



Top, Cindy Stutts talking to attendees. Middle, Marianne DeMarco of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary adopted Ruby. Bottom, Pepe, who was adopted as a partner bunny. Below, banner of the event.

Whiskers in Wonderland: A Holiday Success

By Natalie L. Reeves

Christmas came early for seven of New York City's shelter bunnies who found homes at the Whiskers in Wonderland event held Dec. 18 and 19.

Whiskers in Wonderland, an adoption event co-sponsored by Best Friends Animal Society and the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, took place in Manhattan's Metropolitan Pavilion, a large venue near Union Square. Unlike most pet adoption events, dogs weren't featured. Instead, cats and rabbits (and a few reptiles) were the stars.

The Metropolitan Pavilion isn't a customary locale for such events. Shopaholics associate the building with its frequently held sample sales for everything from Gucci watches to Kate Spade bags. Its unlikely status as a venue for an animal-adoption event likely contributed to its success. Some attendees who might have been uncomfortable visiting public animal shelters were able to interact with adoptable animals in the more spacious and relaxed setting.

New York's Rabbit Rescue & Rehab was there on both days with rabbits looking for homes. Cindy Stutts and a group of volunteers were present to answer questions.

Mary Cotter, founder of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab and chapter manager of NYC

House Rabbit Society, gave a half-hour talk on rabbit care, while Cindy spent much of her time chaperoning bunny dates. Several families who already have house rabbits brought them to the event to find partners. The dynamics were fascinating to watch as the bunnies went on dates with multiple prospective partners and had completely different reactions to individual bunnies. For instance, on one date, a male bunny might have been too bold or frisky for the eligible female, but on another date with a different bunny that same boy might appear almost submissive.

Two bunny parents, Christie and Joe, mom and dad to rabbit Don King (previously adopted from New York's AC&C shelter) spent much of Saturday anxiously watching their boy meet eligible females. Christie, Joe and Don King brought along their extended family to help Don decide who his new lady love should be. It was a hard decision because Don King was a bit of a Don Juan and was compatible with more than one ladybun. Eventually, though, Don selected his new girlfriend, and Christie and Joe added another bunny to their family.

Friends and neighbors Miasia Imani Gaillard and Phantajiah Shaylene Ivory joyfully spent the afternoon sitting in a pen with different bunnies. The young

(Continued on page 5)



Whiskers *(Continued from page 4)*

girls were gentle with the bunnies, and, consequently, the bunnies enjoyed their attention. Much to their delight, Miasia's family adopted a beautiful and sweet grey bunny named Leandra. The Gaillard family's previous bunny had recently died and they wanted another rabbit to love.

Even the Best Friends' staffers couldn't resist the bunnies' charms! Marianne DeMarco of Best Friends adopted big love-bunny Ruby. Marianne told us that after she took Ruby to her first wellness vet

visit (as we recommend to all adopters), the vet technician wanted to keep Ruby because she is such a special bunny.

In addition to the seven rabbits, 125 cats and one snake that were adopted at the event, animals were helped in other ways. Jewelry company Sequin, which makes items worn by celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Madonna, donated jewelry to be sold with 100% of the proceeds to benefit New York City's homeless animals. Kim Renk, one of Sequin's owners and a longtime rabbit rescuer and benefactor, came in to help

the cause. Sequin had several tables of jewelry for sale, including numerous pieces that had been customized with animal themes.

Whiskers in Wonderland was the first holiday event sponsored by Best Friends in New York City. Given its resounding success, we hope that it becomes a tradition.

Top, Miasia Imani Gaillard, whose family adopted Leandra. Middle, Mary Cotter speaking at the event. Bottom, Blizzard.

Adoptable bunnies, with admirers.



Photo: Natalie L. Reeves



Photo: Natalie L. Reeves



Photo: Will Leung



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