

Featured Volunteer: Pamela Ketzal



While enjoying a walk in the park on a sunny day, have you ever stopped to gaze at those chirping friends soaring high up in the sky? Our featured volunteer for Mickaboo did more than just notice those winged pals. Despite her medical responsibilities inside a hospital, she had enjoyed nurturing birds since childhood. Our avian enthusiast for this month is Pamela Ketzal, a retired Registered Nurse from the Management Section of the San Francisco Health Department.

Pamela Ketzal started having avian pets when she was young and says, "As a child we had a parakeet, Perry - everyone in my family including our pets' first names began with a 'P'. As an adult, my first bird was a cockatiel, Mickey."

Before having her cockatiel companion, she had two feline pets until one of the cats died of old age. She never thought of having more pets after her other cat developed a seizure disorder which limited her activities, owing to the time she spent giving medications (i.e. twice a day) for her sick cat. "Well that only lasted about 6 weeks and I couldn't stand not having a companion pet, so then came Mickey," reflects Pam.

After owning a cockatiel, she was encouraged to engage with more avian companions: a tiny petite female African Grey, Kerby (16 years old); a Yellow Collared Macaw, Pablo (14 years old); an Alexandrine Parakeet, Alex (13 years old); and a Yellow Naped Amazon, Toby (11 years old). "Pablo, my rescued Yellow Collared Macaw, came to me from a pet store - that a friend worked at - when he started to mutilate his feet. I was told they couldn't have a bird which bled in the store and if I didn't take him, they might have to euthanize him. Well, of course, I took him. He is so much better now, but he still has to wear a collar when he is so anxious and when he works on his feet mostly at night. Alex is so beautiful and gentle (but very territorial in his cage). Toby is "Mr. Personality" and very talkative. Kerby makes some sound effects but never really talked except to imitate things my Mickey used to say. That is fine with me. She is so cute. She's my only female," describes Pam.



Before Pam became a regular volunteer, she acknowledges having heard about Mickaboo but never knew how it operated. She says, "I retired from my position as a management RN with the SF Health Department in 2007. I laid low for the first few years, but then I wanted to be more active when the work I was doing with a great musician friend of mine ended. My first contact with Mickaboo was at an event at Andy's Pet Shop in San Jose.

And then I met (Mickaboo's Development Director) Pamela Lee as I was buying toys. I then thought I really wanted to pursue not only volunteering to do what I could but also financially support this great organization of incredible volunteers and of course the birds. You can think, 'Oh, isn't that great?' because THOSE people are doing great work. And I realized that the great work really comes from all of us together, putting our efforts towards whatever way we can."

Pam visited the Mickaboo webpage which further fuelled her passion to extend help for rescued companion parrots and support the organization's cause. "I initially fell in love with a Severe Macaw, Chico, from the Mickaboo website. I contacted (a member of the Mickaboo macaw team) Scott Shipley but after seriously considering my housing condition (apartment), I knew I just couldn't handle another bird. It wouldn't be fair to that bird or my current birds. I then thought I would do what I could do and that was to assist with events, and do what I could with home visits and phone screens. I did two home visits with (Mickaboo volunteer) Bernice Morgan and then took the phone screen class with Virginia Scribner. Currently, I have done several of both although, there are still folks who confuse me with Pamela Lee. She is a saint, and during Mickaboo volunteer assignment discussions when I step up, they think it is her. I love being associated with her."



She reckons that her most enjoyable volunteer moments are being with the Basic Bird Care Classes at Pet Food Express in San Francisco. "I look forward to seeing (Mickaboo volunteer) Mike Reed's fostered Amazons, Cappi and Weezee. He often provides his fosters on these events and I have come to love all three of them. I also love to hear about successful adoptions and the ability of Mickaboo to take in more surrendered birds to foster homes through these classes."

For people who have not yet tried volunteering and donating with Mickaboo, Pam encourages, "If you love birds, this is the best way to put that love to work with gratifying results. I am always checking into the Mickaboo website to find those wonderful success stories of adoptions to forever homes. I am also inspired by birds with health issues or special needs, finding wonderful foster families and adoptive homes. Please know that expenses are enormous but every little bit helps. All God's creatures deserve to live healthy and satisfying lives including birds. And birds are so dang intelligent, they really know 'love' and they will love you many times back."