

Ferrets Rule At MaFF

Members of the Massachusetts Ferret Friends help ferrets and have fun together.

By Marylou Zarbock

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Ferrets of the Caribbean is one fun theme that was chosen for a 2007 fundraiser.

Photos Courtesy Alan and Joanne Ouellette

Ferrets and some owners came in full dress for the King Rangers Fair fundraiser that occurred in September 2008.

Membership Benefits At MaFF

Both Spy and Wheeler agree that MaFF is a place where you can come and spend time with other people who are passionate about ferrets.

Members of MaFF can participate in four general meetings every year, plus a fundraiser and ongoing education or outreach. They're also welcome to attend the monthly board of directors meetings, but Spy said the really fun stuff usually happens at the general meetings. In March, MaFF holds Ferret Freedom Day; June is the spring get-together; August is the picnic and December is the holiday meeting. September is the fundraiser.

In addition to events, MaFF offers a 24-hour hotline, veterinarian list, forums, a huge support community for ferret owners and more.

Questions that come in to the hotline cover just about everything related to ferrets — euthanasia; health; litter; I have to get rid of my ferret; I found a ferret; where can I get rid of a dog or cat. That's right, someone called the MaFF hotline and asked about dogs and cats.

"We get back to each and every phone call within a 24-hour window," Wheeler said. Did she answer the caller who asked about cats and dogs? Yes. She said she helps when she can.

Photo Courtesy Alan and Joanne Ouellette

The Christmas Fundraiser features a tree decorated with ornaments that have the names of people who made a donation to be on the tree.

Some Ferret Event Highlights

Heritage Days: MaFF has an ongoing invitation to go to a middle school in North Attleboro, Massachusetts, in May for Heritage Days. Children at the school sign up to attend the different classes presented by various organizations. MaFF's is called Ferrets Are Fun. It includes a slideshow on ferret history, a short talk on ferret care, and a chance for the children to pet a ferret as MaFF members walk around the room with them. The desks are arranged in a circle around the ferrets' playpen, and the class ends with the children seated and watching the ferrets interact with each other.

The Ferret Giving Tree Party: This general meeting in December brings members together to split up and wrap ferret accessories and supplies they gathered all year. These goodie boxes are sent out to ferret shelters in need. MaFF uses the Ferret Giving Tree to find ferret shelters in need, and also sends to ferret shelters it knows.

Christmas Fundraiser: MaFF does a fundraiser at Christmas for one of the ferrets in its own shelter that needs help. In 2008, it was Hope — a ferret that needed an operation for a tumor behind its ear. In 2007, it was Sierra — a ferret that had been paralyzed from the ribcage back. Money raised goes toward the care of the ferret. How is money raised? By people purchasing a MaFF ornament. For \$10, people can send their pet's name and have it put on an ornament and placed on the MaFF Christmas tree for that year. In 2008, this raised more than \$200 for Hope. Spy got the idea to do this from the MSPCA, which sells ornaments that are hung on the MSPCA tree in Boston.

A Goal For The Future

One goal Spy said that MaFF never has time to get to is legal issues, which usually involve a pet store not handling a ferret properly. Spy believes such problems exist because in Massachusetts pet stores are overseen by the Department of Agriculture, which has one set of rules, and shelters are overseen by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, which has a different set of rules.



Spy said shelters are required to vaccinate and health check any ferret before adoption. Pet stores do not have to do this. Spy wishes pet stores had to follow the same rules as shelters. Working to change this would probably require a full-time committee in Spy's estimation. Members currently spend their time doing events and day-to-day activities for MaFF, which is why she believes this project never seems to get the attention it deserves.

The Power Of People

"Legalization, education, getting the shelter up and running, membership involvement, outreach," Wheeler said, "I think we've accomplished a lot in the time we've done it."

Spy attributes MaFF's success to its members. "We wouldn't be where we are today without the great members we have today," she said. "They work really hard. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without them."

Wheeler added a caveat. "We wouldn't have a MaFF today without Phyllis. She's a pushy go-getter! She pushes volunteers and pushes members, she makes us feel involved. We're family."