

## Kudos to AFA Volunteers

The AFA is a not for profit educational organization that relies on a very small professional staff and a large number of dedicated volunteers. The volunteers serve in many capacities from helping with the convention to working at AFA booths in the bird marts and fairs, from work as Regional Directors to grassroots efforts as local club Delegates. All these people are most valuable to the AFA and it could not survive without their dedication and hard work. The Watchbird staff is also very fortunate to have volunteers working specifically for the benefit of the journal. They serve in several capacities including gaining articles and providing photos and art work for the Watchbird. You don't see their names very often but many of the articles you've read recently are the fruits of their efforts. It is our pleasure to present two of our great volunteers.



**Leslie J. Kyle-Gillis**  
Madera, California

**L**eslie J. Kyle-Gillis lives in Madera, California with her 9-year-old daughter Samantha and husband Dan. In her "Secret Garden Aviaries" she has been breeding birds since 1976 having a special interest in finches for the first 18 years. She has now expanded the collection to include Amazons, *Neophema* parakeets and, perhaps her favorite aviary birds – the kakarikis.

She has served a number of year as Vice-president of the Central California Avian Society – and currently holds that position – where her duties include rounding up a grand array of speakers for the club member to enjoy and learn from.

In addition to local bird club work, Kyle-Gillis has been very active in monitoring legislature that might be adverse to the interests of aviculture. She was very involved in monitoring AB409 in 1998 and kept her club members as well as many list member on line about the status of AB409. She continues to be active in the monitoring of legislation that could prove to be a hindrance to bird breeders and owners in California.

Kyle-Gillis believes in and supports the Central Valley Avian Society's efforts in educating the public and the school children in the care and breeding of exotic birds. She herself has gone into classrooms to educate the children regarding the joy and the responsibility of owning these prize creatures.

She is employed with the Madera Unified School district as a Parent Coordinator and Special Projects Expeditor. She enjoys the contact with all the children and overseeing special project for them and their parents.

Between being a soccer mom and softball mom, she enjoys contact with people on-line (the World Wide Web, for you readers not up to computer speed). Indeed, it is her great number and wide variety of contacts that make her so successful collecting articles for the Watchbird. She has provided many articles full of knowledge and experiences we all could learn from.

Kyle-Gillis went from college into law enforcement work where she stayed for 14 years. Her interest in birds began with rescue work for native birds and blossomed into full-blown aviculture. She is a hard worker who really loves her birds. She has and is serving the AFA well. ➤



**Susie Christian**  
Morro Bay, California

**S**usie Christian has had a wide range of pets all her life, everything from tame Valley Quail, snakes, raccoons, field mice, frogs, fish, ferret, turtles, cockroaches, canaries, chickens....you name it she has probably had it as a companion. However, her fondest love has always been any kind of bird. In 1978 her hook-bill fascination started with keeping pairs of breeding Cockatiels. One pair even hatched their babies out from a nest box on the kitchen counter. In 1988 she fell in love with Eclectus Parrots and her original pair has been joined by a larger number of their own kind. The single biggest thrill of her lifetime has been success in breeding Eclectus. She is also is very enthusiastic over Rose-breasted Cockatoos and hopes for breeding success with these birds in the future. Being prolific, however, is not a prerequisite, as all the birds of the flock are just loved for who they are.

Always interested in communication skills and art work, Christian was Yearbook Editor and on the Newspaper staff in both high school and college. She went on to the famous Art Center College of design in Los Angeles with an illustration major. After moving from Los Angeles to Morro Bay in 1972 she took a full time job as a Pharmacy Technician which lasted 26 years. She always had a full schedule of commercial art jobs at the same time such as Christmas window painting, photography, and advertising art as well as writing and oil painting. For the last 15 years she has owned two antique Indian motorcycles and is a free lance writer and photographer for motorcycle magazines.

Christian has retired from a 9 to 5 job and now is able to devote full time to her flock, drawing and painting birds in watercolor, photography, and writing. She also tends to a wonderful garden filled with flowers, vines, trees and all kinds of herbs.

One thing she is grateful for is to have spent a good deal of time "under the guiding wing" of Dale Thompson and says about 90% of all she knows about parrots she learned from him. His enthusiasm and willingness to share ideas have been a great guiding light in her attitudes and knowledge about bird keeping. ➤