

How Ferrets Change People's Lives

People discover that their lives can change dramatically after adopting a ferret.

By Rebecca Stout

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Natalie Fontane and David Kirsch pose with three of their six ferrets, Bartleby, Leela and JLo.

Photos Courtesy Natalie Fontane and David Kirsch

Fontane and Kirsch bought a home that had a room they could devote to ferrets.

A Ferret Home

But these little buggers can also change lives in big ways. Natalie Fontane of Nevada tells a fantastic story about how she met her boyfriend. Shortly after adopting the light of her life, Bartleby, Fontane posted an ad on Craig's List to sell some ferret food she no longer wanted. Dave, who also owned ferrets, answered Fontane's ad. Fate brought the two together on several occasions thereafter and ferret play dates ensued.

"I realized this man was different from others I'd dated. Not only did he care about his ferrets, but he loved my Bartleby," Fontane said. "We started going out and are still happily together two years later. We have a ferret family of six, and we know our loving family is complete."

Their new relationship led to a whole new beginning in life, along with the decision to buy a home together — a home with special facilities. "Ideally, we needed a home that was extremely ferret-friendly. I wanted a way to put a baby gate up to block the front door — to prevent escapes, we needed a ferret room on the first floor, and we preferred to have tile floors instead of carpet because we have one or two kids who rarely make it to the litter box. In many of the houses, Dave walked in, looked around a little, and said, 'There's no ferret room.' He walked out without looking at the rest of the house. We combed over floor plans for new construction, pointing out problems and trouble the ferrets could get into. Finally, we found the perfect house, and our ferrets run around an entirely tiled downstairs, dooking up a storm."

Courtesy of Cheryl Bates

Tim Bates was so enchanted by Freebie the ferret that he soon opened a ferret shelter.

A Soul-Stirring Transforming

Tim Bates underwent the ultimate transformation on every level imaginable. It all began when he became completely enchanted by a little ferret named Freebie. It ended up leading him down the long, difficult road of rescue work, and he eventually became a ferret shelter operator and owner. But Freebie and ferrets in general also changed his life in the deepest and intimate of ways.

"I used to be very hard and cold to people and their ignorance, and wondered if there was actually a God, but Freebie changed that with all his love he showed us," Bates said. "And now we are taking care of all that we find and can care for, finding homes for them if we can. And if not they will live here till God calls them home. All said, one little ferret took a hard man and showed him what it means to love and be loved, and reminded me that I still had a heart."

Spreading The Joy

There is so much life in these little ones, how could it not spill over into ours? How could they not change the very heart and soul of our lives? With a ferret in the house, no matter how hard you try, that loaf of bread will never stay on the counter; your shoes will never survive out of a closet; you will always find yourself seeking the company of "ferret people."

With a ferret in your home, you may never be able to pass the toy section of a store again without thinking how much your ferret would adore a toy piano, let alone pass a drainage pipe in the home section without thinking how cool it would be to hang it from your walls like a giant maze for the ferrets to run in.

Yes, I own many, many types of animals. But I am "owned" by only one. The ferret.

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Rebecca Stout resides in rural Tennessee with her husband, two sons and beloved pets. Ferrets have been in her heart and life for 30 years. She enjoys writing, photography, animals and being a strong advocate for her autistic son.