



Friends of Rabbits

Rabbit And Small Animal Rescue Newsletter

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Loudoun Rabbit Rescue

By Stefani M.

This year, Friends of Rabbits has taken in bunnies from four different hoarding cases. Eleven came to us from Loudoun County Animal Services (LCAS), which took in 367 animals, including rabbits, chinchillas, ducks, quail, turkeys, sheep, and other animals from a case in Aldie, Virginia. Avery, Bubba, Carolina, Cuba, Garfield, Greta, Havana, Heather, Prism, Sofee, and Tindra were brought to FoR on June 30, about 3 weeks after they were rescued by LCAS.

The bunnies (as is the case in most hoarding cases) came from outdoor enclosures with very little protection from weather or predators. Many of the Aldie bunnies had to be cut out of their wire cages because they had been in them so long they had grown too big to fit through the door. Such bunnies usually receive no medical care or attention, and do not get enough food and water. In this case, LCAS provided their initial checkups and medical treatment, but rescued bunnies usually need exams and treatment for mites, fleas, and/or ticks. Often, they have matted fur, overgrown nails, urine scald, and sometimes injuries from fighting or other animals.



Photo: Loudoun County Animal Services

Living conditions at the Aldie residence where the animals were rescued.

A lot of the bunnies FoR gets from hoarding cases are skittish and need to be socialized to trust people again, but some are friendly and playful when they come to us. Plentiful hay, fresh veggies, and a nice bowl of pellets earns a lot of goodwill fast! For those who are more timid and nervous, we are fortunate to have many experienced foster homes to help them settle in and bring them out of their shells. Sometimes a new bunny friend helps them to be brave and confident.

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Bunnacula Ball

Looking for something spooktacular to do the night before Halloween? Make plans to attend the 4th Annual Bunnacula Ball. Like last year, the festivities will be held virtually on Zoom. “We did very well last year,” said board member Mara H. “It was a good fundraiser and we had people from as far away as Australia, the U.K., and Hawaii.”

This year’s special evening will be similar to last year’s event: bunny videos, a silent auction, a small live auction, games, and bingo, to name a few. A children’s art show with a fall or Halloween theme is also planned. Similar to last year, there is no admission fee this year. All funds were raised from live and silent auctions. Last year’s ball raised \$1,455, with an additional \$489 from the companion silent auction on Facebook.

Save the Date for the 2021 Bunnacula Ball on Saturday, October 30, to be held virtually on Zoom.

Midwest BunFest

FoR is planning to have a booth at the Midwest BunFest on Oct. 23. The event, sponsored by the Ohio House Rabbit Rescue, will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Northland Performing Arts Center, 4411 Tamarack Blvd., Columbus, OH 43229. The fun-filled day to help promote bunny welfare will feature vendors, bunny rescues, animal educators, veterinarians, raffles, and everything bunny! FoR will sell shirts, pottery, sweatshirts, and jewelry.

Baby Bunny Shower

The Baby Bunny Shower was held on Zoom on May 16. One of the highlights included a children’s art show. Participants were invited to create a painting or artwork of a FoR bunny. The event also featured a gender reveal, bunny diorama contest, and a silent auction on Facebook.

‘Show Me the Bunny’ Fundraiser

Imagine sitting in your next Zoom meeting and getting photobombed by a bunny. That is what happened during the “Show Me the Bunny” fundraiser. For a \$25 donation, a participants could enjoy a “chat” session with a real bunny or receive a special bunnybomb. This fundraiser brought in over \$150.



Photos: Stefani M.



Two entries from the Children’s Art Show at the FoR Baby Bunny Shower.

Adoption Events Update

Adoptions are still taking place at Columbia HQ on the second and fourth Sunday of the month. To limit the number of people coming in, adopters must be approved and have an appointment.

FoR is talking to store managers at two new locations about hosting future adoption events: Pet Supplies Plus in Falls Church and PetSmart in Fair Lakes (Fairfax). Kai, the Falls Church Pet Supplies Plus store manager, is very excited about hosting us, as soon as the store is allowed to resume in-store adoption events. “We are also in the process of applying to become an adoption partner with PetSmart Charities,” said Mara H.

Pet Supplies Plus halted adoption events because of COVID-19. If FoR is approved, PetSmart events would be on Sundays; however, an actual date hasn’t been set as of yet. Because of COVID, “It’s a moving target,” Mara said. She also added that Bunny Spa Days have ceased and perhaps Bunny Yoga will commence next year at the Veterinary Holistic Center, in Springfield.

New Loudoun Animal Shelter Opens

Loudoun County Animal Services held a ribbon cutting ceremony on July 30 and grand opening events July 31 and August 1 to celebrate its new shelter. FoR has already become a valuable resource to the facility. FoR volunteers spoke to potential adopters and answered questions about rabbits as house pets at the Hippy-Hop Rabbit Adoption Event on June 26. The 21,450 square-foot facility, located at 42225 Adoption Drive in Leesburg, is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Sunday.

All news briefs by Melissa H.



Mara H. and John W. at the Loudoun County Adoption Event.

HQ Policy Update

By Amy S.

Friends of Rabbits headquarters in Columbia has an important new policy. The intake room will now be locked and visitors will not be able to interact with the bunnies there. Rabbits in intake are those taken in by FoR but not yet cleared for adoption. Only volunteers who are cleaning and feeding the intake rabbits will have access. This policy is for the safety of everyone — bunnies and people. Thanks to everyone for understanding this change in policy.

Dr. Kara Schoepp, Emergency Animal Hospital of Ellicott City

By Stephanie M.

Kara Schoepp, DVM, grew up “all over” — but spent her formative years on a farmette (that is, a small farm with a few cows, sheep, and horses) in rural Nevada. She recalls being inspired to become a veterinarian after reading *All Creatures Great and Small*, by James Herriot, when she was just 10 years old. “He tells the story of caring for animals in a magical and heartwarming way,” she recounts. From that point on, she knew her calling in life was to care for animals of all kinds as a veterinarian, which she has been doing for over 30 years.

Today, Dr. Schoepp is a vital partner with Friends of Rabbits (FoR). Her first encounter with FoR was related to a case in which two young male rabbits experienced complications from a routine neuter — since that initial meeting in early 2021, the partnership has grown substantially. When Dr. Schoepp is not running Emergency Animal Hospital of Ellicott City, an after-hours veterinary urgent care practice with over 20 employees, you can find her on any given Wednesday or Friday performing surgeries or providing general medical care to rescue buns. While the majority of her patients are dogs and cats, she says that more and more of her patients are rabbits. “There’s a huge underserved exotics market. And yet no one else is taking exotics,” said Dr. Schoepp. “It’s not that hard, they have the same organs as other mammals. I was happy to help.”

The three most common rabbit health issues she treats are gut stasis, infections related to upper respiratory illness aka “snuffles,” and dental problems. Her single word to the wise for rabbit owners is this: “Husbandry, husbandry, husbandry!” All three of these issues can be prevented by providing proper care — which includes an unlimited supply of high-quality hay for buns to chew on (promotes gut motility, wears teeth down), a clean uncrowded living environment (reduces stress that can trigger snuffles), and plenty of exercise (again, to promote gut motility).

A major component of Dr. Schoepp’s job is to educate people about proper care for bunnies — even a \$10 pet from the shelter or PetSmart means a lifelong commitment to providing proper physical, emotional, and medical care. “The wonderful thing about FoR is the education they provide to adopters and the individualized care they provide to their rescues,” she says.

In her elusive free time, Dr. Schoepp can be found cultivating bonds with her four loves: her horse, Evie; her two standard poodles, Madison and Izzey; her husband, Randal; and her two grown children. She lives in Frederick, Maryland, which she has called home for 25 years.



Photos: Dr. Schoepp

Dr. Schoepp with Evie, December 2020.



Gwendolyn getting treated with acupuncture for torticollis (left). Rabbit being prepping for surgery (right).

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV): Questions and Answers

By Sarah Y.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV), a highly contagious virus that infects wild and domesticated rabbits, is currently spreading in the United States. While the virus does not impact humans, it has a high fatality rate in rabbits.¹ Although no RHDV cases have been confirmed in the mid-Atlantic to date, its spread is rapid, and it may be here soon.²

What is RHDV?

Caused by a calicivirus, RHDV is thought to have originated in Europe, but the first cases were confirmed in China in 1984. Since then, RHDV cases have been confirmed in 40 countries, including the United States. The strain currently circulating in the United States and elsewhere is known as RHDV2.³ On July 8, 2021, the [USDA APHIS RHDV map](#) indicated that RHDV2 had been confirmed in 13 U.S. states — California, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Florida, and Georgia.

What are the symptoms of RHDV?

Rabbits with RHDV often exhibit no symptoms before dying suddenly. They may be found with blood-stained noses caused by internal bleeding.⁴

RHDV symptoms in rabbits include the following:

- Appetite loss
- Lethargy
- High fever
- Seizures
- Jaundice
- Bleeding from nose, mouth, or rectum
- Difficulty breathing⁵

How does RHDV spread?

Infected rabbits that survive RHDV can continue to shed the virus for at least 42 days.⁶ The virus can survive extreme heat and cold, and it can spread through direct rabbit-to-rabbit contact or indirect contact via contaminated materials.⁷ At room temperature, the virus remains stable for 3.5 months, and it can survive for 225 days at temperatures just above freezing. It also survives freeze and thaw cycles.⁸

What treatments are available?

Currently, the only treatment for RHDV infections in rabbits is isolation and supportive care. No antiviral drugs or other treatments are available.⁹ Although a vaccine exists, it is not currently licensed for use in the United States except on an emergency basis. In states with confirmed RHDV cases, veterinarians may request permission to use the vaccine from their state veterinarians.¹⁰



Know the sources of your bunny's hay and other supplies, and be sure they're taking precautions to prevent the spread of RHDV.

How can you protect your rabbits?

Because of the virus's durability, it is important to obtain feed and hay from sources that use RHDV-safe practices.¹¹ Also, because the virus affects both wild and domestic rabbits, two of the biggest threats to domestic rabbits are spending time outdoors where wild rabbits may live and being exposed to people or other pets who walk through such areas.¹² In areas with confirmed RHDV cases, experts recommend biosecurity measures to protect domestic rabbits, including these:

- Always keep rabbits indoors, with no outdoor playtime.
- If you have other pets, keep them indoors if possible. If other pets go outdoors, wash their paws before they come indoors. Don't allow other pets to go near wild rabbits, and do not feed dogs or cats foods that contain raw or freeze-dried rabbit meat.
- Leave shoes outside.
- Wash your hands before and after handling or feeding rabbits.
- Wash clothing twice after contact with rabbits from outside your household.
- [Disinfect](#) items that may be contaminated.
- Use window and door screens to keep out flies and mosquitos.
- Avoid feeding foraged plants, grasses, or tree branches.
- Quarantine any new rabbits for 30 days.
- Keep rabbits, cats, and dogs up to date on flea treatments.¹³

For more information and updates about the current RHDV outbreak in the United States, please see the House Rabbit Society's [RHDV2 information page](#).

¹ Rabbit Advocates, [RHDV2 Resources](#)

² House Rabbit Society, [Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus \(RHDV\)](#)

³ *Id.*

⁴ USDA, [Factsheet: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease](#)

⁵ Rabbit Advocates, [RHDV2 Resources](#)

⁶ House Rabbit Society, [Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus \(RHDV\)](#)

⁷ USDA, [Factsheet: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease](#)

⁸ House Rabbit Society, [Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus \(RHDV\)](#)

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ USDA, [RHDV2 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

¹¹ Rabbit Advocates, [RHDV2 Resources](#)

¹² *Id.*

¹³ House Rabbit Society, [Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus \(RHDV\)](#); Rabbit Advocates, [RHDV2 Resources](#); USDA, [Factsheet: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease](#)

Friends of Rabbits Columbia Supply Store

We fulfill all your bunny's needs!

Address: [10706 Vista Road, Columbia, MD 21044](#)

The FoR Columbia Supply Store operates primarily on a self-service basis.

Staff assistance is available at Columbia HQ
Monday through Friday 10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday* noon–5 p.m.

Please plan your shopping trip accordingly.

*Excluding Adoption Days (held the 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month)

Many supplies are also available at our Alexandria satellite store by appointment only.
Email emily@friendsofrabbits.org to inquire/schedule.

We accept purchases made with credit/debit cards, personal checks, and cash.

Payments can be made through PayPal at donations@friendsofrabbits.org.

(If you choose to pay with PayPal, please list which item(s) you purchased in the description.)



When Your Bunny Becomes An Angel

By Diana O.

On Saturday, April 24, 2021, my beloved Natalie Hope died suddenly due to an intestinal blockage at age 2. She was my whole world. It had never crossed my mind that she, the youngest of my five bunny loves, would be the first one I would have to bury. We were supposed to grow old together.

That fateful morning, she seemed withdrawn and refused to eat. That afternoon, the doctor assured me she was “not critical” but should stay there a couple of days. Just a few minutes after my sister and I left Stahl Exotic Animal Veterinary Services (SEAVS), the doctor called to say Natalie’s heart had suddenly crashed and she died!

Back at SEAVS, we sobbed uncontrollably and held her in our arms for 2 hours. I told her how much I will always love her, how I hope I had made her as happy as she had made me, how deeply sorry I was that I could not give her a longer life ...

I did not want to part with her, but when her body started to stiffen, it was time to let her go. After wrapping her in a towel, I said, “Sweet dreams my love, I hope we’ll meet again in heaven ...”

We came home in shock. Making dinner for the bunnies, I accidentally cut a carrot for Natalie and then sobbed as the horror started to sink in. Waking up the morning after her death, I had never felt emptier, knowing my baby girl was not hopping around the living room as she had been just the day before.

Four months later, life without sweet, joyous, beautiful Natalie is still incredibly hard. For those who have never experienced tragedy, I would like to share a few words ...

Treasure Every Moment

None of us know how long we have. And our bunnies are so very fragile. Savor every moment you have together.

Grieve However You Need To

I still talk to Natalie every day. “Good morning!” “I miss you and love you Natty!” “What are you up to in heaven?” “Are you being a greedy little girl chasing bananas?” Perhaps it is silly, but it makes me feel close to her.

Revel in Your Happiest Memories

Initially, the searing pain of Natalie’s final moments kept playing in my head: The last time we snuggled the night before; her last moments at home with her family; the last time I would see her alive and said, “I love you Natty, be good, see you in a bit;” how limp her lifeless body felt; what else I could have done to save her life.

But we honor loved ones by focusing on the beautiful memories and laughing about their wonderful and silly ways. Do not feel guilty or worry you are forgetting. My family reminds me that Natalie was such a carefree, happy-go-lucky girl, and she would want us to revel in the beautiful times we shared.

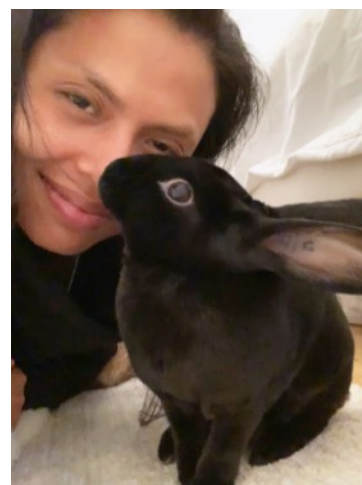
Natalie lived a short but wonderful life. She was so happy, always full of binkies, zoomies, and THE BEST FLOPS. She had toys, castles, treats, lots of fresh veggies. Most importantly, she was deeply loved and cherished. I take comfort in that. After all, what is life other than to love and be loved?

With an angel waiting for me, when my time comes, I will go gladly ... to be reunited with my sweet, precious Natalie Hope, and we shall cross the Rainbow Bridge together ...



Photos: Diana O.

“Mmmm birthday strawberries!”



“I love my Mommy!”

In Memory of Gwendolyn

By Sarah Y.

At Friends of Rabbits, the goal is always to find each rabbit a forever home. Sometimes, however, bunnies come into rescue who never get the chance to find a home. In these cases, the staff and volunteers who care for the rabbits while they're at headquarters or in their foster homes become their "families," giving them the care and unconditional love that each bunny deserves.

Such was the case with Gwendolyn, a 2-to 3-year-old English Lop who arrived at FoR from another rescue in November of 2020. Gwendolyn (also affectionately known as "Gwendy") came in with another English Lop named Merlin who was probably her brother. The two were bonded and went into foster care together, but in late November Gwendy became so sick that the buns had to be separated. She had a severe ear infection that wouldn't respond to any type of medication.

In mid-December, Gwendolyn underwent surgery to remove almost her entire inner left ear. After the surgery she was completely deaf in that ear, and she started a very slow road to recovery. At headquarters, Gwendy received a special habitat in the living room, and staff made constant modifications to it for her comfort. Despite everything she went through, Gwendy was a sweet, friendly, and loving bunny who enjoyed greeting everyone who came through the living room at headquarters.

Over the summer, Gwendolyn became well enough that staff deemed her ready to find her forever home. Sadly, before that happened, she fell ill with GI stasis in early September. The veterinarians suspected that she also had another ear infection. Despite everyone's best efforts and a 4-day hospital stay, Gwendolyn was not able to recover, and she passed away on September 3. A funeral was held for her at headquarters, and about 20 people attended.

Gwendy had many different fosters who dearly loved her and her brother Merlin (who also sadly passed earlier this year). Both knew they were loved. Even though Gwendolyn never got her forever home, everyone at headquarters loved her and gave her all the attention a bunny should have. Her sweet presence in the headquarters living room will be missed.



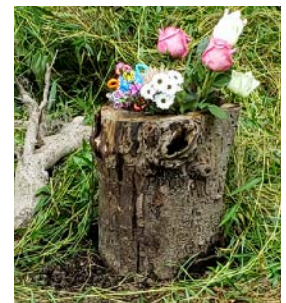
Gwendy snuggling with a fuzzy friend.



Gwendy giving a visitor a warm welcome.



About 20 people came to honor Gwendolyn at her funeral.



Gwendy received a lot of flowers.

Loudoun Rabbit Rescue Continued from p. 1

Carolina had to be treated for urine scald, snuffles, and sore hocks, but she has healed so well that she likes to run laps around her cage! Greta and Garfield are a cuddly pair who like to spend most of their days moving through hay in their litter box — or sleeping in it! Tindra and Sofee are also litterbox loungers, but they're willing to wake up if a person brings treats. All have been eager to toss around their new toys and nose through the day's selection of veggies to find the best pieces. Like all bunnies, they have their own unique personalities and so many reasons they deserve love and excellent care from forever families.

All of them have been spayed or neutered, and most are available for adoption! Check Petfinder or contact us for more information.



Sofee enjoys a nap but keeps an ear out for approaching treats.



Tindra goes into a post-salad food coma.



Garfield & Greta do everything together and like to be directly next to one another!



Carolina's serious face doesn't match her sweet personality.

Photos: Stefani M.

adoption story

A Love Story: Arabella and Huckleberry

By Diana O.

This is a tale of two nearly star-crossed lovers ...

Last December, Arabella, a 6.5 lb. sassy beauty, was found as a stray in Prince William County and rescued by the angels at Friends of Rabbits. Within a few days, 4.5 lb. Huckleberry, a sweet, handsome boy, was surrendered to the Prince William County Animal Shelter. When he arrived at FoR headquarters, his ears were chewed up.

Arabella and Huckleberry stayed in the intake room for a few weeks. They were then moved to the basement, in habitats side-by-side. They could not, however, see each other because of the cloth barriers between their habitats.

One fateful winter day last January, a volunteer noticed Huckleberry was missing from his habitat. After the volunteer alerted Stacy C., FoR operations manager, they both searched high and low for him. He was nowhere to be found, and they began to worry.

Suddenly, much to their surprise, there was Huckleberry, snuggled up with Arabella in her litter tray! Not having seen her due to the cloth barrier, he had taken a huge leap of faith and jumped off his hidey house into her space. Thankfully, there were no injuries. There were simply two peaceful buns who were starting to fall in love ...

Because FoR policy is to keep single buns single to increase their chances of adoption, Prince Charming was put back in his own habitat. When Stacy relayed this story to fellow bun expert Jeanine, Jeanine said, "That's a natural bond!" But, alas, it was not quite the bunnies' time yet, and both went to separate foster homes.

As luck would have it, their foster parents, Sam and Courtney, live close to each other in Washington D.C. They carpooled on some adoption days. At Jeanine's and Stacy's urging to bring the lovers together, Susan W. agreed to make an exception from FoR policy to bond them. Success was not necessarily a given because several weeks had passed since Huckleberry took his leap of faith for love.

The rest, as they say, is history. The two bonded beautifully, and Sam fostered the lovers.

Then, on June 29, it was official — Arabella and Huckleberry found their forever home with Cory, who adopted them together. This love was meant to be, and they now live happily ever after with their Mom Cory in Potomac, Maryland. Isn't true love a beautiful thing?

classifieds

Bunnysitting (“bunsitting”)

By Wendy W.

Many bunparents find themselves in situations in which they need buncare: vacations, hospitalizations, business travel, home repairs, even deployments.

We are happy to be able to provide bunsitting as follows:

- At Columbia HQ, we can accommodate five bunsitting reservations.
- In Northern Virginia, DC, and some areas of Maryland (primarily Howard and Montgomery counties), we have some volunteers who bunsit in their homes.

Over the summer, we were inundated by an extraordinary number of people wanting to use this service, taking in more than the optimum number of rabbits. Even using volunteers, we had to refuse some requests — some from regulars who in the past could make last-minute plans to go away for the weekend.

The important thing to remember is planning. Our resources are limited, and we often fill up our available spaces. Already we have weeks in the fall and winter that are at max capacity at Columbia HQ.

If you are planning a trip, please contact us as soon as you know the dates. If you have an emergency, we will do what we can. If you decide to go away at the last minute, please know that we may have to say, “Sorry, no room.”

How do you get on the calendar? It’s easy: **Send an email to info@friendsofrabbits.org with “bunsitting” and the dates in the subject line;** for example: “Bunsitting Feb 10–15.” In your email, please indicate your preferred bunsitting location as well as your location; for example: “Columbia HQ — we live in Laurel.” This latter example helps if Columbia HQ is full yet we have a Laurel volunteer who is willing to take care of your bunny.

If you’d like to be a volunteer bunsitter, email with “bunsitting volunteer (city state)” in the subject line. We’ll be in touch!

bunny personals

by Sarah Y.



Chad

I never knew rabbits could have human friends until I came to Friends of Rabbits. Before, I was in a bad place with too many bunnies and nobody to take care of me. My fur got tangled and matted, and it hurt. Then I came here, and the nice people groomed me and gave me a clean place to live with fresh food and water. My fur is growing back, and I’m starting to see that people can keep me safe. If you give me a chance to trust you, I’ll be your friend forever.

Chad is one of five rabbits that FoR rescued from a Virginia Beach hoarding situation. He’s a Jersey Wooly/Rex mix, about 1 to 2 years old. He’s friendly and playful and is doing well adjusting to being around people and being handled.

upcoming events

Adoption Days at Columbia HQ

2nd and 4th Sunday of the month — email

info@friendsofrabbits.org for more information and to schedule a particular rabbit for a bunny speed date.

FoR Grooming and Adoption Days!

4th Sunday of the month

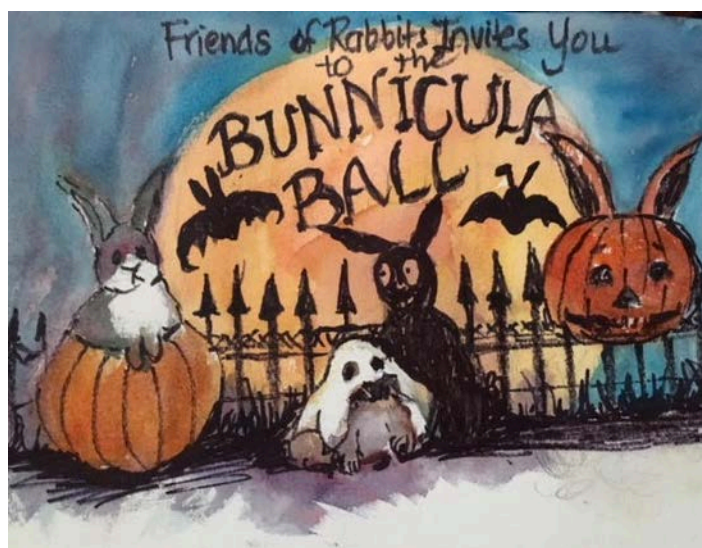
At FoR Adoption Days, Columbia HQ also offers grooming services and nail trims. Please email info@friendsofrabbits.org to schedule an appointment! Walk-ins are welcome, but you could experience a long wait time. A nail trim costs \$12. Grooming (brushing, scent gland cleaning, etc.) is an additional \$12.50 per hour, and an extra charge may apply for removing mats or shaving. All fees are per rabbit.

Adoption Events in Virginia

TBD- Monthly events at the Pet Supplies Plus in Falls Church

Bunnacula Ball

Saturday October 30, via Zoom.



Columbia HQ Hours

Monday–Friday: 10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Saturday: noon–5:00 p.m.

Sunday: noon–5:00 p.m.*

Hairs for Hares Fundraiser

Three awesome volunteers — our Operations Manager Stacy, Board Member Stefani, and HQ Volunteer/Petfinder Manager Marisa — will each cut off 1 inch of their lovely tresses for every \$200 donated to their favorite cause. Join in the fun, and help us raise \$6,000 to pay our veterinary bills for all our wonderful bunnies!

[Donate here](#)

Stacy will cut off 1" of her hair (up to 12") for each \$200 raised for Loudoun County bunnies (see story on page 1).

Marisa will cut off 1" of her hair (up to 6") for each \$200 raised for our amputee bunnies.

Stefani will cut off 1" of her hair (up to 12") for each \$200 raised to pay for vet bills for special needs bunnies.



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