

# Bear cubs are a 24/7 job for Valley woman

Sally Maughan doesn't leave her 2.5 acres anymore because her foster animals need her undivided, 24-hour-a-day attention. No one can substitute.

Maughan rehabilitates bear cubs so they can return to the wild. It's a delicate process that few in the world are able to do. The trick is that the cubs cannot become comfortable with humans, otherwise they might become problem bears when returned to the wild and wander into campsites or cabins.

Very few people come close to Maughan's bears. She does all the nurturing. They perceive her as mother bear. The few volunteers she works with run her errands, buy food for her and the bears and help maintain the bear enclosures.

"Everyone wants to see the bears but that defeats the purpose," said volunteer Belinda Isley, who coordinates outreach efforts. "It's amazing what she is able to do."

Maughan lives in a double-wide trailer with her 92-year-old mother, two dogs and numerous cats. Three coyotes live steps away.

The porch has two cages for the youngest cubs, who need to be fed formula every three hours. She has seven larger cages to isolate cubs who may be injured or hibernating and one huge cage — as big as a basketball court — where cubs can interact, climb on stumps and swim in a wading pool.

Maughan's complex used to be isolated west of Boise. Now she sits in the middle of clusters of new subdivisions about hundred yards off west State Street.

"I'd make a good hermit out in the woods, but here I am," she said. "A responsible adult has to be with the bears at all times."

Maughan learned bear behaviors through trial and error, reading books and years of watching and interacting with them. She began rehabilitating raccoons and squirrels 23 years ago. Someone brought in an abandoned bear cub, and Maughan took it only because she had a big enough cage.

## courage & commitment



jennifer swindell

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time in any state that I could find," Maughan said. "If I didn't take them, they put them down."

Within two weeks of caring for that first bear, she knew this was her life's mission.

She feeds, waters and picks up scat three times a day unless she's preparing one for hibernation. Then interaction is tapered off.

While living in the city, bears eat dry dog food, lots of fruit and lettuce or grass. Her bears usually hibernate here and are released into the wild after the spring hunting season. When released, they are twice the size of a normal yearling, which aids them during their initial months of freedom.

Maughan has cared for as many as 45 bears at one time. She has five now and has nurtured 134 over the last 18 years.

"I love the way they are so creative and how they use their intelligence," said Maughan, who can rattle off details about her first bear, Buzsler, and





Statesman file photo

Napili, a 12-week-old orphaned black bear cub, plays with her new mom, Sally Maughan. Napili was close to dying of malnutrition near Olympia, Wash., before Maughan took her in. "She was the sweetest bear," said Maughan, who has nurtured more than 130 cubs. "She never got mad or destroyed anything. She was very special to me."

antics of some of her other favorites, such as Nipper, Griz and Napili. (She usually gives them Native American or Hawaiian names because she loves the language.)

Maughan doesn't take in adult bears. She takes in cubs that have been injured or abandoned.

Duane Lavelly found a cub with a broken front leg and a dislocated hip in July 2004 on Idaho 55. It apparently had been hit by a car. He thought he saw the mother escape.

He took the cub to Maughan. She named her Makala Pua, nursed her back to health and through winter hibernation before releasing her in the spring. The bear, who had an ear tag, has not been seen since or recognized by a hunter.

"Her release program benefits everyone from treehuggers to hunters, because it replenishes the population," said Lavelly, who raised \$800 in donations to pay for Makala Pua's recovery. "She takes no time off. She's always

there for those bears."

Maughan becomes attached to all her cubs but she's realistic about their future. She was born in Idaho and raised at Redfish Lake, where her parents owned the lodge and hunted and fished regularly.

"I respect hunting as long as they do it ethically and morally ... and don't shoot one of my bears," she said with a smile.

Experts are mixed on whether cubs can be rehabilitated by humans and then released back into the wild without becoming a problem for people.

But Maughan is confident that she has been successful because she hears very little about her bears, some of which have radio collars and most of which have ear tags.

"I heard a 6-year-old was shot hunting and six or so have been hit by cars," Maughan said. "But only two have come in contact with people."

Maughan's brain is full of valuable information about the antics and

## Animal Planet hero

Sally Maughan was nominated to be Animal Planet's Hero of the Year. There were more than 4,000 nominations, and the cable channel selected a top 10, who included Maughan. The winner, who receives a \$10,000 grant, will be selected by votes on its Web site, [animal.discovery.com](http://animal.discovery.com). Votes will be taken through Sunday.

Maughan said if she won, she would buy video equipment to document the daily behaviors of her bear cubs for research and education.

## Black bear rehab

Sally Maughan founded the Idaho Black Bear Rehabilitation, a nonprofit charity that depends on donations to care for abandoned or injured bear cubs. The goal is to release these cubs back into the wild. The IBBR is licensed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game but does not receive financial support from it or any other state agency.

The IBBR mostly needs money to maintain the facility or donated food for the bears. The bears eat fruit and dry dog food.

For more information, go to [www.bearrehab.org](http://www.bearrehab.org).

habits of bears. She has very little documented, which is why she wants to raise enough money to buy a monitoring system. Cameras would record the bears at all times and the information could be used for research or in classrooms.

"It takes three hours for a bear to lose interest in me and go about their business and that's a lot of time for me to spend observing," Maughan said.

Maughan doesn't return her bears to the wild if she doesn't think they will survive. She doesn't keep them and she doesn't give them to zoos.

"I would never put one of my bears in captivity," Maughan said. "I have too much respect for their spirit."