ow’s the animal rights movement doing?

If you’re Tommy the chimpanzee, who was found living in a small cage in a dark shed at a used trailer lot in upstate New York, and with only a TV for company, the answer would have to be “Not very well.”

That’s because while there are more animal rights organizations than ever before, Tommy still has no rights at all. Nor do any other animals outside of humans. None.

And however miserable Tommy’s life, it’s all entirely legal.

Sure, there have been some advances in animal welfare (not the same thing as rights) over the years. Last year, for example, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) decided to reduce the use of chimpanzees in research and to retire most (not all) of the government-owned chimpanzees. And most recently (probably as a result of the NIH decision) the pharmaceutical company Merck is bringing an end to its use of chimpanzees. But the chimpanzees themselves have no right to be freed from laboratories. Indeed, the Director of the Texas Biomedical Research Institute, John VandeBerg, plans to keep a collection of chimpanzees for possible future use regardless of the fact the Institute has no current plans for them.

Continued on page 6
NAVLS Launches Updated Animal Law Resource Center

Anyone who tracks legislation, researches laws, reads court decisions, or downloads model laws from the NAVS-sponsored website AnimalLaw.com will notice the new look—and the new name—for this clearinghouse of all things animal law. The new Animal Law Resource Center provides users with the same resources as before, but in a new, easier-to-use format and with additional search features to help you find the information you need.

If you haven’t stopped by lately, please take a look and see what the Animal Law Resource Center can do for you! 🐾

Leave a Legacy of Compassion

We know that NAVS’ supporters are extremely compassionate and generous individuals. We also know that times are tough, and many people have more compassion than opportunity to make a financial contribution. That is why many of you have asked for information about planned charitable giving.

What people like about planned charitable giving is the ability to support causes, such as NAVS, that are uniquely qualified to carry on their life’s mission even after they’re gone. If you can’t afford to contribute to NAVS today, you can work with a financial advisor on bequeathing funds to charitable organizations.

If you think planned giving may be for you, we recommend discussing the matter with an estate planning professional or family attorney. Working with an expert can enable you to make the most of assets you designate for charity. You can also take advantage of current laws that favor charitable giving.

In the meantime, our brochure The Legacy of Compassion offers an easy-to-read introduction on the topic. See page 11 to order your free copy. Or visit www.navs.org to download a free digital version. 🐾

You’re Invited!

NAVLS will be hosting a number of special events this spring and summer around the country to promote greater compassion, respect and justice for animals used in science. To find out if NAVS is coming to a city near you, keep checking www.navs.org for details! 🐾
The Downside of Being “Man’s Best Friend”

There is no question that “man’s best friend” holds a very special place in our hearts. After all, nearly 37 percent of Americans own dogs, resulting in about 70 million dogs as companion animals in the U.S. While people provide dogs with food, shelter and care, we receive from our furry friends many more benefits including improved physical and psychological well-being, and perhaps most important—unconditional love.

What many people do not realize is that the same features we love about dogs and that make them wonderful companions, such as their cooperative and docile nature, also make them a model of choice for researchers. There is a long and painful history of dog use in research and many dogs, over 64,000 according to the most recent reports by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), still suffer today in the name of science. What does this say about our society to condemn dogs just like our companion animals to life in a laboratory instead of a loving home?

It is believed that the great majority of dogs used in research are subjected to toxicity testing for pharmaceuticals and pesticides. Regulatory authorities, including the Food and Drug Administration and Environmental Protection Agency, require testing in both a rodent and a non-rodent species. Dogs have become the non-rodent animal of choice because a large amount of historical data is available from dog models, despite the fact that they are poor models for human health.

“Purpose-bred” vs. “random source”

Most dogs used in biomedical research are “purpose-bred” for research and are obtained from USDA Class A dealers (breeders). These dogs, most commonly beagles, spend their lives in an institutional environment, rarely knowing the benefits of the human-canine bond. Other “random source” dogs are obtained from USDA licensed Class B dealers, who acquire dogs from individual owners (sometimes under misleading conditions), small hobby breeders and animal shelters.

The use of dogs obtained from Class B dealers continues because they are more affordable and may be considered “unwanted” if they were slated for euthanasia. Many researchers, however, are concerned that studies using Class B dogs may be compromised as these animals have an unverifiable health history and unpredictable temperament. This combined with public pressure in response to revelations of animal cruelty has led to fewer research institutions using Class B dogs and, as a result, only five dealers continue to operate.

In addition to the wasted tax dollars to pay for inspections, numerous problems with Class B dealers have been documented, including failing to be available for inspections, harsh treatment of the dogs and substandard housing conditions. Class B dealers have repeatedly failed to adequately account for the source of their animals — and the failure of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to complete “tracebacks” on those missing records has resulted in tragic cases of beloved companion animals being separated from their homes and ending up as victims of vivisection.

Dubious progress

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced that beginning in Fiscal Year 2015 they will implement a policy prohibiting the procurement of dogs from Class B dealers with NIH funds. At first that decision was celebrated as a step forward in reducing the number of dogs used in federal research, until it was revealed that the NIH had well-developed plans to replace them with purpose-bred dogs. The NIH announced that it “is implementing an aggressive acquisition plan to develop a USDA licensed commercial Class A vendor to breed dogs possessing the same characteristics as those previously acquired from USDA Class B dealers, namely large, mature, socialized out-bred hounds or mongrels.”

The NIH has failed to provide details on this pilot program, including what sources the NIH will use to obtain dogs or the kinds of research that would be conducted.

Clearly what may spare random source dogs (while a good thing) seems destined to increase the number of purpose-bred dogs who will suffer as research subjects. NAVS will keep the plight of all research-bound dogs in the public eye until we end their use in the name of science.

NAVS will need your help to convince researchers and the public that the time has come to end the exploitation of dogs, no matter what the source.

“USDA’s Oversight of Dealers of Random Source Dogs and Cats Would Benefit from Additional Management Information and Analysis,” September 2010
Emerging from The Stone Age

Scientists continue the enlightened conversation about animal research models. Meanwhile, we stay ever-mindful of the animals who need our help.

“Merck has voluntarily made the decision not to use chimpanzees in biomedical research in the foreseeable future or to directly or indirectly fund their use in studies by external research partners.”

MERCK’S OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON THE USE OF CHIMPANZEES IN RESEARCH

“… I believe we are already making progress in finding substitutes for animal experiments. One day, those will lead to us being able to ban them. I believe that day is coming.”

NORMAN BAKER, HOME OFFICE MINISTER IN BRITAIN, “SCIENTISTS FEAR FOR ANIMAL TESTING AS NORMAN BAKER JOINS HOME OFFICE,” THE GUARDIAN, NOVEMBER 16, 2013

64,361

dogs were used in research in the U.S. in 2012 according to APHIS reports.

“Clearly, some testing and research is done in dogs for historical reasons [existence of benchmark data] rather than because they are the best models.”

JOANNE ZURLO ET AL, “CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE USE OF DOGS IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH AND TESTING,” ALTEX, APRIL 2011

69,926,000

dogs are kept as companion animals in the U.S. They reside in 36.5% of American households.

2012 U.S. PET OWNERSHIP & DEMOGRAPHICS SOURCEBOOK

“[B]y ending the abuse of animals in experiments, not only do we save them, but we will also discover the most effective research methods that will save us.”

DR. AYSHA AKHTAR IN “WHO ARE THE ANIMALS IN ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS?” HUFFINGTON POST SCIENCE, JANUARY 12, 2014

381

universities, government entities and companies used dogs in research in the U.S. in 2012.

“For years, researchers, pharmaceutical companies, drug regulators, and even the general public have lamented how rarely therapies that cure animals do much of anything for humans.”

JENNIFER COUZIN-FRANKEL, AUTHOR OF “WHEN MICE MISLEAD,” SCIENCE, NOVEMBER 22, 2013

80%
of dogs in research laboratories across the European Union and U.S. are used in pharmaceutical safety and efficacy testing.
LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

“The wheels of justice turn slowly” is an understatement when it comes to animal rights. And so every step of progress is precious. The more voices speaking out for animals, the more progress will be made. To learn how you can be an advocate for animals through the legal system, visit www.navs.org and also the NAVS-sponsored website The Animal Law Resource Center at AnimalLaw.com. The information below is current as of March 2014.

Only

1

U.S. city (New York) has established an animal abuser registry to keep animals out of the hands of convicted animal abusers ...

... but 4 New York counties have adopted such registries.

“This Petition asks this Court to issue a writ recognizing that Kiko is not a legal thing to be possessed by Respondents, but rather is a cognitively complex autonomous legal person with the fundamental legal right not to be imprisoned.”

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS FILED BY THE NONHUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT, INC., IN SUPPORT OF THE CHIMPANZEE, KIKO

“... but 4 New York counties have adopted such registries.

“The sole purpose in classifying Hercules and Leo as a ‘legal thing’ is the illegitimate, odious one of enslaving them.”

PETITIONERS’ MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE AND WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS AND ORDER GRANTING THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF HERCULES AND LEO

In 2010 the first animal abuser registry was adopted in Suffolk County, NY.

9

states are currently considering proposals to adopt an animal abuser registry.

The count so far on state-wide animal abuser registries.

4

The number of chimpanzees on behalf of whom three lawsuits were filed in New York State to free them from unlawful confinement by having them declared “legal persons:” Tommy, Kiko, and Hercules and Leo.

“This Petition asks this Court to issue a writ recognizing that Kiko is not a legal thing to be possessed by Respondents, but rather is a cognitively complex autonomous legal person with the fundamental legal right not to be imprisoned.”

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PETITIONERS’ MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE AND WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS AND ORDER GRANTING THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF HERCULES AND LEO

“I will be available as the judge for any other lawsuit to right any wrongs that are done to this chimpanzee because I understand what you’re saying. … Good luck with your venture. I’m sorry I can’t sign the order, but I hope you continue. As an animal lover, I appreciate your work.”

THE HONORABLE JOSEPH SISE, NEW YORK SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ON HEARING THE CASE FOR A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS ON BEHALF OF TOMMY, THE CHIMPANZEE

“... but 4 New York counties have adopted such registries.

“The sole purpose in classifying Hercules and Leo as a ‘legal thing’ is the illegitimate, odious one of enslaving them.”

PETITIONERS’ MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE AND WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS AND ORDER GRANTING THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF HERCULES AND LEO

100+

was the count of Class B animal dealers licensed by the USDA to sell random source animals to researchers in the early 1990s.

5

Class B animal dealers are currently licensed to sell animals for research.

All 3

of those lawsuits are in the process of appeal to various New York Supreme Courts after lower courts denied the request to issue a writ of habeas corpus.
Continued from page 1

“I think of the chimpanzees in the same way that I think of a library,” he told PBS TV. “There are many books in the library that will never be used this year or next year. … But we don’t know which ones will be needed tomorrow, next year or the year after.”

And if you’re an elephant at the zoo, a pig at a factory farm, a mouse or a chimpanzee at a laboratory, or even Fido and Fluffy at home, you’re still viewed by the legal system as a piece of property with no more actual rights than a car or a DVD player. You may be protected by certain laws (generally very weak), but you have no more rights than any of your owner’s other possessions.

Last December, however, the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) filed a series of lawsuits asking judges to recognize that four chimpanzees being held in captivity in New York State are “legal persons” who have the right not to be imprisoned. Instead, they should be released to a sanctuary where they can live as close as possible to what their lives would be like in the rainforest.

(Note: In the legal system, a “legal person” is any entity capable of having legal rights. Corporations, for example, have certain rights, such as the right to sue. Ships can be persons, too. It doesn’t mean they’re human!)

The plaintiffs in these suits are Tommy, who’s living at that used trailer lot; Kiko, who lives in a cage next to a private home; and Hercules and Leo, who are involved in locomotion experiments at Stony Brook University.

The NhRP is a group of attorneys and legal experts, supported by an international group of scientists, who submitted affidavits showing that chimpanzees are self-aware, cognitively complex and autonomous, meaning that they meet all reasonable standards for having the basic right to bodily liberty.

As expected, each of the three judges denied the petition. Rulings that venture into new legal territory are generally considered the territory of the higher courts. So this was just the first stage of the proceedings.

What was surprising, though, was the extent of support that two of the judges put into the record. In the case of Tommy, the judge said, “You make a very strong argument. … Good luck with your venture. I’m sorry I can’t sign the order, but I hope you continue.” And in the case of Kiko, the judge said, “I have to say your papers were excellent. However, I’m not prepared to make this leap of faith. … Good luck. Thank you.”

In January, the NhRP filed Notices of Appeal in the three districts where the four chimpanzees reside. It will be several months before the appeals are heard, and depending on each of the rulings, one or more of the petitions may end up at New York State’s highest court, the Court of Appeals.

The lawsuits are all modeled on a habeas corpus suit that was filed 250 years ago when James Somerset, a slave from Virginia, was brought to London by his owner, Charles Steuart. Somerset escaped but was recaptured and put in chains on a ship that was heading out to the sugar plantations of Jamaica. But before the ship could sail, a group of abolitionist attorneys filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus on his behalf, and the case went before the Chief Justice of the Court of King’s Bench, Lord Mansfield.

In 1772, in what became one of the most important trials in Anglo-American history, Lord Mansfield ruled that Somerset was a “legal person” who could not be held as a piece of property, and he set him free. This did not, of course, bring an end to slavery. Many more lawsuits were filed up and down the newly-formed United States. Some of the cases were won, some were lost, and eventually it took a civil war to free the slaves. But that’s how it all began—that first lawsuit on behalf of a human slave remains a template for today’s litigation on behalf of chimpanzees.

Whatever happens with Tommy, Kiko, Her-
In 2013, Chimp Haven, the national sanctuary for chimpanzees established after passage of the Chimpanzee Health Improvement and Maintenance Protection Act (CHIMP Act) in 2002, was facing a huge crisis. Funding provided by the federal government to construct facilities and provide care for chimpanzees retired under the CHIMP Act was exhausted and the 25 percent contribution from the public sector could not even begin to cover the costs of running the facility. To compound this crisis, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) determined that most research on chimpanzees was unnecessary and plans were moving forward to retire many more chimpanzees permanently.

One of the problems was that the CHIMP Act set a firm limit on the amount of money allocated for Chimp Haven and the language of the Act prohibited the use of other federal funds to support the animals. While the animal protection community—and Chimp Haven—celebrated the news that hundreds of chimpanzees would be freed from their cages, the issue of funding loomed like a dark cloud over the celebration.

However, in mid-November, the Chimp Act Amendments was passed with overwhelming support from Congress. This means that funds previously allocated to the NIH for the care of its chimpanzees in laboratories can now be used for the care and maintenance of chimpanzees already at Chimp Haven and for chimpanzees soon to be retired by the NIH. $12.4 million has been allocated for 2014, with a decrease in funding over the next five years.

Chimp Haven is already building new enclosures for chimpanzees to be retired from the New Iberia Research Center, and looking forward to receiving even more chimpanzees previously housed at NIH or kept at federally-funded facilities elsewhere in the country. The celebration continues with the knowledge that Chimp Haven will be able to provide the care that these animals deserve.

The NAVS connection


Recently, hundreds of federally-owned chimpanzees became eligible for retirement under new criteria accepted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Director of the NIH, Francis Collins, Ph.D., stated that “…greatly reducing their use in biomedical research is scientifically sound and the right thing to do.”

Unfortunately, the NIH criteria do not extend to chimpanzees still exploited in laboratories owned by universities or by other private entities. NAVS believes ALL chimpanzees deserve retirement, regardless of “ownership.”

Please ask these facilities to permanently retire their chimpanzees from research:

Michale E. Keeling Center for Comparative Medicine and Research
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
Christian Abée, DVM, MS, Director
Department of Veterinary Sciences
650 Cool Water Drive
Bastrop, TX 78602
lzipalac@mdanderson.org

New Iberia Research Center
Director, Dr. Thomas J. Rowell
P.O. Box 13610
New Iberia, LA 70562-3610
tjrowell@louisiana.edu

Southwest National Primate Research Center
Texas Biomedical Research Institute
Dr. John L. VandeBerg, PhD, Director
P.O. Box 760549
San Antonio, TX 78245-0549
jlv@txbiomedgenetics.org

Yerkes National Primate Research Center
Emory University
Dr. Stuart Zola, Director
201 Dowman Drive
Atlanta, GA 30322
szola@emory.edu
Contributions made to the NAVS Sanctuary Fund are far-reaching—as well as carefully targeted to the greatest, most immediate needs. This map shows locations all over the country where animal sanctuaries have received a Sanctuary Fund grant and highlights the most recent recipients.

One hundred percent of the money you designate for the fund goes directly to the aid of sanctuaries where immediate intervention is necessary. This may be due to an influx of animals after natural disasters, emergency rescue from abuse, and other situations in which animals are at particular risk. Below you can read about animals whose lives you’ve helped save. The animals, their caretakers and NAVS thank you!

Key:
- Recent recipients of Sanctuary Fund grants
- Past recipients of Sanctuary Fund grants

Your Help Spans the U.S.!

### CHIMPANZEE SANCTUARY NORTHWEST

in Seattle, WA, provides lifetime quality care for formerly abused and exploited chimpanzees while advocating for all great apes. The brutal cold caused several power outages this winter, necessitating upgrades to their backup power/heat. A Sanctuary Fund grant was used to help purchase a new generator to keep the chimpanzees safe and warm during subsequent power outages.

### ANIMAL CARE AND ADOPTION NETWORK

in San Rafael, CA, is dedicated to helping Bay Area rescue groups and shelters save the lives of companion animals. A Sanctuary Fund grant was awarded to help pay for veterinary care for rats taken in from a hoarding situation.

### TINY TOES RAT RESCUE OF NEW MEXICO

in Albuquerque, NM, is dedicated to providing for rats in need of homes. They seek qualified adoptive homes for healthy rats and provide lifetime care for special needs rats. A Sanctuary Fund grant helped with the rescue and relocation of approximately 30 rats, including Maddie (pictured here), rescued from a hoarding situation.

### W.O.L.F. SANCTUARY

in Laporte, CO, is committed to improving the quality of life for all wolves and wolf dogs by rescuing animals in need and providing them with a permanent home in a natural habitat. They also educate the public about wild and captive wolves and the problems with keeping wolves as pets. A Sanctuary Fund grant helped to repair roads and enclosures damaged by flash flooding.
ANIMAL ACTION REPORT

BRING HANAH HOME, INC., in Bloomington, IN, seeks to increase disaster awareness and implements standard emergency procedures for all pets. A Sanctuary Fund grant helped Bring Hanah Home provide emergency relief to animal victims of tornadoes in Oklahoma, Illinois and Missouri.

SAFE HAVEN FOR CATS in Raleigh, NC, safeguards the well-being of every cat in their community through adoption, affordable spay/neuter services, community outreach and adherence to no-kill principles. A Sanctuary Fund grant was awarded to provide emergency veterinary care for eight cats, including Moselle (pictured here), rescued from a hoarding situation.

FOREST ANIMAL RESCUE (formerly Peace River Ranch and Rescue) in Silver Springs, FL, is a lifetime care sanctuary for non-releasable wild animals who come from lives of abuse or neglect. FAR recently relocated and powered their move by generator—an arrangement underwritten by a pledge for a large donation. When this pledge was rescinded, a Sanctuary Fund grant paid off the fuel bills.

STRAY CENTRAL in Springdale, AR, provides safe refuge and medical care for stray, unwanted, abused and neglected animals, including Hickory (pictured here). Recent Sanctuary Fund grants were awarded to fund spay/neuter and medical treatment for feral cat colonies and adoptable cats rescued from a hoarding situation; and to purchase a laptop to assist with fundraising and outreach activities.

JUNGLE FRIENDS PRIMATE SANCTUARY in Gainesville, FL, offers a permanent, safe haven for monkeys from around the United States who have been abused, confiscated by authorities, retired from research, or who are ex-pets. A Sanctuary Fund grant will help build a habitat for seven capuchins, including Jobe (pictured here), recently retired from a University of Georgia research laboratory.

SHEPHERD’S GREEN in Cookeville, TN, provides rescue and lifetime care to abandoned pigs, including Launie (pictured here). They also provide support, guidance and financial assistance for caretakers of privately held pigs through their Helping Hoof program. A Sanctuary Fund grant was awarded to purchase a pig shelter to be supplied through that program.
Mystic Farm Wildlife Rescue in north Idaho provides shelter, care and rehabilitation for orphaned and/or injured wildlife. Committed to educating the public about wildlife rescue, rehab and release, they expanded their public education and outreach program to include hands-on experience for an onsite intern. This unique intern program helps a new generation advocate for the rehabilitation and release of wildlife as an alternative to euthanasia or long-term captivity.

A NAVS Sanctuary Fund grant provided funds to build a cabin on the six-acre property for Ramona Bicandi, an ecology and conservation biology major from the University of Idaho. Ramona spent the summer of 2013 caring for injured/orphaned wildlife, and learning legal regulations and protocols regarding wildlife release. The finished cabin is not only an aesthetically pleasing addition to the property, it also provides comfort and safety. As Ramona was happy to report, “No bears can get in here!”

Thanking NAVS for our contribution to her experience, Ramona wrote: “I have learned the importance of wildlife rehabilitation [and] different conservation techniques. … Thanks to your contribution to Mystic Farm, Dory [McIsaac, executive director of Mystic Farm] can continue hiring summer interns and molding young minds in hopes of a brighter future for Idaho’s wildlife.”

Some of the residents in Ramona’s care

“No bears can get in here!”

Fish Cat, a Mystic Farm resident and frequent guest on the front porch
PLEASE DONATE TODAY

COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM OR GO TO WWW.NAVS.ORG TO SUPPORT NAVS’ HUMANE SOLUTIONS TO HUMAN PROBLEMS

Our life-saving work depends on the generosity of people like you.

YES! I want to partner with NAVS to help spare animals from the cruelty and waste of animal experimentation. (Check one)

☐ NAVS General Fund $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $250 ☐ Other ________
☐ NAVS Sanctuary Fund $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $250 ☐ Other ________

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT NAVS:

☐ Please sign me up for NAVS Automatic Monthly Giving. Please charge $_______ each month to my credit card. (To contribute via checking or savings account, please include a voided check.)

☐ Please send me a free copy of The Legacy of Compassion so I can learn more about planned charitable giving.

☐ I prefer the online newsletter Animal Action Report; do not send me the print version.

My email address is printed below.

☐ Sign me up for Take Action Thursday weekly eblast. My email address is printed above.

☐ Sign me up for Science First weekly eblast. My email address is printed above.

☐ Sign me up for all NAVS eblasts. My email address is printed above.

☐ Please do not share or sell my contact information with other organizations.

☐ Please visit www.navs.org/donate for more information.

• Name ____________________________________________________________________________
• Address ____________________________________________________________________________
• City, State, Zip _______________________________________________________________________
• Daytime phone _______________________________________________________________________
• Email ______________________________________________________________________________

☐ Sign me up for Take Action Thursday weekly eblast. My email address is printed above.

☐ Sign me up for Science First weekly eblast. My email address is printed above.

☐ Sign me up for all NAVS eblasts. My email address is printed above.

☐ Please do not share or sell my contact information with other organizations.

• Total donation $ __________________________

• Credit card # ____________________________ Exp. date __________

 VISA   MasterCard   Discover   AmEx
(CIRCLE ONE)

• Print name as shown on card ____________________________

• Signature _________________________________

If paying by check, please make payable to NAVS and return with this form in the envelope provided.

Or mail to: NAVS

3071 Paysphere Circle
Chicago, IL 60674-0030.

All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

If you have any questions about this form or making a donation, please feel free to call us at 800-888-6287.
A Colorful Safe Haven!

By Laura Ell,
NAVS Assistant Director of Programs

Project Perry/Central Virginia Parrot Sanctuary in Louisa, VA, is one of few accredited avian sanctuaries in the United States with the ability to provide proper lifetime care to birds emotionally scarred by human cruelty. The sanctuary saves birds from the worst abuse and neglect situations. The NAVS Sanctuary Fund has supported Project Perry in the past to provide veterinary care to parrots in a hoarding case and to transport six African grey parrots relinquished by a breeder.

In August 2013 my family and I had the opportunity to visit Project Perry while on vacation in the area. My 8-year-old son is extremely fond of birds and has independently raised money for the Project Perry parrots—so he wanted to see them in person! Matt Smith, Project Perry’s founder and executive director, couldn’t have been more gracious and welcoming.

We toured three different aviaries and met a variety of birds who flew over our heads, sat on our shoulders and preened our skin. The aviaries replicate a natural setting and provide bird-safe plants and flowering trees. They’re heated in the winter, and polycarbonate panels allow nearly 90 percent of natural sunlight through, which allows the birds and plants to thrive year-round. They also have access to a meshed area where the birds enjoy sun on their backs, fresh wind in their feathers and baths in the rain.

In the 3600-square-foot aviary built entirely for African grey parrots, many of the residents were cautious but remained close enough for us to appreciate their distinctive personalities. Some were tame enough to perch on our outstretched arms.

Project Perry succeeds at its mission in providing an exceptional natural environment where the birds can enjoy the enrichment of flight and the togetherness of flock while also providing what all sanctuaries should—a safe haven where the residents are cared for in a forever home.