



The Flying Monkey



July 2021 | The Official NEWSLetter of Foster Parrots & The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary

A Message of Hurt & Hope from Foster Parrots' Executive Director

by Karen Windsor

At approximately 5:00 am, in the early morning hours of April 1, 2021, the nightmare most feared by animal rescue organizations everywhere shattered our world at The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary. An electrical short in a fan on a heat exchange unit in the north wing of our sanctuary caused the wiring to ignite. Flames quickly spread across the ceiling and into the volatile attic space above. The destruction was swift and thorough. Within two hours, the entire north wing, representing 1/3 of the facility, had burned to the ground, and 95 precious lives were lost. Our entire north-end cockatoo community perished. Our Quaker colony, all five of our Patagonian caws, and our Pacheco's birds were taken. All of our cherished north hall parrots who had lived so happily in their cohesive little community, suddenly, were gone.

Our whole-building fire alarm system, wired directly to the local fire department, had triggered a quick response from firefighters. Their efforts apprehended the flames just prior to them spreading beyond our main kitchen. With the kitchen completely engulfed in flames, we came within moments of losing our kitchen birds along with all the others. Their lives were saved by a single firefighter who jumped to pull all of their cages out of the flames. Presumably, he was also the man who opened the kitchen door and pulled Rose, our scarlet macaw, and Buddy, our umbrella cockatoo, to safety. Rose and Buddy were the only north-wing parrots to survive.

As a public entity, Foster Parrots is required to be fire-code compliant and we were confident in our precautions. Regulation fire doors and certified fire extinguishers were distributed liberally throughout the facility. Our managers live onsite and evacuation plans were in place. But fire code mandates are structured to save human

lives, not animals, and fire officials will not allow people into a burning building to evacuate animals despite the level of hysteria. In truth, there is no way to prepare for a fire; one can only try to survive it. A fire is indiscriminate, unpredictable and devastatingly fast. A fire doubles in size every 30 seconds. These are the lessons we learned on the morning of April 1st.

In the days and weeks following the fire, thousands of messages of love and support poured in from across the country and internationally. Clearly, this tragedy did not just happen to Foster Parrots. Grief was felt around the world, but the messages were unified in hope and encouragement: "Don't give up. The work of Foster Parrots must continue! You will get through this." After nearly 3 decades of pouring all of our passion into this mission, this was the kind of blow from which recovery and continuation do not feel possible. And yet 300 surviving parrots and the overwhelming need for sanctuary in avian welfare compel us forward. It was the depth of caring expressed in all those messages, and the incredible kindness of the local community that has pulled us through.

I don't think it is possible to ever really heal from a loss this overwhelming. I think we may be able to tuck the pain away in a little pocket in our hearts sometimes so we can keep functioning, but it's always going to be there, waiting to rise up, irre-

pressible. It's always just under the surface. Nevertheless, our parrots and reptiles need our care, and we do not have the luxury of time. The remaining sanctuary can accommodate our birds temporarily, but the building was heavily damaged by flooding, and this is the same aging structure that ignited so quickly in the north wing of the facility. It is not safe. We are looking at a complete rebuild.

At this writing the sanctuary is still running on partial electricity and water is being accessed through a series of rigged garden hoses, but we are working toward progress. Rhode Island architect, Frank Karpowicz, has turned our rudimentary drawings into professional plans, and we have engaged a wonderful company, PDS Engineering & Construction, to oversee the entire reconstruction project. We hope to break ground by late fall of this year. Fundraising will be on-going and the road before us is long and twisty, but when the work is done, we will have created a safe and beautiful sanctuary for our birds and animals, and Foster Parrots will persevere.



The pain of events makes it impossible for us to include photos of the destruction or any of our lost birds at this time. Alternatively we offer this photo of hope and beauty, by our staff photographer, Brian Jones.

THE FACES OF RECOVERY:



Rose – Miraculously pulled from the burning north wing of the sanctuary, Rose emerged with facial burns and singed feathers. While his feathers will continue to be a reminder of his ordeal, his face has since healed completely, and his spirit has never faltered. He loves his new life in the Education Hall at the sanctuary and revels in the increased attention from his human friends. This vivacious, beautiful being has been a Foster Parrots resident since 2007.

Buddy – Like Rose, this beautiful umbrella cockatoo also escaped the flames that took her entire north wing, cockatoo community. She had always had an annoying habit of leaving her community and flying down the hall to attach herself to the kitchen door. Ultimately, this was the behavior that saved her life. She suffered only a slight injury to her foot. Buddy was retired to the care of Foster Parrots in January of 2019.



Sugarbean – Sugarbean suffered the most serious injuries on the morning of April 1st, both physically and mentally. She incurred burns to her face, head and back, and withdrew emotionally in the days and weeks following the fire. Always a demure, quiet little observer, her sensitive nature made her particularly vulnerable to the mental impact of events. While she has since regained her sweet spirit, her burns have healed slowly and continue to require daily care. Sugarbean became a Foster Parrots resident in December of 2011.

Ozzy and Clyde – These two charming African greys, together with Sugarbean, formed our precious little grey community in the kitchen. Many people are unaware that greys are complicated birds and often fail as pets. Neither Clyde nor Ozzy enjoy being handled, but they are wonderful birds who only ask that their boundaries be respected. Ozzy suffered some burns to his face, but has healed beautifully. Clyde has been a sanctuary resident since 2019. Ozzy had only just arrived in February of 2021. (*Ozzy is on the left, Clyde is on the right.*)



MEET OUR SURVIVORS

by Karen Windsor,
Executive Director, Foster Parrots Ltd.



Birdy – A vivacious, yellow-naped Amazon now between 50 – 60 years old, Birdy’s comical personality and intelligence have made her a favorite amongst staff and volunteers. She had become somewhat of a “Kitchen Queen” and delighted her human family daily with her antics and silliness. On the morning of April 1st, Birdy’s cage was pulled from the kitchen by the mystery firefighter, and she was spared injury. For this we will be forever grateful. Birdy has been a member of the Foster Parrots family since before we moved to Rhode Island in 2007.

Watusi – They don’t come any fresher or crazier than Watusi! But this is typical of Goffins cockatoos, whose intelligence, high energy and edgy playfulness can be intimidating to human caregivers. Watusi is no exception. Relinquished to Foster Parrots in 2001, she was adopted in that same year, but was returned in 2008. She was adopted again in 2010, only to be returned in 2011. Despite the events of April 1st, her larger-than-life spirit has never faltered, and she continues to be Foster Parrots’ most cherished brat.



Obie & Ozzie – Possibly the two happiest parrots at the sanctuary, these eclectic brothers have spent all of every day flying through the sanctuary since their arrival in 2018, delivering love and joy to human caregivers and other avian sanctuary residents alike. Inexplicably, they are well tolerated by all other birds. Their cages in the kitchen had only been used for sleeping. Thankfully, neither Obie nor Ozzie were injured in the fire, and they continue to be the sanctuary’s happiest, free-flighted birds.

(Obie is on the top left, Ozzie is on the bottom right.)

A Tale of Scars and Healing... And Bees Who Hold Each Other's Feet

by Julian Trilling
FP Volunteer and
Self-Appointed FP
Personnel Post-Crisis
Daily Care Reminder
Person

I've switched from healing one hand to the other in terms of macaw bites, and this scar hurts more than the others while it is healing. Sometimes parts of us are raw while they heal, sometimes they aren't. I look at my hands, and they are covered in scars. Dog bites and bird bites and scratches, but also other things...stupid things I did that I can't even remember, my skin just being delicate...moving up my arms, I have scars there, too, mostly from bird talons, but they cover up old scars. A test that was too rough when I was a kid. Stretch marks. My face... three big scars from when I was bitten by my own dog in 2014, currently a scar on my chin from Mimi (the sanctuary's sassy rosella) that is taking its sweet time to heal. I am covered, literally from head to toe, in scars. Some of them still hurt. Some of them are internal, some of them are visible.

Right now, that bite on my left index finger isn't really a scar yet. It's just raw. The best I can do is care for it and protect it. I think it is easier to handle healing when we can watch our wounds turn to scars, and then watch the scars fade a bit. We have all been scarred, and it is hard to see, but if we look in the right way, we can see the scars we bear. It is in our eyes, our posture, our energy, our tears. But so is our strength and resolve.

I want to remind you that it's OK to not be OK. For as long as it lasts, that's OK. We hold each other up. Let us be the air beneath each other's wings and the branches beneath each other's feet. Let us sing loudly when one of us is lost so that they may find us. I often joke that I have become a bird, but the bird way just makes more sense than the human way most of the time. Except for the biting. Sometimes.

This started as a morning mini-rant, a reminder to others to practice self-care, but I can't help seeing the scars on my hands while I write, so I felt it was important to share.

Did you know that the aorta of a blue whale is so large that a human could [theoretically] swim through it? (Please do not actually try this.) How about the fact that bees sleep 6-8 hours a night, and some sleep in flowers while holding each other's feet?

Speaking of sleep...did you get some good rest? Can you eat breakfast today? Make sure you take your medications/vitamins, drink lots of water, and stretch! If you don't have a bee to snuggle with, perhaps the thought of them sleeping sweetly will help you rest.

Please do take care of yourselves, whatever that means for you.

I love you all so very, very much.

Love,

Julian



In the News



Petition for the Importation of 4,000 African Grey Parrots

In 2019, Florida breeder, Paul Marolf, and associates petitioned U.S. Fish & Wildlife to allow the importation of 4,000 African grey parrots from South Africa for the purpose of “revitalizing U.S. breeding stock.” Animal and avian welfare organizations from around the globe mobilized to block the petition, which would represent a deadly blow to one of the world’s most highly endangered parrot species. Recently, the World Parrot Trust announced that, while Marolf’s Captive Breeding Program (CBP) application was unsuccessful in achieving approval for the acquisition of 4,000 greys, USFWS did approve the importation of 150 birds. Seventy-five males and seventy-five females, none of whom can be verified not to be wild-caught, will be transferred from egregious facilities in South Africa to spend the rest of their lives as breeder birds in a Florida bird mill. It can be said that where these birds are going is no worse than where they’re coming from, but it is tragic that USFWS would approve a CBP application from documented criminals and abusers.

Quaker Parrot Update

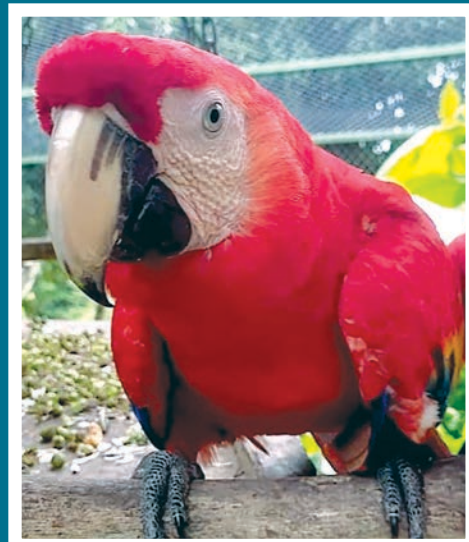
Quaker parrots are illegal in the state of New Jersey, and their classification as a “dangerous invasive, non-native species” has justified the killing of thousands of Quakers – very often babies – over the past 50 years. Having fought relentlessly for the legal re-classification of Quakers in New Jersey, **Alison Evans-Fragale's** battle was recently given wings when the Bergen County Board of Commissioners announced its unequivocal support for the passage of bills A4324/S2640 now pending in the legislature, and issued an official proclamation calling for the protection of Quaker parrots in the state. Big thanks to Bergen County and to all who have fought so long to stop the violence against these precious little birds.



Thanks for joining the contest to name me, and helping to support MCCR!

Scarlet Macaw Naming Contest: We have a winner!

Did you think we forgot? Thirty-two entries were made during the March Matching Fund Drive, with proceeds going to Costa Rica to help support Macaw Conservation Costa Rica (MCCR). Names were written on uniform pieces of paper and the winner was blindly chosen by Foster Parrots Founder, Marc Johnson. Big hugs and big thanks to all who participated in the contest to name this special macaw. Her name is **Henrietta!**



"New Girl" is now Henrietta!

“No Cage Is Big Enough” – The Story of Louie's 41 Years in a Cage

by Amanda Coleman
Adoption Program Manager



Above and lower right: Moluccan cockatoo, Louie. Caged for 40 years, Louie is now learning to explore his environment outside the confines of a cage.

On May 22, 2021, I received a relinquishment request for a Moluccan Cockatoo named **Louie**. His story was one we hear all too often, a story of abuse and improper education resulting in the negligence of an animal. Louie had had three homes that we are aware of. In his early life, he had been purchased by college students who kept him in a cage in a fraternity residence. According to reports, the students would sometimes beat on his cage with brooms and bats when Louie would become loud. He was surrendered to a local organization and was soon adopted by a couple who wanted to “step up” for Louie after his traumatizing experience at the frat house. Unfortunately, the inexperienced couple was afraid that Louie might bite, as he would hiss and sway when they approached him. While they loved him, they were not confident in their ability to take him out of the cage. Consequently, Louie would spend the next 4 decades locked in that cage.

Louie’s last and final guardian took him in when his previous guardians passed. She knew she would not be the forever

home that Louie needed, but she took him in temporarily so he would never again find himself in an abusive situation. When she brought him to Foster Parrots, she had tears streaming down her face from both sadness and happiness. From the parking lot she could see Buddy, our resident umbrella cockatoo, peering out of the big windows of Foster Parrots’ Education Hall, playing joyfully on his frame and watching over the whole process. “That’s what I want for Louie,” she said. This is why I contacted you. I know your organization is what this bird so desperately needs.”

In the wild, parrots spend their days flying through the forest canopies and foraging in trees. They live in flocks of conspecifics and form social hierarchies and strong social bonds. They groom each other and have a wide range of vocalizations to communicate with flock members and mates. In the wild, parrots are never alone and are never confined to any structure for any period of time. While they may sleep and nest in hollowed-out tree trunks, they are not confined. They have the ability and choice to move freely and engage with whom they want. The “cage bird” is one of the biggest fallacies of the pet industry. The “cage bird” does not exist. The “cage bird” is a flighted wild animal, bred into captivity - or worse; kidnapped from its wild home to live a life behind metal bars.

Though in captivity the cage can be a necessary component for safety during times when our parrots cannot be supervised,

when considering adopting a bird, one of the biggest considerations to make is how many hours a day you are able to allow this flighted being to spend out of the cage. Birds that are excessively caged can develop chronic and debilitating behavioral issues such as feather plucking, self-mutilation, excessive screaming, and aggression. Physically, birds that are caged are more likely to be over-weight, have poor muscle development and are at a higher risk for liver and heart disease. Having ample out-of-cage time is critically important for your birds’ psychological and physiological health and well-being. Providing your parrot with the biggest cage possible is important, but allowing your bird ample out of cage time is crucial.

Louie is a 41-year-old Moluccan Cockatoo who has never been outside of a cage. He has never been able to experience any level of freedom - until now. He has found a home here at Foster Parrots and we will continue to work with Louie every single day, building up his confidence and allowing him free-will and choice. Louie will never again be subjected to a life confined to a cage because “No Cage is Big Enough.”



Piper's Journey: A Tale of Love, Neglect and Resiliency

by Rachel DeFronzo
Media & Marketing Director



In late 2019, I received a call from a woman who was worried about her friend, Linda, and the birds under her care. Linda had been taking in birds for many years, but her declining health and unstable living situation were causing concern. When Foster Parrots arrived to evaluate the situation, we saw that Linda was in over her head. There were over 80 birds in the home, many in small cages stacked from the floor to the ceiling. What had started as Linda's well-meaning and heart-felt attempt to rescue birds, had become a hoarding case. With a bit of coaxing, she voluntarily relinquished 7 birds, most of whom were clearly in need of medical intervention. One of those birds was a timid little "pineapple" green-cheeked conure. She was very weak, sleepy, and noticeably underweight. She had not been out of her cage in years. She did not have a name. We decided to call her **Piper**.

Piper was in terribly poor health with liver disease so severe that our vet, Dr. Ann Bourke, could not believe that she looked as well as she did, or that she had even survived. Years of a poor, seed-based diet and a complete lack of exercise had taken a toll, but with dietary improvements, a supplemental milk-thistle concoction and proper medical support, Piper gradually became more animated – and edgy! And almost as if she knew what she needed to be healthy, she began to choose to eat fresh vegetables and pellets exclusively.

Piper was a bird who had lived for so many years without ever being liberated from her cage, and without being handled or having the benefit of any level of social

support. And yet, because a bird in a cage is such a widely accepted concept, we fail to see the abuse and neglect when it is happening right before our eyes. It's heartbreaking to think about how many parrots like Piper there are out there who endure lives like this. Sometimes, though, the fortitude and resiliency of parrots can surprise us.

I was determined to bring love and happiness into the life of this embattled little bird. I have an aviary at home that houses four small birds: two green-cheeked conures, a black capped conure and a white bellied caique.

There was room for one more. Piper went home with me on March 5th. Once introduced into the aviary, she immediately took flight. No one would have ever guessed Piper was such a skilled flyer! My existing flock, barely taking notice of Piper's arrival, went about their business as usual. It was a beautifully seamless integration.

But the biggest surprise happened on Piper's first evening at home. During her time at Foster Parrots, Piper had always been very skittish and uncomfortable around people. She would never allow a hand to come near her and certainly would not accept handling or touch. However, on that evening, as I sat relaxing on the couch with the aviary door open, and my black-capped conure, Max, napping on my chest, out of nowhere, Piper flew straight through the door to land on my lap. When I slowly approached with my finger, Piper lowered her head to be scratched. It was as if she had seen what was happening with Max, and a memory awakened inside her. Evidently, Piper was loved by a family, once upon a time, before ending up under the care of hoarder, who never understood that there was a person inside this little bird.

Piper's story is relevant on so many levels. This is a cautionary tale of a once well-loved parrot whose journey landed her in a life of neglect and deprivation. It's a story that demonstrates the benefits of creating a dynamic home flock and an environment that encourages "belonging." Mostly, this is the story of the physical and social resiliency of parrots, and how years in a cage could not dampen a little bird's spirit or break her wings.

Eagle Scout Project 2021: A New Tortoise Fence for Foster Parrots!

Our sanctuary was in need of a new tortoise fence, and Ben Bacon of Richmond Scout Troop 1 needed a community project to help him earn his Eagle Scout badge. It was

a match made in heaven. Thanks so much, Ben for your hard work! The tortoises are outside for the summer, and the fence is sturdy and beautiful!



SUCCESS!
WE RAISED
\$10,000
FOR FOSTER
PARROTS!



Thank you to all
 our participants!
 See you in 2022!

Results of the FP 2021 Virtual 5k Fundraiser

Lingering Covid-19 uncertainties early in the year spurred us to think creatively around Foster Parrots' 3rd Annual Sneaks for Beaks 5k Fundraiser, and like so many activities over the past year, this time we went virtual! The results surprised even us! We had a record of 150+ participants from across the USA. We even had runners in the Netherlands! (center image below)

2021 Sneaks for Beaks 5k Race to Rebuild

Foster Parrots & The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary

We raised a ground-breaking \$10,000!
Congratulations, thank you, and love to our amazing top three fundraisers:

- 1) Michaela Kennedy \$1050
- 2) Team Maxwell (Heather Wunschel) \$750
- 3) Team Cava-Locke's (Abby Locke) \$615



Save the Date to Soar in Song!

Celebrate with One Earth Conservation and the enchanting Galway Girls. Listen to songs of birds, songs of hope and other delightful songs from Ireland and elsewhere, all while supporting One Earth Conservation's annual (virtual) fundraiser.

When: 7:00pm to 8:00pm (EDT), Friday, September 24, 2021
Where: On Zoom!
 Check www.oneearthconservation.org for more info!

Photo credit:
 Claude Williams
 Photography



MACAW CONSERVATION COSTA RICA

by Chris Castles, MCCR President



MCCR: The Future of Our Scarlet Macaw Breeding & Release Program Efforts Underway to Establish a Release Site & Obtain Permits

Costa Rica's animal welfare and environmental regulations have changed dramatically over the last few years, resulting in many rescue and sanctuary facilities being inspected and shut down by authorities in 2020. During this sweep, [Macaw Conservation Costa Rica](#) (MCCR) was met with a surprise inspection by MINAET, Costa Rica's governmental agency for conservation. The project was evaluated, aviaries were measured, diets, medical facilities and the overall quality of life of resident parrots were reviewed. Officials were impressed. **MCCR scored high ratings and our current license as a "Zoologico" organization was renewed, enabling us to continue rescue and rehabilitation services, and to offer sanctuary for unreleasable parrots.** However, licensing as a "captive breed and release" facility, which has been MCCR's goal since our inception seven years ago, remains out of reach, contingent upon MCCR's ability to establish a release site in the Guanacaste or Nicoya Peninsula region in the north of the country. We've been working toward that goal, but now must move quickly. As of 2022, MINAET will not be approving any more permits for scarlet macaw release sites.

Formerly the head of The Ara Project, MCCR President, [Chris Castles](#), has been at the helm of Costa Rica's most successful breed and release programs, reaching back more than 15 years. Under Chris' direction The Ara Project released 40 great green macaws and 118 Scarlet macaws between 2003 and 2013. Genetic integrity had formed the basis of adult bird pairings, and several release sites had been secured to repopulate the natural areas where macaw numbers had dwindled. Now at the helm of [Macaw Conservation Costa Rica](#), Chris hopes to continue this important work.

In an effort to further develop programs with a strong basis in conservation science, Costa Rica regulations have now turned intense scrutiny on genetic accuracy and the natural geographic distribution of indigenous species. Of the two subspecies of



Three of MCCR's current resident macaws.

scarlet macaw (*Ara macao* and *Ara macao cyanoptera*), *cyanoptera* is exclusive to Central America and is quickly disappearing across its natural range. Out of the current 20 captive macaws being held by MCCR, 14 of these represent the rarer *cyanoptera* subspecies. Most of these birds had been kept illegally as pets or were used in clandestine breeding programs hybridizing offspring for the pet trade. Under the care of MCCR, these 14 macaws have been "flock-mated", meaning they have been given the opportunity to choose their own mates. The result has been 6 genetically diverse, breeding pairs that are now beginning to produce fertile eggs. Unfortunately, until a new release site and proper licensing are secured, these eggs must be pulled and destroyed.

After much investigation, we have located a suitable release site in a desirable region of the Nicoya Peninsula bordering Diria National Park. This site offers an ideal environment and perfect location for the rewilding of scarlet macaws, and will enable the project to breed and release flocks of 4-10 macaws per year.

Macaw Conservation Costa Rica must now raise \$10,000 for a biological study of the new site, production of the "Plan de Manejo" (business plan) and the required permits. A modest biologist's cabin and a release aviary are the only structures needed to complete the release site. **If you are interested in supporting MCCR's breeding program and becoming a partner in this work, or for more information, please email Chris Castles at Chris@macawconservation.org** **If you would like to make a contribution, please visit www.fosterparrots.com/support and designate your donation to MCCR. 100% of your tax-deductible donation will go directly to Macaw Conservation Costa Rica. Thank you!**

Join us at the Foster Parrots' Fall Fundraiser Memorial: *Rebuilding and Remembering*

*Cordelia's Farm**

228 Pleasant Street, Berlin, MA 01503

October 2, 2021 • 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm

*Live
music by* **WILL
& VANS**



Featuring

- Delicious Vegan & Vegetarian Fare
- Open Beer & Wine Bar
- Incredible Raffle and Silent Auction
- Guest Non-Profits
- Children's Activities
- Ample lodging nearby visit FosterParrots.com for area details

Tickets are \$99 ea.

Purchase tickets online at: www.fosterparrots.com/events

Tickets must be purchased in advance. Seating is strictly limited and tickets will go fast, so please don't wait!

**Due to fire damage, the sanctuary is still not fully operational and cannot accommodate an onsite Fall Fundraiser Memorial. We hope you will understand and join us at Cordelia's Farm as we work together to rebuild and continue to care for our precious sanctuary residents.*



**It's the most fun
you can have
in the world for
under \$100!**



Foster Parrots & The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary

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We invite you to join us at the Foster Parrots' Fall Fundraiser Memorial:

Rebuilding and Remembering

October 2, 2021

details on page 11

YES!

I want to attend the FP Fall Fundraiser Memorial and help FP Rebuild and Remember.

NUMBER OF TICKETS _____ at \$99 ea. = TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

I am unable to attend but please accept my donation of \$ _____

YES! I WANT TO SPONSOR THIS EVENT! SPONSORSHIP AMOUNT \$ _____

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