behavior. When a rabbit is truly ill, it is imperative to get help as soon as possible as it may be the difference between life and death; the earlier the detection, the better the chance of preventing an untimely death.

Our bun's name was Siggy. We got him through the Buckeye HRS and he was a little older than other rabbits, somewhere between four to six years. He was so adorable he took our hearts at first glance and we had to have him no matter his age. He had the greatest personality. He would growl like a Wookiee when he was annoyed, which was absolutely hilarious. He was a great little rabbit and he seemed so healthy.

After about a year, he had an odd bout of stasis that came from absolutely nowhere. He had to go to the vet for a weekend stay, but he popped back from that very well. About nine months later, we were back at the vet for the same issue. That was a subtle sign in itself. Maybe something was wrong with Sig that was not easily detectable.

He seemed fine after that, and life went back to normal until late February of this year. Sig's eating slowed down and he was lethargic at breakfast time, which was very unusual. He started urinating all over the carpet. He was the tidiest of litter box users so we knew something was wrong. Off to the vet we went. There was slight evidence of a potential urinary tract infection, so he came home with a course of oral antibiotics.



On Friday he seemed to be regressing again and stopped eating altogether, so back to the vet he went. His doctor was obviously concerned and kept him for five long days; his progress was up and down, which was worrying in itself. We finally got him back on the following Wednesday and he seemed better. He was eating and his eyes looked bright. Thursday was an up and down day. It started poorly since Sig would not eat or go to the litter box, but by Thursday night he was eating again and actually using his box. When we fed him Friday morning, he seemed better and I saw reasonable amounts of feces in his litter box. We went to work hopeful that he was making a turn for the better.



and we were with him until his last breath. I was grief stricken.

Two Wednesdays before he seemed a happy healthy bunny and ten days later he was gone. It was too fast for me to comprehend at first. Then I thought back and looked for the subtle signs we missed. One thing I did note is that Sig gained almost a pound in six months. That was very odd as we did not feed him that much. This whole problem was first thought to be a urinary infection and in reality may have been a much more serious condition that was not detectable by standard testing, but we will never know. Sig even had an ultrasound that came up clear.

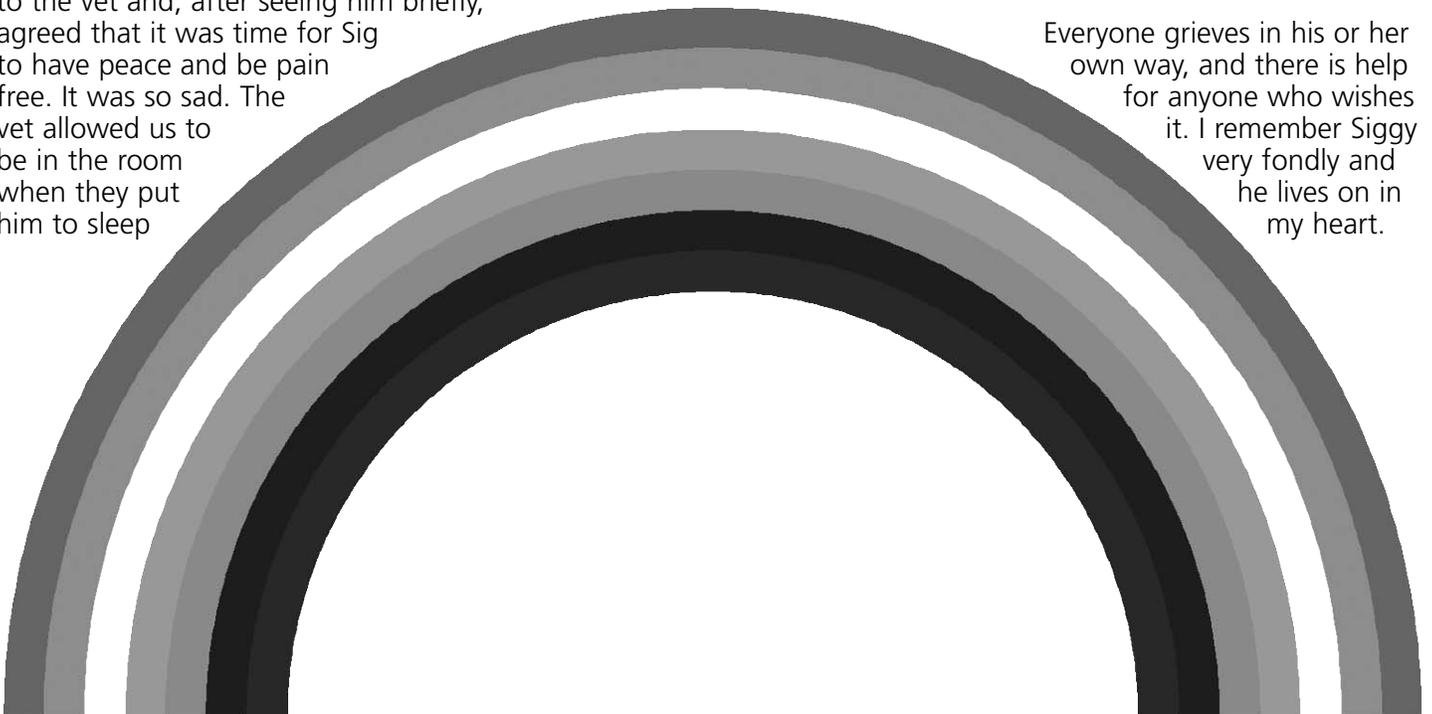
The most important lesson during these tragic events is not to be too harsh with yourself for missing something that may or may not have saved your rabbit. Do not second guess yourself. I have had four rabbits now; this one caught me by total surprise and I know most of the telltale danger signs. Again, rabbits are fragile and are astute at disguising their pain. It is important to always remember that you gave your little bunny friend a great life and that you both have grown from your experiences together. Think of the happy times that brightened your life.

There are some great sites that help with the loss of a bunny through information, posting pages, and grief chat rooms. A couple of these are:

- [www.rainbowbridge.com](http://www.rainbowbridge.com)
- [www.petloss.com](http://www.petloss.com)

Tragedy struck when my wife came home from work. Sig had terrible diarrhea everywhere and was lying in it. She couldn't get him to move and he was teeth grinding in terrible pain. He did move to hide, as rabbits do when they are gravely ill. We knew we had to make the right decision and end his ten-day rollercoaster ride. We took the miserable car trip down to the vet and, after seeing him briefly, agreed that it was time for Sig to have peace and be pain free. It was so sad. The vet allowed us to be in the room when they put him to sleep

Everyone grieves in his or her own way, and there is help for anyone who wishes it. I remember Siggy very fondly and he lives on in my heart.





# MEMBERSHIP FORM

## Your \$33.00 annual membership in the Buckeye HRS includes:

- National membership (\$18.00) and 3-4 issues of the House Rabbit Journal
  - Local membership (\$15.00) and issues of Harelines
- If you are already a national member, your local fee is \$15.00

- I would like to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help a foster rabbit (vet care, supplies)
- I would like to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_ in memory of \_\_\_\_\_.  
The grieving family receives an acknowledgment of your gracious gesture.

## I would like to volunteer to:

- Distribute information to vets
- Assist with mailing
- Help at Buckeye HRS booth at Pet Expos and fairs
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Bunnies' names and special dates \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to:**

**Buckeye**

**House Rabbit Society**

**P.O. Box 5767**

**Athens, OH 45701**

**All donations are tax-deductible.**



**Buckeye House Rabbit Society**

P.O. Box 5767

Athens, OH 45701



Buy a bunny a little time...