



## First Annual Sugar Glider Expo to Debut in Detroit, Michigan, Suburb

**This event will offer information and education for sugar glider enthusiasts.**

*By Angela Pham*

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Photo Courtesy Val Betts

Val Betts with one of the sugar gliders that she rescues and rehabilitates.

The First Annual Sugar Glider Expo, to be held on October 11, 2008, may be the first ever in the world of sugar gliders but, judging from its projected schedule of events, it won't be the last.

The event, held in Belleville, Michigan, a town 30 minutes outside of Detroit, Michigan, is planned to comprise six hours of vendors, classes, speakers, demonstrations and presentations to promote responsible sugar glider ownership and care. But the day doesn't end there.

"A fun part is after the event: We hang out at the hotel and hang out with each other," said Val Betts, public relations representative for The Glider Initiative, the group of sugar glider lovers that created the Expo.

Set in the historic Women's Literary Guild building among three different rooms, the Expo provides the opportunity for sugar glider enthusiasts throughout the United States to come together and educate themselves about their exotic pets. Betts also recommends that veterinarians and those who work in veterinary clinics attend the event to educate themselves on caring for sugar gliders' unique needs.

"People aren't quite aware of what their needs are," Betts said. "Even vets haven't kept up with the research in the last five years and, unfortunately, mill breeding is a problem right now, selling sick and injured sugar gliders."

The Glider Initiative, a nonprofit group, was formed in 2007 with the ultimate goal to decrease the number of sugar gliders that enter rescues every year, Betts said. By bringing the Expo to fruition this year, the group hopes to further help the cause.

Aside from meeting with vendors and fellow sugar glider aficionados, Expo attendees can sit in on demonstrations that instruct on topics like how to look for a knowledgeable veterinarian, how to care for wounds, how to give medications and why nail-clipping is essential. A nail-clipping service will even be on-hand at the event for those who bring in their sugar gliders.

The Super 8 Motel in Belleville permits both owners and their sugar gliders, and Betts can assure travelers that their sugar gliders won't be denied, "When we were looking for a place to stay, we took sugar gliders in and showed them what they were, that they were caged animals, and yes, they allow them."

Although the First Annual Sugar Glider Expo will not have sales or adoptions, those who don't currently own a sugar glider are still encouraged to come to gain useful knowledge in areas from healthcare to dietary needs.

The First Annual Sugar Glider Expo is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Oct. 11, 2008, in Belleville, Michigan. There is no cost to attend for those who are members of The Glider Initiative; non-members pay \$25.

To register, RSVP to [gathering@thegliderinitiative.org](mailto:gathering@thegliderinitiative.org) and indicate whether or not you are a member of The Glider Initiative. The Super 8 Motel is located at 45707 S. I-94 Service Rd. in Belleville, Michigan. To make reservations, call 734-699-1888.