Hedgehog Rescue ~
Alive and Well in Canada

WHO ARE WE?
For the newer Hedgehog Welfare Society members who may not know us, we are Linda and Gary Edwards of Hedgehog Heights Rescue in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. We adopted our first hedgehog, Charlotte in April of 1997. Shortly after that came Gary’s Maggie Mae, our sweet Brandee, and before year’s end, we were deeply committed to our first three rescues, Buck, Rosita and their daughter Daisy. This

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trio came to us from deplorable living conditions and were so emotionally traumatized, that Rosita repeatedly self-mutilated her chest and it took two years of gentle nurturing for us to whisper Buck’s name without sending him into a hissing panic. This experience changed our lives forever.

We just never imagined that people could and did treat hedgehogs in this way. It wasn’t a conscious decision, it was just a natural transition for us to devote our time and energy to improving the lives of as many hedgehogs as we could, in whatever way we could. Thus, we officially evolved into “Hedgehog Heights Rescue”.

**How are we funded?**

As most rescuers who are passionate about their cause, we began funding our mission with our own money, and still do to a large extent. As the number of hedgehogs increased, so too did vet bills and general expenses. We began making and marketing hedgehog-related craft items, as well as organizing fundraising events, such as our annual “Hedgehog Ornament Project”, now in its 9th successful season. We occasionally receive unsolicited donations in the form of money, food, supplies and fundraising items.

We approach pet stores asking them to help us with discounts on our weekly purchases. We look for “rescue friendly” vets, who assist us by reducing fees on consultations, surgeries, medications and euthanasias. We scour garage sales for “critter stuff”, such as sheets, fabric, cages, etc. Sheets and fabric are quickly transformed into snuggle bags and cages and supplies are “refurbished” and sold where possible. In an abundant situation, we share our good fortune by donating some of these items to our local Humane Society and other rescuers in need.

Finally, in desperation, at times we have appealed to the hedgehog community for their assistance. The response has been generous and heartwarming. Through organizations such as Hedgehog Welfare Society, the Twink Fund, Flash & Thelma and private donations, Gary and I have been able to rescue and/or rehome approximately 100 hedgehogs, providing them with food, shelter and veterinary care, including medications and costly surgeries. These are essentially 100 hedgehogs who probably would not have survived.

Our expectations are simple – a happy, healthy, safe hedgehog. Cost? Countless hours of hard work and sacrifice, tears of anger, frustration and loss and at times shear exhaustion and heartache. What makes it all worthwhile? The miracle of seeing a hedgehog dramatically recover from their illness or injury; the thrill of watching a hedgehog learn to use a wheel for the first time, much like a baby taking it’s first steps; the joy of peeking in at our quilled kids nestled into the warmth and comfort of a snuggle bag with their new found family; or ultimately, observing a “vicious, unsocialized, biting hedgehog” sweeten up with the companionship of a fellow hedgehog, flourishing in the healing power of friendship.

This has been an amazing and fulfilling chapter in our lives and we eagerly view each and every hedgehog coming into our rescue as one of life’s “hidden treasures”. Each one has come to teach us something or enrich our lives in some way. Sometimes they are a personal gift or have come to enlighten the entire hedgehog community. At other times they are destined for our loving and dedicated veterinarians or perhaps a complete stranger. But they always come for a REASON.

**Where do they come from?**

**Cassandra:**

“I was rescued in Edmonton, Alberta and made my journey home to Waterloo, Ontario. I was a “classroom pet”, who got tired of kids poking their little fingers in at me. When I tried to defend myself, I was branded a “vicious biter” and was slated to be euthanized three days after I was rescued.”

**Linda:**

Cassandra is a prime example of how networking within the HWS community and the hedgehog train program are so effective. List members were alerted of this hedgehog desperately needing rescue by week’s end, but no one was forthcoming. “Coincidentally”, I was orchestrating a rescue transaction of my own, reserving a little female hedgehog for a contact in Toronto, whom I had “met” only on the list. As soon as her husband returned from a business trip in Edmonton, they would arrange pick-up. I immediately e-mailed her to see if it was feasible for her husband to rescue “Kendra” and bring her home to me. Other list members generously offered financial assistance to help pay her flight and within a 48 hour period, this seemingly “hopeless” situation had
Evolved into a miraculous rescue, consisting of a 500+ mile journey from Edmonton, Alberta to Waterloo, Ontario. Although we buried “Kendra’s” name with her tragic past, her circumstances so deeply scarred her that she still voraciously attacks all human flesh in sight. Fortunately, she is a loving companion to her cagemates. We are eternally grateful to Rebecca, David and Westjet staff for their cooperation and heroic efforts in rescuing Cassandra.

**Here’s how YOU can help:**

* Even though it may seem like an impossibility, NEVER assume that a rescue cannot be done. Contact Hedgehog Welfare Society and give full details of the circumstances. There may be someone who can help.

* If you are traveling, offer your assistance in the form of transporting a hedgehog, even if it is for part of the journey.

**Tiggy:**

“I am a three year old, gentle white male who found my resuer, Linda, through the HWS Rescue Website. Although I was cared for by a loving, well-intentioned family, veterinary care was inadequate and when I arrived at Hedgehog Heights Rescue, I was infested with mites, completely missing quills from 2/3 down my body, my skin was sloughing off in huge flakes and my raspiness turned out to be bronchial pneumonia. Upon immediate vet examination, a wiggly tooth was extracted, which left only three teeth intact.”

**Linda:**

The HWS Rescue Website is an extremely effective tool and has been instrumental in many hedgies finding their way to us. It’s also important to note that although a hedgie can came from a “good home”, it does not necessarily guarantee that he/she will be in a healthy state when they arrive. We have learned to expect the best, but prepare for the worse.

**Here’s how YOU can help:**

* Volunteer to become an official HWS rescue station and have yourself listed as such. It’s one of the most rewarding, worthwhile ways you can benefit the hedgehog community.

* Support HWS by actively promoting its existence, making donations or participating in their various fundraising events.

**Sweetpea**

“Linda found me advertised in the local community paper, along with my cagemate. My previous owner was a young man with all the right intentions, but all the wrong information. My cagemate died an hour before I arrived at Hedgehog Heights Rescue. I was the “lucky” one. I was infested with mites, grossly overweight from improper diet, my nails had never been trimmed and my ears were impacted with four years’ worth of aspen dust, that Linda carefully plucked out with a pair of tweezers.”

**Linda:**

I check our daily newspaper classifieds on-line every morning for hedgehogs, as well as our weekly community newspaper, which includes Canada-wide listings. If a
hedgehog is not in an area accessible to me, I pass the information on to a fellow rescuer, or HWS in the hopes that another member can assist in some way. Initially, I would negotiate and purchase the hedgies outright, but can now only do that if I suspect the hedgehog is at risk. In any case, I make contact with the owner though and tell them that as a rescue, we can unconditionally guarantee a good home and vet care if they are willing to surrender their hedgehog to us. Alternatively, I pass their contact information on to people on my rescue “waiting list”.

Here’s how YOU can help: 
Even though you may not be able to actually take a hedgie into your care, you can still be instrumental in their rescue by:
* Actively locating hedgehogs in need by checking your daily/weekly newspaper publications/supermarket bulletin boards and posting your findings to HWS, in the hopes that someone else can take the hedgie.
* Contacting the person selling/surrendering the hedgehog and giving them HWS rescue contact information.
* Offering to help transport a hedgehog if you have a vehicle, even if it’s only one leg of the journey to form a “hedgie train” to its ultimate destination.
* Fostering a hedgehog until a home is found, if you can take him/her in temporarily, but not permanently.
* Donating food, supplies or money to a rescuer taking in a hedgehog.

Mis-information abounds
Over the past 10 years, I have found that there is far too much “misinformation” out there about hedgehogs. Many unsuspecting new hedgie owners are being poorly educated about proper hedgehog care through unknowledgeable pet stores, veterinary offices and animal shelters. Although it’s reasonable to “assume” that these are all reliable, trustworthy resources, that’s not necessarily so. There are also many books and websites relaying misleading and downright inaccurate information. To me, it’s logical that the most reliable source of hedgehog information would come first hand from the experienced hedgie owners, rescuers, breeders and veterinary personnel specializing in hedgehogs right here within the HWS community.

Linda:
Sometimes rescues come to us through social contact of a friend or neighbour. Shadow is one of my most memorable rescues, not only because of his sweet disposition and patience with life’s injustices, but because he was the worst case of neglect I have ever seen. He sat in a small aquarium on the floor next to a blaring TV, being poked and prodded by three screaming children and five cats stealing his food. When I picked him up, my hands and arms were immediately enveloped in a white layer of mites. I had never seen such an infestation! His ears broke off in pieces, he had huge sores over his body and a grossly infected eye, which later dislodged during bath time. He was
so severely stressed that sedation for veterinary examination took one-half hour to induce him. Due to this extreme neglect, Shadow’s immune system was permanently compromised and he required medication every day of his short life for a painful, chronic skin infection, eventually succumbing to an invasive nasal tumor.

**HERE’S how YOU can help:**

* Don’t assume that just because someone has a hedgehog, that they know how to care for it. If you meet someone who has recently acquired a hedgehog, offer to share your knowledge and direct them to the HWS website for further support.

* Word of mouth is a reliable form of communication within communities. At every opportunity that presents itself, explain your involvement with hedgehog rescue and let people know that you are a reliable resource.

**CASEY:**

“I lived with a little girl who took wonderful care of me, but for some reason I developed a chronic biting habit. It was decided I needed to find a more experienced, understanding home and my veterinarian suggested that I be surrendered to Linda.”

**LINDA:**

Sometimes a veterinarian will contact me if one of their clients is looking for a new home for their hedgehog or if a hedgehog has been surrendered to the clinic. I have given my name and contact information to local area vet offices for such circumstances.

**HERE’S how YOU can help:**

Contact your local veterinary offices and advise them that you can help them with hedgehogs needing a home by:

* Taking the hedgehog into your care permanently (if possible).

* Fostering the hedgehog temporarily until a home is found.

* Providing the necessary contact information in order to find an appropriate home.

**CHLOE:**

“I was rescued from a pet store. I was very sick and weak as a result of untreated diarrhea. Being such a small animal, I could have dehydrated and died very quickly. My ears were also missing. I’m not sure when or how I lost my ears, but they were still painful, raw pieces of flesh when Linda found me. I was also housed with at least one male, so there was a good possibility I might have been pregnant at my young age of eight weeks. Linda was not allowed to hold me in the store. She was told she would have to buy me first, take me home and then if she didn’t like me, I could be returned. Unfortunately, my unhappy and stressful circumstances taught me to bite, which resulted in my being returned many times over. I was sick, unwanted, neglected and had little hope of a bright future. Linda was my only ray of sunshine!”

**LINDA:**

In Canada, as in the US, pet stores exhibit varying degrees of care, awareness, knowledge and priorities. We do not typically “rescue” hedgehogs from pet stores, as this practice could backfire and actually encourage them to keep a steady supply of neglected hedgies for us to purchase. Sometimes, however, it is absolutely necessary to get a hedgehog out of a stressful and/or dangerous situation. We routinely visit our local pet stores to evaluate the living conditions and health of hedgies and other small animals.

When we detect a problem in a pet store, we immediately approach the manager in a firm, polite, yet unthreatening manner with our concerns. One of two things will happen: they will either be open and accommodating to our suggestions; or they will be defensive and refuse to co-operate at all. Depending on how they meet our approach will determine our course of action. It might be as fundamental as educating the staff. Sometimes it takes a follow-up call to our local SPCA for their involvement. Still at other times written correspondence to the chain’s head office is necessary. If all these venues have been exhausted without satisfaction, we then reach out to the hedgehog community for their input and assistance.

I am not suggesting that all pet stores behave in such an irresponsible manner, because they don’t. There are many reputable establishments with caring employees who are
dedicated to the welfare of the animals in their care, and echo our concern by supporting our rescue efforts. Unfortunately, the sad reality is that there are also less desirable pet stores whose only concern is the monetary profit, at an extremely high cost to the animals. These are the stores that are particularly in need close scrutiny and intervention.

HONEY:
“I was also rescued from a pet store (different one than Chloe). I was shipped there with three males and we were all kept in the same small cage. Store personnel were not accustomed to handling hedgies, so provided us with only the basics of shelter, food and water, but little in the way of human contact. Linda was suspicious when staff were “not sure” when asked if we were boys or girls. Upon closer inspection, she quickly determined the others were boys and when she held me, immediately saw that I was a little girl who was badly injured with fresh and old bite marks on my fleshy butt. I was very weak and traumatized by my circumstances and had endured this torture for quite some time. Store personnel were shocked to learn of the situation and gladly made arrangements for me to go home with Linda.”

LINDA:
Sometimes even though the pet store can be well-intentioned, there may be a lack of knowledge preventing proper gender identification and/or care. Also, in some stores, the breeder “always” sends only one gender, so the staff “assume” they are all one sex. In Honey’s case, the breeder made an error, which almost cost Honey her life. Remember, even though it may be a reputable store, it doesn’t hurt to double-check in case males and females are mistakenly housed together.

In our general experience with “rescuing” from pet stores, in dire circumstances some hedgehogs have been purchased outright, some we negotiated at “cost price”, and still others we “gently persuaded” to have surrendered to us at no cost at all. You can’t necessarily change how a pet store treats their animals, but you can strive to help improve living conditions and/or actually save the life of a hedgehog. Routine “surprise” visits are a very effective tool in keeping such stores in line. They may not know “when” you’ll show up, but they “do” know you’ll never go away!

HERE’S HOW YOU CAN HELP:
* Make routine visits to your local pet stores to monitor the level of care the hedgies are receiving. If you notice improvements that could be made in the living conditions, suggest those to the staff and follow-up in a few days.
* Bring along a copy of the HWS Caresheet and if necessary, personally demonstrate to the staff how to handle and care for hedgehogs. Some clerks are very intimidated by the sharp quills and could use a little coaching.
* Leave your name and contact information in case they have any questions.
* Volunteer to rescue and/or rehome any hedgehogs that might be returned to the store, even if that means assisting by passing on the information to other HWS members.
* Ask the clerk if males and females are kept together, and if so, educate them appropriately, stating that they can get pregnant at a very young age, which is dangerous. Also, by mixing males and females, or housing too many hedgies together, serious squabbles and injuries, even death, can occur.
* Ask the clerk if you can hold the hedgies and check for any obvious health concerns (diarrhea, discharge from ears, eyes or nose, wheezing, lumps and bumps or injuries). If you notice any of these signs, notify the clerk immediately. They may not be aware of the condition. Ask them what their procedure is for a sick animal. If they provide veterinary care, ask for the name of the vet office and follow-up in a few days. If they do not provide this care, contract your local SPCA immediately and report this as neglect. Follow up with the SPCA.

THE TWO GEORGES:
“We were rescued from an animal shelter by another rescue group from “Georgetown”, Ontario. Thus, we were dubbed “George I” (because I was born with only...
**EDWARDS...**

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one eye) and “George II” (because both his eyes were intact). George II was adopted out, but I stayed at Hedgehog Heights Rescue, and am to this day known as “George”.

**LINDA:**

Although we are registered with our local animal shelters as a hedgehog rescue, and we check the adoption room of their website on a regular basis, we have never been requested to take in a hedgie. We have, however, been contacted by other rescue groups (rabbit rescue and cat/dog rescue) to take in a hedgie.

**HERE’S HOW YOU CAN HELP:**

* Register with your local animal shelters as a hedgehog rescue contact.
* Supply them with a copy of the HWS Caresheet.
* If you are associated with any other rescue groups, make it known within that community that you also rescue hedgehogs or alternatively can make the appropriate connections.

**WHAT ARE OUR STORES LIKE?**

For the most part, our pet stores are similar to those in the US, where we constantly struggle to monitor the level of animal care, particularly in the large chain stores. They offer similar products at similar prices, but generally lack in hedgehog-specific items, which encourages us to shop on-line. In our area, we are particularly fortunate to have retained some “old-fashioned” small town stores whose focus is on the ethical treatment of animals with an accommodating array of products at reasonable prices.

**WHO ARE OUR VETS?**

Ten years and over 100 hedgehogs, guinea pigs, hamsters, chinchillas and bearded dragons later, we have accumulated a vast array of knowledge and experience in this area. In the beginning, being new to hedgehog ownership, as well as an unexpected introduction to the need for emergency vet care and subsequent surgeries, we were not in a position to question the integrity of the services provided or the fees charged. As years passed and our need for veterinary care increased, we realized that we needed to explore other options. It just never occurred to us to “shop around”. What we learned was:

* Indeed “shop around”! Choose a vet in the same way you would choose any other service provider, comparing quality of service and fees charged.
* Experience with hedgehogs can vary greatly from one vet to another. Even though a vet advertizes as specializing in “exotics”, this doesn’t necessarily mean they are hedgehog “savvy”.
* Even though they claim to be “hedgehog savvy”, doesn’t necessarily mean they are. Trust your own knowledge and experience and don’t be afraid to challenge their actions (case in point, an “exotics vet”- who suggested filing down a hedgehog’s teeth).
* Vet fees for different procedures can vary greatly from one vet to the next. Find out what is reasonable in your area.
* Some vets will teach you how to do certain money-saving procedures, such as Ivermectin injections for mite infestations, which is a HUGE savings when you regularly take in rescues.
* Some vets will assist you by providing medications at cost price.
* Hours of operation are important. Some vets offer full week-end hours without an extra charge. Some are open for a half-day on Saturday and closed on Sunday, charging exorbitant “emergency” fees outside of these hours. Some do not charge extra for emergency visits.
* Some vets offer emergency paging service up to midnight. Some charge extra for this service, some do not.
* When bringing a hedgie for treatment, some vets charge for “hospital stay”, some do not and you are free to leave your hedgehog there for the day while being assessed.
* We have learned to pick and choose which services are most beneficial to us. For example, if we...

**Guess who’s turning 5!**

HWS will be celebrating its upcoming 5th ‘birthday’ in part with a special tribute in the September/October newsletter. For this anniversary issue we are asking that each and every one of you send in a little ‘blurb’ about what the HWS means to you. The deadline for these thoughts will be September 15, 2006, so put on your thinking caps...

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Changes in the HWS

The HWS Board is saddened to report that Judie Peters has stepped down as Co-chair for Public Relations. Judie will continue to be involved in the Quills & Comfort Committee and will continue to provide her truly beautiful artwork through her Café Press Store at http://www.cafepress.com/judiepeters.

We are pleased to announce that Cindy DeLaRosa has volunteered to serve as Acting Co-Chair for Public Relations and will be working closely with Tonya Thomas, Co-Chair, on new and exciting events and ideas for the HWS. Watch for Cindy’s “Monday Meet & Greet” on the Yahoo Welfare List in August, and WELCOME and THANK YOU, Cindy! ~ The HWS Board

EDWARDS...

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are prepared to go through with a surgery, but not follow-up treatments, such as chemo, then it is not important for us to have certain lab tests done. They are very costly and may have no bearing on future treatment.

* We explain to the vet that we are a rescue and ask if there is a “rescue courtesy” available. Some vets are approachable in this way and assist by offering a cost reduction for various procedures.

* Some vets can offer a reduction in fees for “well hedgehog” check-ups, especially useful for busy rescues. Fees should not stand in the way of evaluating a needy hedgehog.

* Some vets offer a reduction in fees for euthanasia. Other vets will charge you a consultation fee, plus the charge for euthanasia. An exorbitant fee for euthanasia should not be a determining factor in ending the painful existence of a hedgehog, when you are already faced with such a difficult decision.

* We are fortunate to have a veterinary teaching college relatively close-by in Guelph, the OVC (Ontario Veterinary College). They have assisted us several times with their expertise, and although their fees are not particularly competitive, their knowledge and procedures are innovative.

The most important thing to remember when choosing a vet, is to try to find one who shares your passion and ethics and will do everything in their power to assist with your rescue efforts. Only then can you say that you have found your true hedgehog hero. It has taken us almost 10 years, but thankfully... we have found ours.

In closing, we would like to express our gratitude to ALL our hedgehog heroes: the organizations and individuals who support us financially and in other ways; the pet stores who assist us by regularly discounting our purchases, in particular “Parkdale Pet Place” in Waterloo, Ontario; pet stores who have generously donated items for our “Canada Day” fundraising event, in particular “Superpet” in Cambridge, Ontario and the “Animal Inn” at Conestoga Mall, Waterloo, Ontario; our very special veterinarians and their support staff, in particular the offices of “Gateway Pet Hospital” in Kitchener, Ontario and “Waterloo West Animal Hospital” in Waterloo, Ontario.

YOU are our hedgehog heroes and because of your genuine love and devotion to the hedgies, as well as your compassion and generosity, Gary and I are able to fulfill the commitment we made almost 10 years ago! THANK YOU!

Pog Profiles

This column introduces our readers to some of the wonderful hedgies with whom HWS members share their lives. Each “profilee” is given a list of 15 questions and chooses some of them to answer. In this issue, we profile Kiah Lynn, who was born on September 1, 2005. At that time, she lived with her mommy LaVonna in Seattle. Her mom LaVonna graciously transcribed the following:

Q: What is your favorite food, and do you think you get enough of it?
A: Right now I’m eating some kind of baby cat food, since I was born kind of a preemie.

Q: Which recreational activities do you pursue?
A: I’m kind of embarrassed to admit that I don’t do a whole lot. Pretty much I just sleep, poop, eat, and wheel. I’m not really interested in toys right now, and I just warmed up to mealworms.

Q: Do you have a significant other?
A: Nope, but my mom’s boyfriend Ryan is pretty cool.

Q: What is your philosophy of life?
A: Life’s too short to do things that you don’t want to do.

Q: What do you think it’s like across the Rainbow Bridge?
A: It’s probably pretty cool. I’m not really afraid of death. I kind of believe in the afterlife.

Q: How do you show your affection for your human caretaker?
A: Tough love. I like to bite her. I don’t like to be vulnerable, so we don’t bond much. She understands now that if she wants to hold me, she’d better have a towel that I can hide in.

Q: How do you like your human...

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profile...
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caretaker to show affection for you?
A: She likes to hold me, buy me
snacks (even though I don’t eat em!) and try to show me
new toys (yeah, I don’t really play with those, either...).

Q: How do you want to be remembered?
A: As my mother’s daughter. Just
like her, I’m spunky and I’ve got
attitude!

Q: Do you have a favorite saying?
A: “The greatest thing you’ll ever
learn is just to love and be loved in
return.” I heard it from my mommy.

Q: Where is your favorite place?
A: Burrowed under my blankets.

Q: If your human caretaker quotes
you in email messages, do you think
your thoughts are communicated
accurately?

A: Of course! She’s great at
knowing what other people are
thinking. She’s going to be a great
psychologist.

Q: What is something that very few
people know about you?
A: Psh. Mommy talks a lot.
Everyone knows everything about me!

Q: What piece of advice do you
have for all human caretakers?
A: Care for your pets as you would
your own child.

Milwaukee Rendezvous
Hedgehog Show
October 13, 14, 15, 2006

Come join us in Milwaukee for the first
Milwaukee Rendezvous Hedgehog Show. This show will include two conformation shows (Saturday morning and Sunday morning), sports games and costume contest (Saturday afternoon), fun games (Friday night), a vendor area, a silent auction, Friday night casual dinner and program, Saturday night banquet and speaker, and a Phileas Hogg II look alike contest! Start digging out your yellow rain coats now and plan on joining us! Hotel and registration information can be gotten by emailing show secretary Deb Weaver at deborah.weaver@marquette.edu.

Check out the show website on the internet – http://tinyurl.com/lgske

Favorite Rescue Story
Do you have a favorite rescue story you would like to share?
Please send it to us either electronically at newsletter@hedgehogwelfare.org or via snail-mail to HWS Newsletter c/o Kathleen Knudsen PO Box 70408, Seattle WA 98127

Little Ms Greta Babycakes Cranky Pants Show Princess Weaver is all ready for her first show – attending with big sister and one of the show’s hostesses Ms Molly Dolly Snickerdoodle Sassy Pants Show Queen Weaver.