



## Bits and Pieces

### A Day in the life of a Second Chance Volunteer

By Kimberly Patterson

My twelve year old daughter and I like to arrive at the center early in the morning before the busy, bustling time of the day. At 6:30 AM, it's quiet and peaceful. The baby birds haven't yet realized that it's morning and the Animal Control vans aren't coming down the driveway. We can start the work of the day and, hopefully, help the day go more smoothly by sneaking in before the insanity strikes.

My daughter, Lucy, often chooses to start with the flight cages behind the house. I go outside to help her. We gather up dishes and check on the baby pigeons. The birds all seem happy to see us. After washing, filling and redistributing food and water dishes, it's on to the ducklings. I make sure that they have plenty of food and

water as Lucy carries a group of larger ducklings to a small outdoor pen. Next job; mixing up deer fawn formula and feeding the two indescribably adorable fawns that came in earlier in the week. I've avoided entering the "animal rooms" so far this morning because I haven't wanted to wake or disturb the animals. Lucy and I try to sneak into the clinic room quietly and without turning on the lights. The second we pull back the curtain that covers the front of the fawn cage, the two fawns begin their chorus of endearing baby lamb sounds. We love to hear that sweet little "baah, baah," but, apparently, the baby chimney swifts don't. The combination of the bleating fawns and us opening their cage door has awakened the swifts and they treat us to an explosion of sound reminiscent of a plague of locusts! Of course, this awakens every other creature in the building. The baby birds all begin calling for breakfast as the crows send up their own special greeting. Ah, yes; this is what is considered "business as usual" at Second Chance. I am suddenly deeply thankful that the phone has not started ringing. After feeding the fawns (a wonderful task, I might add), I head back to the kitchen to mix up baby bird formula. Baby bird feedings start promptly at 8:00 and it is now 7:30 AM.

Chris arrives and is happy that I've been able to make it in early and get the work started. I am pleased that maybe I've been able to make her monumental list of tasks a tiny bit

shorter. There is so much that needs to be done. I wish I could do more. Luckily, today will be a good day with several volunteers due to come in. There are many days that we are in need of more volunteers, though. I have no idea how Chris does it! As soon as Chris arrives, the phones start their relentless ringing. And, of course, the animals start rolling in. Baby bird feedings get underway and the never ending cage cleaning commences.



The first arrival of the day is a pigeon with a badly torn crop; seed and blood are spilling down the front of the bird. The kind-hearted man who has brought the bird in looks worried. I take the bird in the box into the clinic

room and call for Chris. My daughter is at my side and I whisper to her that I believe that there is no way that this bird will live. Lucy says, "No, Mom, Chris can fix this." And, then, I watch in awe as Chris cleans the wound and deftly stitches it shut. At the same time, she is making friendly conversation with the man who brought the bird in. And, amazingly, she is also answering a myriad of questions fired at her by our young volunteers. She finishes the job



by administering an oral antibiotic and an anti-inflammatory injection. She asks me if I can set up a cage for this animal and I feel truly honored that there is at least something that I can actually do. As I settle our new patient into his living quarters, I apologize to him for giving up on him so quickly. Amazingly enough, he immediately starts pecking at the seed that I've put in the cage for him and I hope that the other volunteers don't notice that I am getting "choked up." There is no time to

ponder about life and death though, it's baby bird feeding time! All those mouths are open and waiting. The rest of the morning passes



in a blur of phones ringing, admissions, feedings, cleaning and endless loads of laundry.

It is now 12:30 and time for me to leave. Chris came

into the center one hour later than I did but she will be staying nine hours after I leave! It is hard to leave. There is so much that still needs to be done and I have been enjoying myself. I am reluctant to go back to what my daughter and I call "the real world." As I climb into my car, I feel exhilarated knowing that perhaps I've made a difference. I take so

much from the Earth, maybe I've found a way to give just a little bit back. Lucy is glowing. She is smiling and chattering about all the things she has done this morning. She has spent the last six hours in close contact with the animals that she loves. She has also spent a lot of time in the company of the best people on earth; people who love animals as

much as she does! I can't remember what we spent our time doing before we met Chris and discovered Second Chance!

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Reprinted from "Second Thoughts" newsletter – July 1997.  
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