

Rachel's Love for Animals

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(Rachel's mom who proudly tells her story.)

Rachel's love for animals extends to all aspects of her life. She is a 7 year old who has been diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder and suffers from difficulties connecting with other children and people. Unlike human communication, she has no problem understanding the signals of her animal friends, and they adore her.

Her favorite pet is our white Schnauzer named Cassie. Rachel and Cassie have a special bond that keeps Rachel connected to our reality rather than retreat into "her own world." Cassie recently chased a skunk and needed special baths to get rid of the smell. Rachel carefully wiped around Cassie's eyes with the special skunk-off treatment.

Other Rachel pet "rescues" include: a red-footed tortoise named Addison (with failure to thrive) that must be soaked and hand fed and five land hermit crabs (Punchy, Greeny, AJ, Pearl, and Pikmin) from horrible conditions at a petstore; a 25 year old bird named Sydney with skin cancer that needed treatment 3x/day; and a frail 18 year old parakeet (Miss Byrdie) of which the owner just grew tired of caring. We also share our home with dwarf hamsters (Peanut, Fluffy, Sunflower, and babies), a guinea pig (Peppie), three mice (Super Jerry, Batman, and Nibbles) and fish (Twisty, Speckles, et al.)

Rachel's goal for the future involves development of a rescue station which offers educational programs about the habitat and diet requirements for common and exotic pets. She also writes stories and paints pictures about the adventures of her animal friends in "her world." She exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between people and animals: she "rescues" animals and the animals "rescue" her from the isolation imposed by autism.