



P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102



Dedicated to educating the public and to fostering and adoption of companion rabbits. 781-431-1211 or www.rabbitnetwork.org.

RABBIT TRACKS

Fall 2003

- The Andover
Rabbit Wrangle 2
- Taming The
Aggressive Rabbit. . . . 4
- In The Spotlight: HRN's
Sponsorship Program . . 5

Plus: Membership, Volunteer
Opportunities, HRN News and Views



The Andover Rabbit Wrangle

By HRN Writers. It—the rabbit wrangling saga—all started with a phone call to the HRN hotline. According to the caller, the following scenario had occurred. While watching children play softball at an Andover baseball field, some parents observed an unidentified man at the field's periphery releasing about a dozen pet rabbits to uncertain fates. Responding quickly, several adults were able to rescue six rabbits by grabbing the disoriented individuals. The caller wanted to know where she could have the rabbits spayed and neutered. She also asked numerous questions about two females who were both visibly pregnant.

The saga continued with a close-following second phone call to the hotline. This one, from a different Andover citizen, was about the same herd of dumped rabbits. The caller had managed to rescue yet another rabbit and place it in a home. She mentioned that someone else had been able to round up two more. At the end of her message, she asked, "Does your organization want to help?"

Typically, HRN works directly with local animal shelters, taking their rabbits and placing them in our network of foster homes. Therefore, this type of request is rather "beyond the call to duty" as it creates an unexpected surge in rabbits needing placement in foster care. Foster homes don't normally have empty pens, so surprises such as this compel foster homes to extend

themselves beyond regular capacity. However, HRN is a community-focused organization dedicated to bettering the lives of all house rabbits, so when I answered the call about the dumped rabbits, it was with a deliberate, "Yes, we will."

Now that the commitment to assist was made, I raced my daughter up to her riding lesson, picked up Teresa (another HRN volunteer), and headed over to the Andover park. What we saw amazed and saddened us. One rabbit was hiding under a huge garbage dumpster. Two others, a small cream-colored dwarf rabbit and a black mini-lop,



Parker

were romping freely in a heavily wooded area. We were told there was a fourth black rabbit, somewhat of a loner, who was not in sight. After assessing the situation, we concentrated on capturing the dwarf/mini-lop pair. A group of parents joined the rescue attempt, and after some heated chasing and herding, we caught the cream-colored dwarf rabbit under

a blanket. I named him Parker. Friendly? Absolutely. He had one dog tick on him and a few small wounds, but considering his situation, he was in decent shape and had a great disposition.

That evening, I returned home with Parker, but I couldn't get the other rabbit off my mind. I didn't know for whom I felt worse: Parker, without his friend in a strange place, or the black mini-lop, now alone in the woods without Parker. I returned to the field early the next morning (I couldn't sleep for worrying). The black mini-lop was on the side of the field, munching on dewy grass. There were bags of carrots and loose bananas scattered about, left by concerned parents. Alone, I could do nothing, except to toss a few carrots toward the tentative rabbit.

On the following evening, a group of us returned to the field, this time equipped with carriers, pens, blankets, and more food. We were able to surround the area where the black mini-lop was now located, under one of the dugouts, with a metal pen. Naturally, there had to be complications: baseball players arrived for the evening game and needed their dugout—and it began to rain. When the rain began to fall heavily, several volunteers left. Who could blame them? But I just had this feeling, so I stood with a comforter over my head, talking to the players' parents, waiting, apologizing for any inconvenience. Suddenly, out from under the dugout came the little black mini-lop.

She gave no fight, unlike her friend Parker. I felt she sensed our help was salvation, not capture. I scooted her into a carrier and took her home, where I named her Hanna.

The HRN hotline phone continued to ring. A third caller asked if we were going after the remaining rabbits. So in response, another volunteer group formed, consisting of HRN members Carol, Suzanne, Suzanne's husband Gary, Dina, my daughter Laura, her friend Tamra, several others from the original Andover rescue party, and myself. Again, we penned in the dugout area and waited. Emerging from under the dugout into our expectant arms appeared Greta, who was promptly taken home by Carol.

And then came the last call. The fourth and final rabbit had been spotted again – the solitary black bunny. Suzanne and Gary undertook that rescue, and miraculously went home with Blackie.



Hanna and her babies

And so ended the Andover rabbit wrangle. From what we can determine, all the rabbits have been rescued and treated, and are safe in permanent or foster homes.

What an accomplishment!

Unfortunately, no one was able to finger the man who thought that domestic pet rabbits were suited to a feral life in Andover's woods.

Parker was quickly adopted by a family who reports that he oft times shares a playpen with their young daughter. He is enjoying the loving attention that he so rightly deserves. (Parker was not bonded to Hanna, his friend from the woods, so he was OK being adopted out on his own.)

Hanna has had a harder time of it. She was pregnant at the time of her rescue, and has since delivered a litter of seven, of which she lost two. She then underwent two surgical procedures to remove a toe compromised by a viral infection caused by an insect bite. Hanna pulled through and is doing well, along with her remaining five babies.

Greta, also pregnant, delivered her litter of seven babies less than a week later. Mom and babies are all doing well and keeping their foster



parents busy. In the near future, both Hanna and Greta will undergo their spays, and when it is time, all the babies will have their spays or neuters – and everybun will be ready for adoption!

Blackie, a quiet and gentle doe, was adopted two months ago with Tamra and is now happily part of a trio.

This rabbit wrangling effort has been quite a lot of work, especially for the foster homes (I am one; Carol the other) who weren't expecting to accommodate pregnant does. Days spent standing in the rain, multiple vet visits, countless trips to the market to feed ravenous babies, and endless litterbox changings...Would I do it again? In a heartbeat.

Want to help? You can help defray the costs associated with this rabbit rescue! Please send a donation (check made payable to *House Rabbit Network*) to:

House Rabbit Network

P.O. Box 2602

Woburn, MA 01801



Taming the Aggressive Rabbit

By Suzanne Trayhan. Most people have a preconceived notion of rabbits as cute and cuddly creatures that crave their owner's affections. While this may be true with some rabbits, they do have a wide variety of personalities. In fact, some can be aggressive, exhibiting behaviors such as lunging, grunting and sometimes even biting people. Most owners will label these rabbits as mean or aggressive. With time and patience, these rabbits can be worked with and will overcome many of their bad behaviors. I am not going to state that all will become sweet lovable buns, but they can become nice members of your family.

First things first. If your rabbit has not already been spayed or neutered, then get him or her fixed. Many rabbits have raging hormones that can turn them into little demons. Remove the hormones (through altering your rabbit), give some gentle touches, and you can turn an aggressive or territorial rabbit into a love that seeks out attention. A prime example of this is a foster rabbit named Lucky. She came in as a rather grumpy bun who loved to growl and lunge at you. Lucky was immediately spayed. Every day I would go by her cage, ignore her grunts, and just start petting her. She quickly decided that she enjoyed being petted and would lower her head to receive pets. The funny part is that she learned to grunt in order to get me to pet her.

I am always in favor of petting an aggressive rabbit, ignoring their

moods, sounds and lunges.

However, there is a right and a wrong way to do this. You want to be safe and minimize any biting. Some people wear thick gloves when they are first approaching a tough bun. This will help protect you if you get bitten. Once your confidence is up, you can probably do without them. Since rabbits lunge and bite forward, the trick to petting an aggressive bun is to approach their head from above. I place my hand directly above their head and then move it straight down onto the ears. I gently press their head down, and will stroke the forehead with my thumb. If this works out well, I will stroke the forehead with several fingers and rub the base of their ears. Remember to always keep your hand behind the mouth. If the bun resists or tries to lunge up at you – don't act timid and back off. Firmly tell them "NO", and gently press their head to the floor. Do this several times each day. While you want to pet them, don't pet them for too long. You want them to start liking it, but leave them wanting more.

Now that you have mastered this, it is important to understand the behaviors that you are seeing. Some rabbits don't trust humans and will react to any action by a person. Others have a "trigger" which activates the behavior. They typically are just being protective. For example, some buns love their humans but they just don't want anyone to touch

their food or litterbox. Others are fine outside a cage, but don't want anyone in their cage. If you can determine the "trigger", it is easier to work with the bun. When I have a rabbit that is possessive about their food, rather than fight them over the food dish, I distract them. With my left hand I start petting them, and then with my right hand I put food in their dish. If your rabbit doesn't like you touching the litter box, then clean the cage when he is outside playing. Some rabbits react to the scent of another bunny. If that happens, make sure you wash your hands and possibly change your shirt before approaching your rabbit's cage. Try to minimize acts which will trigger the aggressive behavior.

If your rabbit is just generally aggressive, you should try to get your rabbit used to you. Every time I walk by the cage I talk to the rabbit in a calm, soothing voice. You can even sit next to the cage and read a book out loud. This will enable your rabbit to listen to your voice for a period of time. Give them some treats in a safe manner (such as through the cage wires) so that they associate you with good things.

Sometimes we get phone calls from people complaining that their rabbit is biting. However, in some cases the owner does not understand what is happening. Rabbits have a bite and a nip. A bite is a hard chomp. The teeth are wide apart, and they often break the skin. A nip is really just a small pinch, although

sometimes you can get a tiny bruise from it. When rabbits nip, it is often a way to communicate with each other, and rabbits will nip their owners in the same manner. Sometimes they want you to move, to put them down, or even just to pet them. The important thing to realize is that your bunny isn't being mean, they just don't understand that a nip, which doesn't hurt other rabbits with their fur coats, does hurt a human. If you receive a nip, cry out, "Ouch!". Your bunny will learn that it hurts you.

While there are rabbits that are aggressive, others we receive just haven't been socialized well.

They won't lunge or growl, but they seem to quiver if you go to touch them. It is clear that they are afraid. With these rabbits I try to talk to them in a soft voice. I will slowly approach with my hand and often I will start out gently stroking with one finger. After several days with one finger, I will progress and stroke with two fingers, gradually increasing the amount of fingers, pressure, and time that I pet them. It is very important with these rabbits to always be gentle and to always use a calm, soothing voice.

Another alternative is to try a holistic approach such as TTouch or reiki. These practices can have a calming

effect on your rabbit, allowing you to work with them and develop more of a relationship. You can get more information about these at <http://www.ttouch.com> and <http://www.reiki.com>.

Most important of all, love your rabbit. Be consistent, be patient, and be willing to work with your bunny. You will not notice improvements over days, but will see them over months and years. I have seen many rabbits transformed over time.



In the Spotlight: HRN's Sponsorship Program

By Christine Bennett. House Rabbit Network's mission is to better the lives of house rabbits through fostering, adoption, and education. We also promote volunteer opportunities to involve the community at large. One way HRN encourages broad-based volunteer efforts is through its Sponsorship Program.

In our network of foster homes, HRN cares for several rabbits who have incurred extra expenses due to special surgeries or complex medical conditions. Such expenses can be difficult to shoulder; therefore HRN implemented the Sponsorship Program to help defray these particular veterinary expenses. For some rabbits we are looking to raise a sum of money to pay for outstanding vet bills. For others,

who require ongoing care, HRN is looking for assistance with the cost of monthly expenses.

For some people, sponsorship is the ideal volunteer opportunity, as they can directly affect the quality of life for an individual rabbit. Sponsorship is flexible: people can choose to sponsor a rabbit in full or in part. Sponsors also have the option to give on a basis that suits them — a one-time donation, monthly contributions, or even quarterly submissions. All donations are tax deductible. Sponsorship is a wonderful way to work closely with HRN to further our mission.

For each of the rabbits on the website who are eligible for sponsorship, HRN provides a synopsis of the individual, their medical situation, and a financial goal based on their expenses. Potential sponsors can review the rabbits and select the individual they wish to help. Some rabbits



Bunner is the lucky (sponsored) rabbit

have more than one sponsor, which is fine as some really need that extra support! Sponsors will receive regular updates about their chosen rabbit and will have their name appear on the HRN website with their bun. Sponsors may of course opt to remain anonymous if they prefer.

To personalize the HRN Sponsorship Program, we are delighted to spotlight a lucky bunny recipient, Bunner, and one of his special sponsors, Amelia Cook. (Bunner is also sponsored by Sarah Whitney through her bunnysitting activities. Thanks to you too, Sarah!) Bunner suffered from a serious stomach blockage that required surgery, lots of medication, and a stay at Angell Memorial in Boston. Fortunately, Bunner came through like a trooper and is now healthy and was recently adopted! His medical bills came to over \$1,500, and therefore Bunner has benefited by having more than one sponsor.



Mopsy & Maggie are Amelia's bunnies; she's the sponsor

Recently I spoke with 16-year-old Amelia Cook to find out more about her and the reason she became an HRN Sponsor.

CB: *So my first question is—
Do you have rabbits yourself?*

AC: Yes, I do. I have a bonded pair Mopsy and Maggie. I adopted Mopsy from the MSPCA in Jamaica Plain. He is a gray angora dwarf. We just celebrated his fourth birthday; the shelter knew his exact birthday from his previous owners. Maggie is silver grey and white; she was born at the ARL Boston shelter and is just over six months old.

CB: *What spurred your interest in having house rabbits?*

AC: I attended a boarding school that had a farm. I took care of the rabbit there, as well as the sheep and goats. That was my first experience with rabbits. When I got home, I really wanted my own rabbit, and to keep it indoors. I began to volunteer at the MSPCA in JP last fall. I clean cages, walk the dogs, and do whatever they need. It was there that I saw Mopsy and had to adopt him. Then I wanted a girlfriend for him, so I adopted Maggie from ARL.

CB: *How did you hear about House Rabbit Network and our Sponsorship Program?*

AC: I wanted to learn more about caring for house rabbits, so I found HRN on the web. While checking through the site I saw the sponsorship page and read about Bunner.

CB: *What compelled you to be a sponsor?*

AC: I believe animals should be treated equally and with respect; they are not just pets. They know a lot and we should give them more credit. I picked Bunner because he had gone through a lot and deserved the help. I started with \$10, then did some bunnysitting and sent in another \$70. I'll be sending in some more in the fall.

CB: *It's so great to have you as an HRN Sponsor, and to know you're an active volunteer bettering animal welfare—in many ways. Thank you!*

AC: Thank you. I'm glad to be Bunner's sponsor. I encouraged one friend to adopt her own rabbit and another friend to become a volunteer.

If you would like to become a sponsor, please visit the HRN website www.rabbitnetwork.org.



Bun of the Month: Belle



Belle is a pretty agouti lop who loves being pet; she eagerly puts her head down to soak up your attention. She is a larger girl weighing about eight pounds. She has perfect litterbox habits. Belle seems to be deaf, and thus she does not hear when people come up to her from behind. Because of this, she startles easily and can become defensive. Belle would do best in a calmer household where people can approach her and interact in a manner that accommodates her deafness. She loves to eat her pellets and enthusiastically looks for her carrot and greens at night.

Adoptable Rabbits

HRN has a wide array of single rabbits, pairs, and trios living in foster care who are eagerly awaiting their own loving families and indoor homes. All have been spayed or neutered, socialized, and litterbox trained. Visit our website at www.rabbitnetwork.org to see their pictures and learn more about them!

Successful Fundraising Events

Yankee Candle Sale a Hit



Several homes this holiday season will be graced with the aromatics of Yankee Candles given as heartfelt gifts. HRN volunteers and supporters with a passion for pillars and votives made this fall fundraiser a lucrative venture. An amazing \$3,000 of Yankee Candle products and accessories were sold, netting HRN a remarkable \$1,230 (a nearly 40% profit!). These funds will go directly to rabbit veterinary bills and needed supplies. If you missed out on participating in this Yankee Candle fundraiser, don't fret, our volunteer Jessica intends to repeat this again next year.

Winchester Starbucks Fall Rabbitfest

For a second time this year, the Starbucks in Winchester hosted an HRN fundraiser, this time on Sunday, October 19th. Despite the unforeseen raw weather, the event was successful on the adoption and education fronts, and though the cold drizzle discouraged passers by from browsing our fundraising merchandise, we still received donations! Volunteers at the HRN table chatted with several prospective adoptive families. In fact, Opus

was adopted because his new Winchester Center family specifically came to this event to learn more about HRN and our fostered rabbits!

Volunteers also met a fabulous angora rabbit, Picabo (named after Picabo Street) who came with his wonderful family just to see us. Picabo felt right at home meeting the on-site HRN foster babies Piccolo, Pumpnickel, Pistachio, and Popsicle. The tongue-twisting foursome didn't seem stressed at all by the prodding, animated under-three-foot set. In addition to disseminating the basics on house rabbit care and feeding to inquiring visitors, volunteers also advised a family on the benefits of moving their outdoor hutch rabbit indoors. Hopefully they will do just that and experience the joy of sharing space with a house rabbit! Overall, the Rabbitfest was a winner—and fun was had by all.

HRN extends its sincere thanks to Winchester Starbucks for donating space and coffee for this event! A two-paw salute to the hearty volunteers as well!

Winter Fundraisers

2004 HRN Calendars and Notecards: Perfect Gifts for Animal Lovers

Tired of using boring, nondescript calendars at work that just mark time spent in a cube? Why not perk up the joint and spread the love of house rabbits at the same time by hanging the new and

improved 2004 HRN calendar! Printed on 8.5" x 11" heavy card-stock, the spiral bound calendar features either current HRN foster rabbits or adopted alumni. A perfect foil for dull grey Dilbert walls, this colorful and functional calendar will remind you of your schedule and your support of HRN. *Now that's multitasking!* **\$12 each.**

Local artist Kelly Raver has created exquisite paintings of our members' rabbits. So that we may share her delightful art with an extended audience, the pieces have been reproduced onto notecards. Measuring about 3" x 5" each, the notecards capture the inner and outer beauty of house rabbits and their friends. *Break out of the rut of always sending email to stay in touch—send some original artwork and make somebody's day.* **\$8 for 5; \$15 for 10.** (Further ordering details on the website.)

Hop on over to www.rabbitnetwork.org and click on "Shop and Support HRN."

Volunteer Opportunities

HRN is an all-volunteer organization, **and because we do a lot**, we need volunteers interested in furthering our mission and keeping HRN running strong. We want to recruit you! Don't know how you can help? — Don't worry — we will provide training, assistance, and support. Here are a few examples of our needs:

Foster Homes

Do you have space in your home to foster rabbits until they are adopted?

Education Events

How about participating at an adoption day by "manning" our table? Share your love of house rabbits and help educate potential adopters.

Transportation

Do you have a van or truck? Help by transporting cages or hay bales, bringing rescued rabbits to a foster home or the vet, or distributing donated supplies.

Fund Raising

Do you enjoy running a fundraiser? Does hosting a yard sale put a glint in your eye? Turn your baking, babysitting, or car washing skills — or whatever you can dream up — into an HRN fund-raising activity.

Computer and Web Services

Turn your computer savvy into rabbit adoptions by updating adoptable rabbit information on internet sites such as PetFinder. Do you know HTML? Could you assist with HRN website updates?

Sound interesting? Perhaps you have a skill or interest not mentioned above that could really benefit HRN. Please contact us at info@rabbitnetwork.org or call us at (781) 431-1211 to learn more. **Thank You!**

Memorials

We all must remember that we go into loving an animal, especially a house rabbit, knowing that they will probably go ahead of us — and yet, we love them anyway. Moreover, despite the pain of loss and grief, we do it again willingly, with open, joyful hearts.

'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.
— Tennyson

If you are grieving the loss of your own companion rabbit, you may find comfort at www.petloss.com.

Barney & Hazel



It seems only befitting to honor you together, as your lives were so tightly knit. We were so blessed to share in your bond over the last four and a half years. You lived full, long lives together, and died within days of each other. If we could all enjoy such a committed bond! Our relationship started somewhat distant, and yet ended so close and tender. Barney, though you were a reclusive curmudgeon, in time, Hazel and your paralysis softened your ways, making you receptive to our heartfelt gestures. Hazel, you were always the ambadress, approaching everyone for lovin's, happily enduring the wide-eyed attention of the Under Five crowd. Your gentle ways and strong spirits are permanently

impressed upon the hearts and minds of several young children who still speak of you dearly.

*Still missing The Biggins, With love,
Christine & David, and Helena*

Jangle



We are glad you were brave enough to hang on until

you felt safe with us. Although we only knew you for a short time, we will remember your sweet, gentle nature. You are missed.

Katherine & Brian, Ralph & Alice

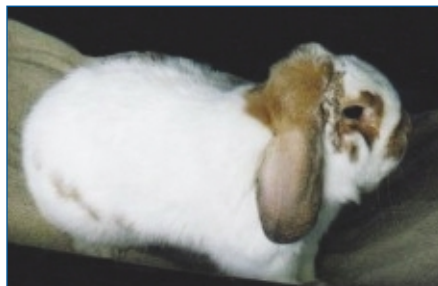
Margaret Anne Mouse



Our little Mouseketeer, with your gorgeous brown eyes and super-soft white fur, we are lost without you. We cannot watch movies without missing your warm body pressed up against us under the blankie in the cuddle chair. We miss you motor-mousing around the room and then being a mountain goat on the couches. For nearly seven years, you ruled the den your way. Your sudden departure was rather a shock, but Colby is doing his best to help us heal.

*Snuggle on, Maggie Mouse.
With our unending love,
Christine & David, and Colby*

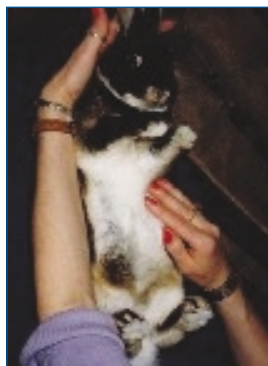
Mo



We loved your sweet, endearing, gentle nature and strong spirit; snuggling with your soft, silky fur; watching your bunny dances. Just being with you put smiles on our faces and brightened our days. We miss you dearly and hope that you are with your buddy, Thal.

*With love from Denise, Ronnie
and Auntie Andrea*

Nathan



You left us much too soon, but we still feel your spirit in our home and in our hearts.

You are missed every day by your mate Sammy and by the humans that loved you more than you could ever imagine. Rest in peace you dark handsome man bunny.

With Love, Dawn, Tom and Austin

Nestor



You sweet little angel. Our home will never be the same again without your spunky and mischievous ways. You took a piece of all our hearts when you left us so quickly, and we will never stop missing you. Keep Nathan company in Bunny Heaven. We will take care of your ladylove, Lunetta, and your best buddy Manley, who both miss you very much.

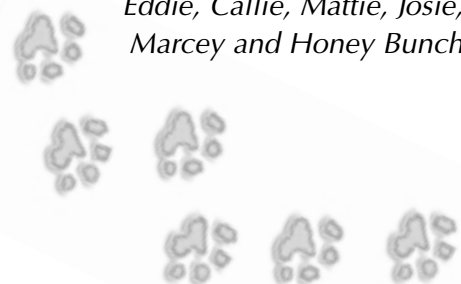
*You are forever in our hearts,
Dawn, Tom and Austin*

Walter



Walter, you sweet and feisty boy, just like the grumpy old man you were named for...how brave you were to the end! Neglected until you were nine years old, you blossomed under our love and gave back much more than you asked, charming and touching us with your sofa-time licks and snuggles. We wish we could have known you as a young bunny and given you the loving life you deserved—and now, oh, how we miss you! We hope your afterlife will be far happier than this earthly one.

*Carol, David and bunny pals
Eddie, Callie, Mattie, Josie,
Marcey and Honey Bunch*



Join HRN...or...Please Renew Your Membership

Your membership dollars will go a long way towards improving the lives of house rabbits everywhere. We thank you for your support!

House Rabbit Network does not only foster rabbits, we also foster friendship, encouragement, and community. Please become a member and join our efforts, share your strengths, and be a part of our success. You will gain something personally rewarding while helping house rabbits both within and outside of our organization.

Make 2004 a year of change — for you and for house rabbits alike!

Contact HRN at info@rabbitnetwork.org or (781) 431-1211.



House Rabbit Network Membership and Ordering Form

Your membership donation is tax deductible and will be used for medical costs (spays/neuters, vet bills) and education expenses. All members will receive a copy of our newsletter, Rabbit Tracks, when it is published. Currently, we are publishing three issues per year.

Memberships run from April 1 to March 31 (donations received in Jan.–March will be credited for the following year). To join, fill out this page and mail it with your check (payable to the House Rabbit Network) to:

**House Rabbit Network
P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102**

Choose your membership level:

- Dwarf. \$ 15.00
- Mini Lop \$ 25.00
- New Zealand \$ 50.00
- Flemish Giant. \$ 100.00
- Mix (other) \$ _____

Choose your newsletter delivery preference:

- PDF format via email (significant savings for HRN)
- Hard copy via U.S. Mail

Please send me _____ copies of *Rabbit Health in the 21st Century* at \$20.00 each \$ _____

Membership: \$ _____

Book(s): \$ _____

Other Contribution: \$ _____

Name _____

Street _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Total: \$ _____