

Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue, Inc.

# Safe Haven Scoop

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## Questions about care?

Do you have questions about caring for your rabbit? Zoom call help available for nail trims, grooming, litter-box training, bonding, etc.

Please contact us via our [Contact form](#) if you have care question (*no medical questions, we are not vets*).

No charge.



Donate



*By Linda Tolay, SH Educator w/  
Karen Augustynowicz, Director*

# 20<sup>th</sup>

ANNIVERSARY

20 Years ago! and coincidentally 20 rabbits are what started Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue.

It was mid-winter 2003 when Karen Augustynowicz, Safe Haven's president and longest volunteer, along with Irene Findley and Barbara Bruyer, had the idea of establishing a rabbit rescue. Having already been rescuing and fostering rabbits in various ways, all three women knew there was still the need for one more.

Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue, Inc. was incorporated on May 30, 2003 and not even a year later, on February 4, 2004 became a nonprofit charitable organization, eligible to receive your monetary donations as tax-deductible contributions which are greatly needed and used to feed, spay/neuter, provide medical care, housing, litter, pen supplies, and toys (just to name a few), for all who come thru its doors.

All members of Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue are volunteers, including Karen. No member receives pay or compensation no matter how many weeks, months, or years they are part of the group. Volunteers volunteer because they want to help and make a difference which surely is something Karen has done over the past 20 years.

I wanted to interview Karen and inquire about some activities connected with running a rescue. I know every day is different and every day presents its own challenges depending on how many rabbits are in house, who needs grooming and/or medical attention, who is getting adopted and time taken for that venture, answering emails, contact forms, etc.

***Let's start with the big question, just how many rabbits have you brought thru Safe Haven's doors to date?***

- We recently consolidated our data into a more robust database; built from various sources of information we have kept over the years. It contains information about the rabbits that resided in one of our foster homes (215 rabbits to date), but it does not contain all the rabbits that "came through our doors".

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In recent years, Safe Haven has also shifted its focus from rescue/adoption to more rescue/sanctuary. Although we still do both, we find that our percentage of sanctuary rabbits is increasing each year. Currently, 42% of the rabbits we are caring for are sanctuary rabbits.

Many times, we took in large groups of rabbits, only to re-locate them to other rescues, often within a few days or weeks. Those groups are not included in our database or counted. I would guesstimate a “through the doors count” at 350 plus.

***Did you ever think Safe Haven would be celebrating a 20th year anniversary?***

- I didn't think that far in the future, I guess. I just knew that there were an overwhelming number of rabbits that were being abandoned by owners or overbred by breeders. There were not many rabbit rescues in NJ and the ones that did exist were always filled beyond capacity. You'll read about my experiences of being a first-time rabbit owner further down in this article. That experience and my first bunny Emily really were all the inspiration I needed.

***When Safe Haven started with 20 rabbits where did they come from?***

- The same issues that exist today also existed 20 years ago. Some of our first rescues were rabbits that had been abandoned on Garrett Mountain and rescued by Irene Findley. Some were in a shelter that did not have the facilities to keep them. Some were owner surrenders that were no longer wanted, were moving, didn't have the time, or someone in the family had allergies. Sadly, none of those problems have gone away. They have just increased.

***Why do some rabbits call Safe Haven their forever home?***

- Rabbits who are not eligible for adoption, either due to health, age or temperament, always have a place in one of our foster homes to live out their lives peacefully as sanctuary bunnies. Some rabbits, with no health problems, get overlooked by adopters just because they are the wrong color or are too big. We have had rabbits returned to us when illnesses or disabilities arose.

Thankfully though, we have had a few adopters who were up to the challenge of adopting a rabbit with dental or personality issues or wanted a rabbit that no one else wanted. Those are the ones that renew ones faith.

***Over the years how many bunnies became sanctuary bunnies and who has been the longest resident?***

Forty-two (42) rabbits reached sanctuary status and were never adopted (19%). The one earning top honors for our longest resident is Danny.




Danny was rescued 10/24/2008. He was part of a large group confiscated by the NJSPCA from an owner who let breeding get out of control. Safe Haven took 15 from that group, relocating all but the one who was most injured. After recovery, Danny was adopted in 2009 but was returned to us just four months later. Dan

Danny is still with us. Still doing well. Eats on his own like a champ. He is receiving monthly acupuncture treatments which help with old age creaks.

***And, we are looking forward to celebrating his 15<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 24th, 2023!***

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Second longest resident honors goes to LiAnne. Rescued 4/10/2005, LiAnne was rescued from the group on Garrett mountain by Irene. LiAnne tested high positive for e.cuniculi early on and had respiratory issues most of her life.

LiAnne was a beautiful blue-eyed Dutch lady. She loved to eat and toward the end of her life would gobble down critical care “meatballs” faster than you could put them down for her .

LiAnne left us on 7/20/2018; 2 months shy of her given 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. She had been a Safe Haven sanctuary bunny for 13 yrs. 3 months.

### *Which rabbit gave you the most challenge and why?*

- I would have a very hard time narrowing that down to just one rabbit. Rabbits are challenging even on their good days. That is what makes them so interesting. We have multiple with medical issues, but to avoid a novel here, I’ll quickly mention just two.

Safe Haven also tends to take in the neediest of rabbits. Particularly when responding to large group situations where multiple rescues are involved. Danny, mentioned above, became a Safe Haven foster due to his bite injuries pointed out to me by the NJSPCA.

**Ursula**, a part of the 2016 Hampton hoarder case, was first taken in by another rescuer, but became a Safe Haven foster when her large jaw abscess and attitude could have doomed her to immediate euthanasia. Instead, I took her to our vet for a second opinion. In addition to the obvious jaw abscess, a large uterine mass was also felt. Surgery later found that to be an abscessed uterus along with large ovarian abscesses. After multiple surgeries, Ursula’s condition was able to be kept under control with pain meds and antibiotics for more than 6 years. She lived out her life with us as a happy rabbit until November 14, 2022.

**Hope**, another very challenging case, was taken in, 1/7/2020, when a pet store called us about a rabbit brought back to them with a huge mammary tumor on her chest. Hope was one of the sweetest rabbits we’ve ever been blessed with caring for. Along with the mammary tumor, uterine and ovarian cancer were also later found. Unfortunately, she was only with us a short time. Metastasized lung cancer claimed her on 2/16/2021. Another example of a life lost because the first owners did not have her spayed.

Both of their full stories can be found on our website Sanctuaries page.

### *What is the hardest part for you of rescuing and fostering?*

- If you ask anyone involved in any type of animal rescue, I am sure you would get the same answer. There is no getting ahead of the overwhelming need. No matter how big or small the rescue may be, there are many more animals that have to be turned away than can possibly be accommodated. Having to say no to rabbits in need is the hardest part, but it is an everyday reality.



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***On a personal note, who was your very first bunny and when and how did she/he come into your life?***

Funny thing is, it was Easter time 1999 when I started thinking about having a bunny as a pet. *I was the person I screen very thoroughly now.* I wanted to get a pet, and bunny things were all over all the stores. I saw an ad in the local paper: “Bunnies for Sale – Holland Lop or Mini-rex” and I thought “A cute little bunny would be so sweet!” I quickly got on the internet, did a little scan of the information available and called the phone number.

I knew nothing about rescues or adopting, I just saw all the ads for bunnies for sale. I went to a chain pet store, got a cage and a few supplies, and headed off to pick out a bunny. The house was only a few miles from where I still live. A backyard breeder who had rabbits outside in hutches. At least from what I had read on-line, I knew I would keep her in the house. When I mentioned that to the woman selling the bunnies, she laughed “only if you want to live in a barn”.

She asked me if I was interested in a lop or rex. Since I didn’t even know the difference, I said I wanted a bunny that likes to be held. She handed me a little gray and white mini-rex and said “this one will be good”. Within 2 seconds, I was in love with her and asked how much. I paid my \$10 and off I went with my new best friend. I wasn’t given any care information or recommendations of what she would need. She only told me that she was selling her was because she got into a fight with her mother and they could not stay in the same hutch.

I had found the House Rabbit Society website, so at least I knew this little bunny was not going to be outside in a hutch. She would be in the house and treated like a princess. At just 5 months old, I quickly learned that her hormones were in full swing. She was much more rambunctious than I had ever imagined!

Luckily, I found a little pet store on Rt. 31 named Country Pet Specialties (now in Lebanon Plaza). The owner, Alice Shope was my first source of sensible house rabbit care. I vividly remember our conversation about the cage I had for Emily. She pointed out all the issues and helped me quickly figure out other options. Alice was a fountain of rabbit care knowledge. I also joined Etherbun; an on-line listserve for house rabbit owners that to this day is still active and an excellent resource. It was there that I met Carol Manos who became another mentor and friend. Carol was a fosterer for NJHRS and introduced me to the world of rabbit rescue in 1999.



Emily shared her life with me for almost 13 years. She was my greatest teacher. She took over the house and my life. She taught me the importance of educating oneself about rabbits—it seemed she was always trying to outsmart me. She was a joy to have around and I wanted to share that joy with others. The commitment to the rescue and sharing what I have learned with others comes directly from Emily—my inspiration for it all.

## *In Appreciation.....*

*by Karen Augustynowicz, Safe Haven President & Director*

As director of Safe Haven, I'd like to express my appreciation and thankfulness to each and every volunteer who has helped along the way; whether that be for one day, one event, one rabbit or for many days, many events and many rabbits.

Safe Haven volunteers have touched many lives; both human and rabbit and have brightened the future of those rabbits by educating adopters and sharing their enthusiasm about them with anyone who will listen. Although the pandemic and the RHDV2 virus have impacted the way we now need to do things, the needs of 20 years ago are basically still the same today. Rabbits still need rescuing, vet care and daily care, owners still need educating, and fundraising still has to happen to keep the rescue running.

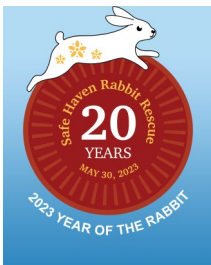
The work of Safe Haven is made possible entirely through your donations and fundraising participation, and the dedication of our volunteers. While I can't list all those who have helped over the years, you know you all have my gratitude. I do want to recognize our current core volunteers and officers: **Gail Petersen, Treasurer, Michelle Manderski, Secretary, Yumi Nakayama, Jacqueline Crown, Astrid Hesse. Linda Torlay, Bill Mack and Emiliya Shotwell.**

*I thank them for their dedication and thank you for your continued support.*

### *Ways to help .....*

#### **Celebrate with Us!**

Special thanks to **Laura Colon**, graphic artist, who designed this super logo just for our 20th Anniversary!



Coincidentally, 2023 is also the Year of the Rabbit! Laura also created our Bun-nanza logo and has adopted 3 rabbits from Safe Haven!

We love it! And, we hope you will love it too!



We've created a BonFire campaign so you can purchase T-Shirts (short or long sleeve) or sweatshirts in your favorite color! Adult and youth sizes available. Shirts are available in multiple colors. Pick your favorite!

**[Order yours Today!](#)**

**The Bunnies Thank You in Advance!**

#### **Details coming soon!**

This event was so exciting last year! We hope you will join us this year!

Join us and compete in the 4th Annual Goat Games — hosted by Catskill Animal Sanctuary.

*Friday, August 11 -  
Monday, August 14th, 2023*

RSVP deadline April 15th

The Goat Games empowers anyone, anywhere to be a champion for rescued farmed animals.

**CATSKILL**  
Animal Sanctuary

## Adoptables

*A few of the bunnies looking for their forever home.*



**Luke** and his siblings were stow-a-ways when their Momma was rescued. Born July 1, 2023, Luke is ready to find his forever home.

Luke is excellent with his litter box skills, and loves to eat! He has been fine with his rugs so far. He does like to zoom around and appreciates the traction they give him. He is a very sweet guy and loves attention and pets. Last weigh-in he was 8.8 lbs.

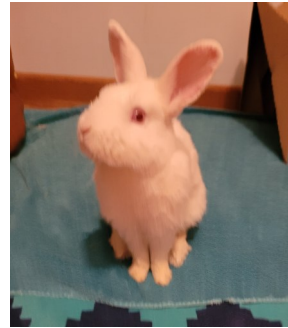


**Ayden**, is the biggest of Luke's siblings, born July 1, 2023. If you love the bigger, teddy bear bunnies, Ayden is your boy! Ayden is excellent with his litter

box skills, and loves his hay.

He and brother Luke are almost identical, but Ayden is just a little bigger at 9.8 lbs.

Both boys love to be petted and are comfortable with being picked up. Ayden is not kind to rugs, so he needs lots of cardboard flooring.



One of the 192 hoarder bunnies taken in by Griffin Pond Shelter. **Tate** suffered multiple bite wounds on his back, side and head.

His bite wounds are all healed now. And is showing he is a really

sweet little guy.

Tate is excellent with using his litterbox. Not a fan of being picked up or held, but he is getting more comfortable with proper handling and time. We gave Tate a birthdate of 5/29/22. Weight 4 lbs.



Maddie is happy, healthy, spayed and ready to find a permanent home.

Given a birthday of March 1, 2021. She is excellent with her litterbox and a great hay eater. She loves attention and pets.

A uniquely marked harlequin, one side of her face is orange while the other is black - which is adorable! Maddie loves pets and attention, but really does not have time to sit on your lap. There is just too much to do and investigate. Maddie will run over to see you when you walk by her pen. Just hoping for a pet or maybe a treat. Maddie weighs just over 5 lbs.

All adoptable rabbits are spayed/neutered, litterbox trained and vaccinated against RHDV2. To apply, read through our adoption [policy](#) and fill out our [application](#).

★ *Educational Corner* ★  
by Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator



Foxtail is a common grassy weed named for its 'fox like tail' heads. It is found all throughout the world and considered invasive. It grows in all soil conditions, varying climate conditions, and can be an annual or perennial plant.



There are many varieties of the grass and all have seeds heads that are barbed. The individual barbed seed is called an awn. The most noxious variety of foxtail come from the *Setaria* group which literally derives from the Latin word *seta* meaning 'bristle or hair' referring to the bristly spiked seeds in the head. The barbed seeds help transport and disperse the seeds by clinging to wildlife (and people) that brush up against them thus spreading more foxtail.

So why I am writing about a plant when the newsletter is about rabbits?

A few months ago, I opened a box of hay ordered from a reputable supplier and noticed throughout the hay were foxtail seeds. Knowing the danger to my bunnies of not only ingesting barbed seeds but too having a seed that could lodge in sensitive paws or other parts of their bodies, I took photos, contacted the company, and was refunded my purchase price. I was not going to take any chances and tossed the box of hay out for trash.

Foxtail is dangerous to bunnies and to all animals. A barbed seed can puncture and lodge in skin or get trapped in the nasal cavity, mouth/gums, ear canals, digestive track, or scratch an eye. If a lodged seed is left untreated it can cause infections/abscesses or worse. Even lightly lodged seeds when removed can still leave barbed remnants to fester.



Foxtail is not a poisonous plant but the seeds heads are a threat and exposing my rabbit to them is not a chance I'm willing to take.

Foxtail looks a lot like Timothy hay before and after it develops a seed head and therefore can be overlooked when harvesting hay which is why it is important to inspect the hay you feed to your bunnies and not assume all is well. Timothy hay seeds have no awns and are soft to the touch. Foxtail on the other hand feels sharp and jagged because of the barbs and tends to 'catch' on you.



Timothy      Foxtail

## Did You Know...

By Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator



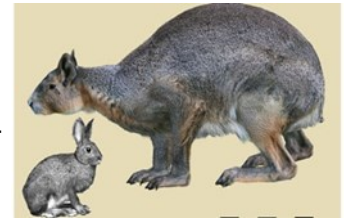
**Did You Know** the oldest, most complete skeleton of an ancestor to today's rabbit is about 55 million years old?

Gomphos Elkema, found in the Mongolian Gobi Desert, is the oldest descendant of a rabbit found. This ancient animal had large hind feet and theorized to have hopped. Unlike today's rabbit it had a big long tail and teeth that were more like that of a squirrel.

Fossil evidence is subjective and leads to some uncertainty as to when modern day rabbits first evolved. Some believe the rabbit started evolving before the great extinction which took place about 65 million years ago that wiped out the dinosaurs and others feel they evolved after.

Tiny foot bones found in Gujarat, India that are about 53 million years old are even more closely related to today's rabbit. The bones found in India are classified as Lagomorpha which today's rabbit is believed to have evolved from. That creature was tiny, about the size of a hamster and weighing less than ½ lb.

Nuralagus Rex (King of the Rabbits) is the biggest prehistoric fossil of an ancient rabbit and was found on the island of Minorca which is part of the Balearic Islands of Spain. Now extinct and dated to have lived 3 to 5 million years ago this large rabbit ancestor weighed an average of 26 lbs. Based on its skeletal structure it is not believed to have hopped but rather lumbered around like a beaver. Because it evolved on an island its characteristics evolved to fit its environment. It is believed to have dug for roots and such to eat, had smaller eyes and ears, and short legs.



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The above article is a perfect reminder to be sure your rabbit is up-to-date with RHDV2 vaccinations.

*Remember they need a Yearly Booster!*

Avoid extinction!!





*Happy Spring!!*



*Need a bunny themed gift? Check out our [On-line Store!](#)*



Many of the items are handmade or created just to help the bunnies of Safe Haven. Just in time to help you find that unique present or buy a special gift for yourself.

*All proceeds go directly toward caring for our foster & sanctuary bunnies!*

*[Go to Store!](#)*

*Take care - We'll be in touch soon!!*