



The Gabriel Foundation
1025 Acoma Street Denver, CO 80204
Aviary and Adoption Center
39520 CR13, Elizabeth , CO 80107
303-629-5900
www.thegabrielfoundation.org
Tax-ID 84-1396085

*Following is an open letter to all friends, supporters and volunteers of
The Gabriel Foundation from Gaye Thomasson, TGF Volunteer Coordinator
January 21, 2010*

URGENT HELP NEEDED FOR THE FORGOTTEN FLOCK OF PUEBLO, COLORADO

If there is a Hell on Earth for parrots, I witnessed it Wednesday, January 20th, in Pueblo, CO. And if there are parrot "angels," I personally know them. They work for The Gabriel Foundation.

Yesterday I participated in a rescue of approximately forty parrots, mostly Blue and Gold Macaws (species: ararauna) a number of Green-winged Macaws (species: choropectera), a Military Macaw (species: militaris), two Moluccan Cockatoos (species: moluccensis), and a Bare-eyed Cockatoo (species: sanguinea) from a condemned home in Pueblo. I went with Julie Murad, Founder and CEO of The Gabriel Foundation, Dr. Noel Opitz, onsite Avian Veterinarian, and Karen Vanderhyde, Coordinator of Relinquishments, Long term Foster, Boarding and Sanctuary. I write "approximately forty birds" because as we came on to the scene, there were already four dead birds. And, we don't as yet know how many survived through the night. The birds were living a nightmare, to say the least.

TGF was contacted by The Pueblo Community Animal Shelter at approximately 12:00 PM, Wednesday, January 20th. They asked if we would work with them on this case. We offered our expertise. They asked us if we could provide housing and care for these birds. The shelter staff had very limited experience with parrots but knew the situation was critical. We were asked to help remove the birds from the property, to help to transport them back to the Shelter, to do medical exams, to administer emergency treatment if needed, to create documentation for each bird, and to provide fresh food and water for all. It was an experience I will never forget.

The local police and animal control officers secured the house and yard for us. There were big dogs and over one hundred caged pigeons behind the house. There were only a few body parts left of the goats that had once lived there. The dogs had eaten them. The owner, an elderly man who suffered from dementia, had been feeding the pigeons to the dogs. He had been feeding dog food to the parrots. There was no running water in the home. The toilet hadn't worked for five years. Dog feces everywhere. Six Blue and Gold Macaws in one small, ratty, metal cage in a back room inside of the house.

The TGF team entered the cramped outside, unheated, unlit attached aviary, where all but six of the parrots were living. (Mind you, we have had subzero weather in Colorado the past month and these birds have lived in those deplorable, hazardous conditions for a very long time!) When we opened the door, the stench of ammonia, feces and death was staggering. What we saw was heartbreaking: wire cages stacked on wire cages with sick, emaciated birds, piles of bird feces the size of footballs, empty food and water bowls. Dead birds. (Please understand, I am not exaggerating.) Wearing masks, we took action.

There was only one immediate goal: get the birds out as quickly as possible. Carriers and crates were readied outside of the door. Upon entering the room, we were all stunned at the sight of a beautiful Green-winged Macaw, dead by the door. We had to tend to the living.

I was in awe watching Dr. Opitz and Karen Vanderhyde perform an extremely difficult task. Starting at the front, they worked as a team, gently towelng each frightened bird and placing them in marked carriers. Cage doors had to be torn back. Perches, made of rough branches and rusty nails, had to be removed to extricate the living as well as the dead. There would be time for tears later.

The calm, compassionate professionalism that these two people and Julie demonstrated hour after hour was remarkable. The assistance from Pueblo's animal control officers, police, and the animal shelter was exceptional. And, as the birds were crated in their carriers (mates carefully kept with mates), Julie Murad oversaw the meticulous documentation and their placement in safe, warm vehicles. The noise of the frightened birds was deafening.

We drove the short distance back to the Pueblo Community Animal Shelter and quickly set up a triage for Dr. Opitz. The shelter provided us with an examining room, clean towels, stainless steel bowls for water, a room to prepare food. The staff was right there to help out with any request, any need. They were magnificent. With the medical equipment we brought from the Foundation in Elizabeth, the hours-long shuttling of birds-to-doctor began. One by one, each bird was brought to the exam room, gently toweled and held by Karen, photographed, numbered, examined by Dr. O and documented by Julie Murad. Then the bird was returned to its carrier for its first real parrot meal along with a fresh dish of water. Finally, we moved the birds to rooms, transformed into bird sanctuaries, for the night. A quiet night. Full crops. Safety. Warmth.

All of the birds that we saw are physically suffering. They are malnourished and have numerous advanced infections. That they could even breathe and live in the rancid smelling aviary is beyond belief. All of these birds must have a great strength of spirit to have survived this horrific ordeal.

One of the last birds to be examined broke our hearts: She, of course, was suffering from the same maladies that the others were. Dr. O lifted the towel to examine her feet. One was gone. Completely gone. As Dr. O looked at the other foot, one of her little toes fell off. Rotten. The team changed focus and tended to this beautiful bird's little legs. She was given antibiotics and painkillers. Wrapped in clean gauze with antiseptic, she was returned to her carrier. Will she survive? We don't know.

But now, once again, we ask for your help. Tomorrow, the remaining live birds will be transported from the Animal Shelter in Pueblo, Colorado, back to Elizabeth to be cared for, according to the search and seizure warrant, by The Gabriel Foundation.

As you know, we are at capacity. These birds cannot be around other birds. We are taking extreme caution to minimize contact with this flock. We don't know what infectious or contagious diseases they may have. We are currently looking for another building in which to house them; one with heat, a kitchen area with floors and walls that can be regularly washed down. We are seeking volunteer help to tend to them once they are in their new lodgings. We will need dozens and dozens of cages. Big cages. Cages these birds have never known in their entire lives. They will need fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, seed, every day. We will need storage containers and bins for food and rolling carts.

The Gabriel Foundation needs money now for all of the immediate and ongoing medical expenses, including lab testing, surgeries, and whatever treatments their tests reveal. We have estimated the minimum medical costs for each bird at \$250. Up to a dozen of these birds will most likely require surgery as soon as their conditions are stabilized.

And, of course we will need toys. Lots of toys. These birds have done nothing for years except sit in their cramped cages, tails bent, naves plugged. Waiting. Waiting.

As dear friends of The Gabriel Foundation, we hope that you will find it in your hearts to financially help TGF in this time of need. Your donation will make an incredible difference. These beautiful parrots were once cared for, but time took its toll on their owner's health, and all of his animals suffered. We can make the future lives of these parrots better. The need is urgent.

Here is how you can help today:

1) Go to www.thegabrielfoundation.org, scroll to: "CLICK HERE TO MAKE YOUR 100% TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION."

2) Donate by mail, directing your contribution to

**Pueblo Rescue 2010
c/o The Gabriel Foundation
1025 Acoma Street
Denver, Colorado 80204**

3) Download copies of this message and pass it to friends who care about the welfare of all living creatures and who may be willing to financially assist these birrds; and/or

4) Forward this message to friends and family who also might be able to make a valued contribution.

And now, you can join all of us at The Gabriel Foundation as we cry for this forgotten flock.

With my deepest thanks.

Gaye Thomasson
Volunteer Coordinator
The Gabriel Foundation
39520 County Road 13
Elizabeth, Colorado 80107
T: 303.629.5900 x 235
F: 303.646.1351
www.thegabrielfoundation.org

"Many have forgotten this truth, but you must not forget it. You remain responsible forever, for what you have tamed."

--- Antoine de Saint Exupery

The Gabriel Foundation is a 501(c)(3) avicultural and veterinary affiliated non-profit parrot welfare organization providing for the needs of parrots everywhere through each of its seven programs: Education outreach, adoption, rehabilitation, long term foster care, sanctuary, rescue and conservation. Tax ID 84-1396085

Visit www.thebirdbrain.com often for the very finest in products for parrots and the people who love them. We now carry premium, ultra premium, and holistic dog and cat food along with quality toys and treats! All proceeds benefit the parrots and programs of The Gabriel Foundation, www.thegabrielfoundation.org.