

Hello,

I first of all, I'd like to thank you all for all of your compassion for and continuous work helping birds. I also recognize that with compassion comes passion, so it's not a surprise that we've had some heated discussions.

I've been working in vet med for over 30 years. I worked at Bay Area Bird Hospital for decades, Wildwood Vet Hospital for several years, For The Birds for several months, I interned at Medical Center For Birds while I was in tech school, and worked at various dog/cat clinics. I also worked at SFSPCA as an adoption counselor. I created this organization in 1996 while working in SF for one of the very first ABVP avian board certified vets.

It was then that I realized how dire the circumstances were for birds (especially small birds) when they became ill or injured. I can't count the amount of times I heard people say they weren't willing to spend money on medical care for a bird when the bird cost less than the exam fee. Many times I would have to see birds go home with no treatment, knowing they would likely suffer, and the shelters had no services or appropriate shelter for birds. There were many horrific stories of the things people would do to rid themselves of the financial burden of a sick bird.

In addition to the help with parrots who had been acquired through pet stores and breeders, there was a very slowly increasing number of abandoned wild/stray conures and canary winged parakeets falling out of the sky, with no stewardship, being sent to shelters or going home with well-meaning good Samaritans, who didn't know how to care for them and would most often end up taking them home and watching them pass. It was around that same time that I met Mark Bittner, who took a special interest in helping these birds. However, it became clear that caring for these displaced, often dumped pet parrots was more than one person could handle. So, those good Samaritans started calling on Mickaboo to help when they would find these little parrots helpless on the sidewalks of San Francisco after having been hit by cars, attacked by feral cats, shot by BB guns and, most often, poisoned with rodenticides.

Sadly, the little flock of Canary winged Parakeets was no match against the cruelty of San Francisco city living, and they died out. However, the conures managed to adapt enough to survive and grow, but they are still no match against the perils of living in an urban environment on the wrong continent, and getting poisoned regularly.

Eventually I met a like-minded and motivated client, we became friends, I shared those experiences and my desire to do something about it with her, and Mickaboo was born. For a long time, I felt like there were no other people who cared about the welfare of birds as much as she and I did. We used beepers and had paper files, we interviewed people using corded telephones and personally met and approved each adopter. To fund our work we had garage sales and collected aluminum cans. I even dug dirt and cleared out yards for money to fund Mickaboo.

Since then, over the years, I've met so many others who love these beautiful, intelligent, unique and fragile creatures. With every new alliance, the positive impact of Mickaboo increased. With internet and social media, news of our work spread exponentially. As word of our work spread, so did the need, and as our volunteer base multiplied, so have our needy birds. As those of you who work closely within Mickaboo know, it is a daily struggle to keep up with this need. There have been a few other reputable rescues that have popped up over the years, but not nearly enough to support the weight of so many ill, injured and homeless birds. It's very difficult to find foster and adoptive homes to care for all of the birds needing homes, and almost impossible to find foster homes who are able to treat ill/ injured birds.

For that reason, our veterinary bills have always been our greatest expense. This means we are also constantly trying to keep up with fundraising to support these birds. We are extremely fortunate in that we have some of the best avian vets in the country within driving distance of most of us. There are quite a few factors that determine how much we may use one vet versus another, and it can have very little to do with superior care— some are more centrally located to the bulk of our medical volunteers and shelters than others, some may have equipment that is needed for a specific case or other specialists nearby that can be more easily accessed, some are a bit more affordable and some are able to handle larger capacity for those needing medical boarding.

As an all-volunteer org., we're all struggling to keep up with the challenges involved with bird rescue, while raising families, working, going to school, etc. it's hard, it's frustrating, and oftentimes, it's downright heartbreaking. While we've seen tremendous growth over these past three decades, we're still struggling and there are daily decisions that need to be made with regard to the care of our little feathered charges. The one thing I can guarantee every single volunteer, adopter, donor and surrenderer is that every single decision I make as president, medical director and RVT is made with the best interest of that bird. Period.

There have been a lot of unfortunate distractions as of late, and I'm afraid it's threatening to severely interfere with our ability to do the work we need to do for the birds who rely on us.

I sure hope that the instigators of these distractions understand they are causing harm to the very birds they claim to want to help.

We will continue to do the work we committed to 30 years ago, and continue to make decisions that we, as the directors and admins who are most familiar with the intricacies of avian rescue, feel is best for our birds.

It stands to reason, of course, that an increase in volunteers means an increase in opinions on policies, protocols, etc., and there are constructive ways to express those opinions. If anyone is interested in a Zoom meeting where we can discuss thoughts, suggestions and get a bit more in-depth as to our policies and protocols and reasons behind them, please let me know and we will arrange that.

Those who choose non constructive ways and interfere with our work are not welcome. If you are in such strong disagreement with our mission or the methods through which we follow through with that mission, you are welcome to leave and find an organization that better aligns with your values, so those of us who are clear with our intentions can get on with our work.

Sincerely,

Tammy Azzaro