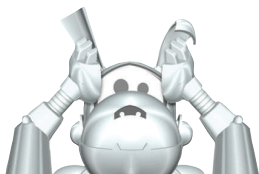


KIDSPOST

CHIP SAYS

On this day in 1912, the Titanic ocean liner, on its way to New York from Southampton, England, hit an iceberg and sank less than three hours later.



TODAY

Showers are likely by the afternoon, highs range from the upper 50s to low 60s, and winds are light.

ILLUSTRATION BY LUCIANA SAENZ, 8, MANASSAS



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If you like animals, look on our website for our stories about endangered species.



FAMILY PHOTOS

Katheryn Collins, who started Petites Pattes Rescue, holds a hamster. Also shown are mice, left, and another hamster, right. Katheryn seeks adopters for unwanted tiny animals and educates people about their special shelter and nutritional needs.

Teen has big heart for tiny critters

Katheryn Collins started an organization that cares for unwanted gerbils, hamsters and mice

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

Katheryn Collins understands better than most people that just because a pet may be tiny enough to weigh on a kitchen scale, that doesn't mean it needs only tiny amounts of attention and love.

Katheryn, a sophomore at Wheaton High School in Silver Spring, recently started an organization that cares for unwanted gerbils, hamsters and mice. She finds adopters and helps educate people about how to care for the critters. Her organization is called Petites Pattes Rescue. Petites Pattes means "little paws" in French.

"I think people don't think about the care of small animals," Katheryn said. "They just think, 'I'll just get a small cage.'" But often these pets don't have the right containers, toys or food. "It's not as

obvious when they need rescuing as it is with dogs and cats," she said.

Katheryn, who will be 16 in May, has grown up with animals. Her mom has rescued large dogs, cats and rats. But nothing as little as her sister's friend's gerbils, whom Katheryn met last year. It was love at first snuggle.

"They have fuzzy tails," she said, "and I love their curious personalities and how social they are."

In September, after several weeks of research, Katheryn bought two gerbils and named them Connor and Oliver. She got them from a pet store — which she regretted once she learned that many small mammals live in unsuitable homes and need rescuing from them. She also learned that pet stores don't always give the best advice. For example, some stores sell small hamster tubes that can be dangerous if the animals get stuck in them. They also may sell wheels that are too

small.

"If hamsters run in a wheel that's not big enough, it will cause back problems," Katheryn said, "like if you're always crouched over your computer."

Katheryn gobbled up information online about gerbils, hamsters and mice. She learned about how much space they need, what they eat and which ones like to live alone. She says there are many misconceptions about small-animal care.

"I love caring for pets, and I also like getting up on my soapbox," she said, laughing, "and telling people how to do something better."

So in January, Katheryn set up Petites Pattes, designed a website and asked for donations on her neighborhood message group. Family and neighbors donated money and supplies. She rescued her first animal in January from a family that was moving — a hamster she named Pluto. Pluto found his "forever home" within a

Small-pet facts

- Hamsters can run five to six miles a night on their wheels.
- Gerbils create intricate burrow systems with tunnels and chambers.
- Mice are very smart. They can learn tricks and how to come when they're called.
- The smallest hamster, the Roborovski, is about two inches long, while the largest, the Syrian, grows to about seven inches.
- Mice love to climb.
- Gerbils need to live with another same-sex gerbil or they will be sad.
- While hamsters don't have good eyesight, they can smell something up to 30 yards away.
- Hamsters have 16 teeth.
- The Syrian, also called a golden hamster, is on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species. In the wild, it is considered "vulnerable."
- In nature, female mice form colonies and live together. Males are territorial, so it's better if they live alone, or they can live with females if they are neutered.

couple of weeks, adopted by a woman in nearby Kensington who has several more of the pint-size fur balls.

Since then, Katheryn has posted a Craigslist ad looking for unwanted small animals to rescue. In March, she and her mom traveled to Virginia for a pickup that was larger than expected: one hamster and five mice, including three identical albino females. Several have been adopted.

Katheryn writes detailed descriptions of the animals' personalities and wants to find a good match with human adopters. On her website, she describes Cow, a short-haired Syrian hamster, as curious and needing a large enclosure.

The teen would like to expand to rescuing rats, guinea pigs and ferrets, but these animals need larger spaces. For now, she'll stick to the little guys. After all, she said, she has a small bedroom.

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TODAY'S NEWS



AARON LAVINSKY/STAR TRIBUNE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

People mourn the death of Daunte Wright, 20. A police official said he was mistakenly shot by an officer.

Officer, chief resign after police killing of young Black man

A Minnesota police officer who fatally shot a Black man during a traffic stop in a Minneapolis suburb and the city's chief of police resigned Tuesday. The mayor said he hoped the resignations would help heal the city after two nights of protests.

Officer Kim Potter and Police Chief Tim Gannon resigned two days after the death of 20-year-old Daunte Wright in Brooklyn Center.

Mayor Mike Elliott called the shooting "deeply tragic" and promised full accountability.

"We have to make sure that justice is served, justice is done," Elliott said.

Gannon said he believed Potter, a 26-year veteran, mistakenly grabbed her gun when she was going for her Taser as Wright resisted arrest.

Wright's father, Aubrey Wright, said early Tuesday that he rejected the explanation. "This officer has been on the force for 26 years. I can't accept that," he told ABC.

The incident began Sunday with a traffic stop for an expired registration, police said. The incident turned into a struggle when officers attempted to arrest Wright because he failed to appear in court last year.

— Associated Press