



Sheldon, the tortoise, decided to emerge from his burrow February 10, after a nice warm spell. Sheldon lives with Trista Hermann and her family. Here is her son, Michael Hermann Jr, who was so excited he forgot to change his shoes and wore them to school. Proof that it's really exciting when a tortoise emerges from its long winter nap. Of course, not all tortoises are out, and those in northern Nevada are still wondering with the fluctuating temperatures!

## Shelter project begins

Thanks to Tortoise Group supporters, a project to create a shelter to temporarily house up to 20 tortoises has started in Las Vegas.

In fall 2014, a generous homeowner gave Tortoise Group access to a portion of his property to create a shelter to alleviate the problem of having nowhere for homeless tortoises to go. On December 2, we launched an online campaign to raise \$12,000 to pay for the items needed to make the dream a reality. Funds were needed to create the irrigation system, pens, water dishes, and habitat for the tortoises.

And with the generous donations that came in from far and wide, the target was reached in January. Volunteers have already come forward to show willingness to help with the many phases of the project, from construction right through to feeding tortoises and maintenance.

The project has already benefitted from the volunteer work or landscape architect Richard McCreedy, Project Manager of WLB Group, Inc., Brian Esposito, VP of business development, SoilTech, and Billy Haas, from Amazing Creations Inc.

The shelter is expected to be up and running in March, 2015.



**TORTOISE GROUP**

While it may not be a spectacular image, flags and paint and stakes out at the site of the new shelter mean only one thing - we've started on the project!

A non-profit, 501 (c)(3) organization since 1982

## Times are changing

As this is the first newsletter of 2015, may I be the last person to wish you Happy New Year!

Perhaps, as with other cultures, the year starts at a different time for desert tortoise lovers, the time of year when our friends emerge from their long winter nap and take a look around to make sure all their favorite plants are still where they used to be.

With an unseasonably warm winter, we heard of a few tortoises emerging from their burrows in February, and we always get a few calls whenever there is rain as tortoises follow their instincts to come out and investigate the puddles and pools.

This unusual weather might be something we need to get used to. Dr. Ben Cook, from NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, suggests in *Science Advances* journal that mega-droughts lasting decades in the southwest may become the norm. Co-author Toby Holt, from Cornell University, told reporters that after 2050 the entire region is going to get drier. There is, he states, an 80% chance of a 35-year-long drought by the end of the century.

But he also goes on to state that we have the capacity to change these models, by addressing climate change and by adjusting to having less water available.

This will certainly affect this region, and it remains to be seen what these potential changes will mean for wild desert tortoises, as well as the other species living in the desert ecosystem. For now, it might mean that tortoises start to emerge from their burrows and be ready to start chomping on plants earlier than usual. And it could have implications for tortoises in northern Nevada brumating in garages. It might also mean a quick trip to buy some annuals!



*Jim Cornall*  
*Executive Director*  
*Tortoise Group*

## MegaDiet RF Sellers

Please call sellers for appointment. All are 702-area code unless otherwise noted.

Check [map online](#) for seller locations

### 33% discount to TG members

Nellis & Owens	Georgi – 459-1274
Ann & Camino al Norte	Don – 374-2466
Durango & Grand Teton	Cathy – 339-5012
Craig & Cimarron	Annie – 306-5096
Decatur & Gowan	Toni – 277-6179
Smoke Ranch & Michael Way	Julie – 245-4671
215 & Far Hills	Kathy & Pauline – 804-0472
Rainbow & Charleston	Jamie – 232-6289
Charleston & Casino Center	
Trilla at Ace Locksmiths	– 528-2237
215 & W Tropicana	Athena – 682-0307
215 & S. Decatur	Carolyn – 534-7888 x824 378-6514 cell
Russell & Pecos	Sherri – 339-9821
SW of I-15 & Blue Diamond	Shirl – 338-5231
Russell & Nellis	Cindy – 530-9052
215 & 95 at Van Wagenen	Peggy – 281-3048
Boulder City	Carol – 293-6494
Pahrump	Sheri – (775) 727-5557
Kingman, AZ	Toni – (928) 757-8317
Sparks	Kym – (775) 762-3418
S. Reno	Tonya – (775) 853-8218
Carson City	Robin – (775) 220-0523
Gardnerville	Tricia – (775) 450-2259

You can also shop at our [online store](#)

No computer? Call Susan at (702) 458-8382

### Business Locations

(Member price not available—tax added to price)

<i>Creature Comforts Animal Hospital</i>	658-7339
Ann Rd and US95	
<i>Lone Mountain Animal Hospital</i>	645-3116
Rainbow & US95	
<i>Aloha Animal Hospital</i>	567-5222
S Torrey Pines & Warm Springs	
<i>Moon Sun Landscapes</i>	645-2032
Russell & Boulder Hwy	

# Spring Behavior tips

BY KATHY UTIGER  
TORTOISE GROUP

What should I do when my tortoise first comes out of brumation?

Just watch it and enjoy! Your tortoise usually wants to bask for a few days or weeks before it warms up enough to do much. Then it should start roaming and browsing.

## Should I soak it right away?

When your tortoise is coming out every day and seems up and alert, soak it in a slightly warm, shallow pan of water. It may soak for as long as 30 minutes after the long, dry winter! Let it really wake up before you do anything for it.

## When do I feed my tortoise?

Browsing is the key. When your tortoise is warmed up and browsing, that's the time to offer food.

## What if he seems sick or is blowing bubbles?

Take him to the vet right away. If you live in Nevada, consult the [list of vets on our website](#).

## What if my tortoise hasn't come out and I'm worried?

Do you suspect burrow collapse from the rain? If so, your tortoise could become trapped when the mud turns hard. If it is past time for your tortoise to emerge and you are worried, check your burrow.

- Look around the yard to be sure your little one hasn't emerged and is resting in a sunny corner
- Use a flashlight at night or reflect

sunlight with a mirror during the day to assess the situation in the burrow

- Slide a long pole or PVC pipe slowly into the burrow, listening for tortoise movement or an intake of breath

- Tape your phone to a long pole and video the burrow (and hopefully the tortoise)

- Call the Tortoise Group Hotline at (702) 729-7113 to have us come out with the snoopers, a video camera on a long line. The line won't reach around corners, so its use is limited.

## Should I weed the yard?

We may have a nice crop of weeds this year that will make for tasty browsing. Do remove the wild mustard, but leave the filaree. Your tortoise will let you know which ones she likes.

**Registration:** Unless you adopted your tortoise from Tortoise Group, you must register it on our website to make it legally yours. Please take a moment to do that at <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/adoption.php>

**Marking:** Please guard against the heartache of losing your little one



Here is Tenna Howard's baby, Bubbles, sunbathing for a few hours each day. She is about five years old, and her back legs only have partial movement due to an injury before she was adopted. More tortoises will soon be emerging from brumation. Not all emerge at the same time, and their behavior is different to summer and fall.

by marking the shell safely and permanently. You can buy a Lost Tortoise Prevention Kit through our website, or use the direction on our care sheet <http://www.tortoisegroup.org/infosheets/infosheet05.php>

## Northern Nevada:

Once the outside temperatures rise to 60°F, usually around April, tortoises can go outside, taking care to bring them inside if nighttime temperatures drop. For concerns about brumating tortoises in cooler climates, contact Bobbeye Bowes at (775) 240-2855.

# Volunteers – the heart of Tortoise Group

What a busy year it was!

It's amazing to think of the changes in 2014, and the projects we took on. With a small staff, volunteers are at the center of all of the operations of Tortoise Group, and we have a very large and willing group of people with a lot of different abilities to tackle such diverse things as the sterilization clinic, answering the hotline, digging burrows and informing the public at events.

We truly value all the contributions of our volunteers, and look forward to a great 2015.

**We will be recognizing volunteers March 21 at our first TG meeting of the year.**

## Helping with Executive Director relocation

Gretchen Hau  
Don Knisley  
Curtis Obi  
Antonio Manriquez  
Kathy Utiger  
Pauline Antonakos

## Reptile Expo

Dominique Walton  
Larry Acedillo  
Laura Deitsch  
Diane Lee  
Marilyn Krentzin  
Tyler Stewart

## Storage

Tiffany Van Tuyl  
Stephen Stocking  
Jim Moore  
Russ Beck

## Burrow/Habitat Building

Marv Stevens  
Bob Furtek  
Mike Jones  
Leigh Ellis  
Antonio Manriquez  
Mike Jones  
Brenda Herbstman  
Morgan Frazee

## Adoption

Leigh Ellis  
Antonio Manriquez  
Sherry Watts  
Jeni Lindman  
Morgan Frazee  
Nadine McAfee  
Marv Stevens  
Antonio Manriquez  
Mike Jones  
Carol Smith

## FMWCC

Bobbi Papadopulo  
Kathy Utiger

## Veterinary

Christine Kolmstetter  
Liz Cornall  
Dr Christopher Smith  
Kim and Bob Noble

## Hatchling Foster Care

Jeff Watson  
Audrey & Merrill Larsh  
Sharleine Morrison  
Marv Stevens  
Rich Ruocco

## Video

Scott Mees

## Hotline staff

Sherri Graves  
Morgan Frazee  
Carolyn Wilson  
Kathy Utiger  
Brenda Herbstman

## Admin

Kathy Gillespie  
Eric Larsen  
Scott Mees  
Nick Utiger  
Susan Stater  
Dianne McLain  
Don Knisley  
Marjorie Kirschner



Melissa Ashworth assisting at the sterilization clinic

## MDRF Bagging - Spring

Leah & Husband  
Judy & Burt Weinerman  
Peggy Morris  
Nancy Thompson-Jones  
Tom  
Tiffany White  
Sherri Graves

## Pet Expo

Bobbi Papadopulo  
Dianne McLain  
Marilyn Krentzin  
Linda Martin  
Peggy Morris  
Larry Acedillo  
Bob Furtek  
Kim Noble  
Marv Stevens  
Morgan Frazee  
Athena Fenimore

## Office

**Advertising**  
Nadine McAfee  
Gretchen Hau

## Plants

Aleta MacFarlan  
Kathy Utiger  
Trilla Newton

# Events and participants

## Board

Kathy Utiger  
Dominique Walton  
Laura Deitsch  
Trilla Newton  
Kirstin Haas  
Angela LaFrance  
Jim Moore  
Norma Engberg  
Jessica Green

## Science Expo

Bobbi Papadopulo  
Marilyn Krentzin  
Kim Noble  
Diane Lee  
Kathy Utiger  
Brenda Herbstman  
Peggy Morris

## Meetings

Audrey & Merrill Larsh  
Susan Stater  
Bobbi Papadopulo  
Powell and Pam Patrick  
Bob Furtek  
Steve Stocking  
Diana Petri  
Debbie Daughtee  
Laura Deitsch  
Nancy Thompson-Jones  
Sue Cho Lyo  
Susann Stoecklin  
Larry Acedillo  
Marv Stevens  
Diane Lee  
Brenda Herbstman  
Scott Mees  
Dominique Walton  
Earl Miller  
Kathy Utiger

## Get Outdoors Nevada Day

Dominique Walton  
Linda Lundgren  
Dianne McLain  
Brian and Sandy Morgan  
Marilyn Krentzin

## MegaDiet Sellers

Georgi Shalhoob  
Don Knisley  
Annie Ellmers  
Toni Downen  
Julie Otten  
Kathy Utiger  
Pauline Antonakos  
Jamie Lee  
Trilla Newton  
Athena Fenimore  
Michelle St Claire  
Sherri Graves  
Cindy Ash  
Peggy Morris  
Carm Pratt  
Carol Smith  
Sheri Duval  
Toni Rashelof  
Carolyn Wilson  
Cathy Sheehy  
Shirl Moody

## MDRF Staff

Marv Stevens  
Sherri Graves  
Susan Stater  
Kathy Utiger

## Office Painting

Marv Stevens  
Debbie Forbush  
Dianne McLain  
Bob Sturgeon  
Rick Brattain  
Sue Lyo

## People Offering Storage

Ali Baker  
Lynn Fein  
Marilyn Krentzin  
Terry Sackett

## Sterilization Clinic

Diana Orgill  
Dianne and Michael McLain  
Ursula Lambertson  
Bonita Alvarez  
Lyn Meers  
Mary Lee

## Fundraising

Michael Dimengo  
Dominique Walton  
Larry Acedillo  
Kathy Utiger  
Linda Lundgren  
Earl Miller  
Laura Deitsch

## MDRF Bagging

Kathy Utiger  
Marv Stevens  
Sandy & Brian Morgan  
Sherry Hanneman  
Curtis Obi  
Therese Campbell

## Northern Nevada

Patty Cwiak  
Bobbeye Bowes  
Cheryl Darnell  
Ed Kleiner  
Dr. Janet Maker  
Kym McDonough  
Andrea Green  
Victor Hernandez  
Tonya Clements  
Heather Jackson  
Crystal Swedowski  
Steve & Kelly Pietz  
Robin Ross  
Tricia Smithen  
Chris Smithen  
Chill Yee  
Karen Beckerbauer  
Hilary Erickson  
Julianne Dewitt Smith  
Kerry Christy & Tyler Clark  
Breanna and Justin Roach  
Eileen Cohen

## MDRF Bagging - August

Billy Haas  
Wayne O'S  
Ralph Hemington  
Michelle Gack  
Cricket Arens  
JC Arens  
Joy Sierra  
Don Robinson  
Sharon Goldman  
Bev Vincent  
Tommy Mees  
John Christopherson  
Gary Wilson  
Judy and  
Burt Weinerman  
Donny Robinson  
Janice Robinson  
Abby Culpepper  
Marjorie Kirschner  
Bob Furtek  
Annie Ellmers  
Marilyn Krentzen  
Sue Lyo  
Therese Campbell  
Gerogi Shalhoob  
Judy Anderson  
Carol Smith  
Peggy Morris  
Don Knisley  
Marv Stevens  
Shirl Moody  
Susann Stoecklin  
Scott Mees  
Linda Lundgren  
Nancy Thompson-Jones  
Kirstin Haas  
Sherry Hanneman  
Curtis Obi  
Carolyn Wilson  
Cathy Sheehy  
Aleta MacFarlan  
Jennifer Brunner  
Brian & Sandy Morgan  
Trilla Newton  
Sherri Graves

Kate Martin  
Jennifer Brunner  
Melissa Ashworth  
Judy Anderson  
Marv Stevens  
Georgi Shalhoob  
Mike Jones

Morgan Frazee  
Toni Downen  
Scott Mees  
Kathy Utiger  
Linda Lundgren  
Sherry Hanneman

# Volunteer of the Year: Marv Stevens

Marv Stevens is a Tortoise Group volunteer who constantly goes above and beyond with his assistance. For example, at the sterilization clinic, Marv assisted with every task from health assessments right the way through to post-op care. He's helped with painting, burrows, MegaDiet RF bagging and distribution, transportation and much more.

## *How long have you been volunteering with Tortoise Group?*

About five years, give or take. It was a long running joke about how I would show up to help at the meetings and I still didn't have a tortoise! I found the adoption booklet at the vet's office when we took one of our dogs in and I was hooked just from reading the booklet.

But at the time we had just moved here, were renting a house, and had to get things settled. I didn't want to put in everything for a tortoise just to have to move, so we waited until we bought a house. I ended up volunteering for almost four years before I ever got a tort of my own.

## *You volunteer for other organizations too, which ones?*

I volunteer with Friends of NV Wilderness, NV Naturalists, Department of Forestry, US Fish and Wildlife, and NV Fish and Wildlife.

## *Why do you volunteer?*

The short answer is to try and leave the world a better place. I absolutely can not stand to see trash blowing around, especially out in the wild tortoise habitat areas.

## *What's your history with tortoises, and can you tell us about the hatchling habitat you created for Tortoise Group?*

Before we ended up moving to Vegas I had wanted to get a Russian tortoise, but we never did. For some reason I am just absolutely fascinated by tortoises, but I can't pin down any specific reason as to why I am.

I created the hatchling habitat to give unwanted hatchlings a place to be quarantined for 90 days, to give them a chance of being able to be released into the wild. One of the biggest problems I see with the fate of the desert tortoise is that most of the money being generated

to save wild ones is being spent to help deal with the exploding pet population. This was one way I could directly help with that problem.

The habitat measures 20' long by 4' wide and a

foot tall, it has lids with chicken wire attached to keep any predators out of the habitat. The habitat is outdoors next to my tortoise George's yard. Inside the habitat are three burrows, a wet end with edible plants, a water dish, and a couple of shady places to hang out.

I have 12 hatchlings in there, all of them hatched last year and all are around 45 millimeters long. Seven of the 12 have already been out having a look around, after spending their first winter in brumation. This is my second batch of babies. The first batch was determined to be clear of upper respiratory tract disease and were released into the wild by US Fish & Wildlife Service.

## *You spent a lot of time helping out at the sterilization clinic, what did you enjoy about that?*

I enjoyed being able to help out with such a wonderful idea. I think the sterilization of pet tortoises is going to help tremendously with the backyard breeding problem. I actually kinda enjoyed all the craziness of being the tortoise wrangler/director. Although I was glad when it was over too, it was a lot of hard work.

## *What do you love about tortoises?*

It's like getting a new pet every spring when they wake up. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, so there is a great joy upon seeing your tortoise peek their head out of the burrow for the first time each spring.



# Volunteer of the Year: Don Knisley

Don Knisley works on the website and extensive database for Tortoise Group. Whenever there's a problem with a page, or a new system needs developing, Don gets the call, and puts in countless hours coming up with solutions to keep Tortoise Group running smoothly!

## *What was your introduction to Tortoise Group?*

I first encountered the Tortoise Group during a visit they were making to the Springs Preserve in 2011. My then 14 year old daughter fell in love with the desert tortoise she saw there and the rest was history!

## *Do you, or have you, volunteered for other organizations too, and if so, which ones?*

Tortoise Group is my primary non-profit. However, I'm employed by another non-profit in the valley. Nevada Donor Network bears responsibility for the procurement of organs and tissue throughout the state. I've also been a board member for my community's HOA.

## *Why do you volunteer?*

Simply because I'm needed!

*You spend lots of time helping with databases and finding solutions to computer issues, what do you enjoy about that?*

I enjoy the unique challenges presented by Tortoise Group and balancing the opposing needs of the group to accommodate less tech-savvy users while leveraging the most modern programming techniques possible within given budget and time constraints.



## *When did you start volunteering?*

I became a Satellite Seller in September 2011 and the DBA/Webmaster in May 2012.

<b>Tortoise Group Membership Form</b>		
Memberships and contributions are tax deductible		
<b>1. Please print the complete address</b>		
Name	Home Phone	
Address	Cell Phone	
City	State	Zip Code
E-mail		
<b>2. Check One Newsletter Option</b>		<b>3. Check amount for your 1-year membership</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Send my newsletter by e-mail		( )\$25 ( )\$40 ( )\$70 ( )\$100 ( )\$250 ( )Life \$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Send my newsletter in hard copy		Special Contribution: _____
<b>Mail to:</b>		
Tortoise Group 1001 Adobe Flat Henderson, NV 89011		

Make checks payable to Tortoise Group. Mail with form to:  
Tortoise Group, 1001 Adobe Flat, Henderson, NV 89011

Tortoise Group  
PO Box 33866  
Las Vegas, NV 89133  
(702) 739-7113

**Board of Directors:**

Chair: Kathy Utiger  
[kathyutiger@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:kathyutiger@tortoisegroup.org)

Vice-President: Dominique Walton  
Secretary: Laura Deitsch  
Treasurer: Kirstin Haas

Members: Norma Engberg, Jessica Green, Trilla Newton

**Editor/Executive Director:**

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**Adoption Coordinator:**

Janina Little  
[janinalittle@tortoisegroup.org](mailto:janinalittle@tortoisegroup.org)

Tortoise Group Newsletter is published four times a year in March, May, July and September

## Other events

**Spring Plant Sale & Green Living Expo**  
Springs Preserve  
March 21 & 22  
8 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Admission to the sale is free.

**Las Vegas Spring Wash Green-Up**

Saturday, March 14  
Noon to 3 p.m.

**GREENFest 2015**

Saturday, April 25  
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Downtown Summerlin

**The cost of Life Membership increases from \$500 to \$750 Jan 1, 2016. Get yours now!**

## Calendar of Events

**Meeting dates:**

**March 21, April 18, May 16, June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, October 17**  
Guest speakers to be announced

**General Meetings run from 1–3 p.m.**  
Las Vegas Library (across from Cashman Center)  
833 Las Vegas Boulevard North  
Las Vegas, NV 89101

**We will also be at Reno Earth Day, Sunday April 26**  
and  
**Elko Home & Business Expo, Saturday & Sunday May 9 & 10**

*Any additional events will be announced by email*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Tortoise Group  
1001 Adobe Flat  
Henderson, NV 89011

