

dog's life[®]

FALL 2008 Be Your Dog's Best Friend

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7 YEARS OLD!
(OR 1 IN HUMAN YEARS)



BACK TO SCHOOL

Tips to Find the Right Dog Trainer

DOGS STILL ON THE MOVE

Overcoming Physical Challenges

Celebrating Senior Dogs

Why the Golden Years Can Be Richer

+
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REASONS TO ADOPT A SENIOR DOG



Kandu at the Nuts for Mutts Dog Show where he won Best In Show.

KANDU

In October 2005, a volunteer from Evergreen Animal Protective League (EAPL), an animal rescue and advocacy group, went to a shelter in Lamar, CO and met a tiny, energetic Jack Russell Terrier who was born without his front legs. The dog's original owner believed that his condition was hopeless, and had originally planned for him to be euthanized. On his own, though, the dog showed that he was not going to give up as easy as his owner had. He figured out how to scoot around by pushing with his back legs, his little chest rubbing across the cement floor.

Although he was making miraculous progress on his own, the EAPL knew the dog—they appropriately named him Kandu—needed a family and some equipment to help him get around more comfortably. The EAPL started searching for a home for Kandu and enlisted the help of Martin Kaufmann, owner and founder of OrthoPets, a Denver-based company that makes custom orthotic and prosthetic devices for pets, to start creating a custom set of wheels for him. Kaufmann created a mold of Kandu's body and started to work on a wheeled device that would fit underneath the dog's chest and enable him to run around.

Meanwhile, just outside the little town of Oak Creek in the mountains of Colorado, Ken and Melissa Rogers were looking for another dog to join their family. They already had a black Lab, Bob, who provided pet therapy to people as part of the Heeling Friends program. When Ken saw a news story featuring Kandu on Denver station CBS 4, he recognized how much the dog had to offer. "I thought that Kandu would be a really cool therapy dog," recalls Ken. "So we went online and filled out the form, then went to see Kandu for a meet and greet, and it all worked out really well. The more we had him, the more we realized just how much of a joy he is."

At home with the Rogers, Kandu now whizzes

around outside using his wheels and a "monoski" created by OrthoPets. Ken requested the special ski so that Kandu would still be able to get around easily outside during the long snowy seasons at his new home in the mountains. "It's a device that's one piece of plastic and it fits underneath him like his wheels do," explains Ken. "We'll wax it up and let him go in the snow. He loves it because it weighs less than 2 pounds."

Since Kandu weighs only 10.5 pounds, his adaptive equipment has to be lightweight in order for it to truly help him get around. "It's nice when I'm able to shave a few ounces off of it," says Ken, who makes incremental tweaks to Kandu's equipment. "I'm always on the web looking for stuff like in-line skate wheels that are 10 grams or lighter in weight."

When Kandu isn't playing at home he keeps busy out in the community. "We go out and about with him," says Ken. "He was part of the last 4th of July parade in Steamboat, CO, and he has also participated in the local Winter Carnival Parade." Kandu also visits local hospitals two or three times a month with his canine brother Bob, providing therapy and inspiration to people who are sick. On top of all of that, he recently won Best Kisser, Best Physically Challenged and Best in Show at the 7th annual Nuts for Mutts mixed-breed dog show and pet fair in Woodland Hills, CA. "Kandu isn't overly impressive with the stuff he does," admits Ken. "For Best in Show he just showed his personality—it seemed so easy for him to be himself."

The Rogers have to take Kandu to the vet for regular checkups to ensure he's not developing back problems or other conditions as a result of his unique posture, but clearly, his condition hasn't slowed him down a bit. "Just because a dog has a disability, it doesn't mean he's any less of a dog. Don't be turned off by it," stresses Ken. "They'll do just fine if you just give them a chance." And given the chance, Kandu has already accomplished more than many dogs who have all of their legs.

HAPPY ENDINGS

These stories prove that it's possible for a dog who is physically challenged to lead a healthy, happy life. If a treatment or product exists for humans, then chances are it exists for animals—it just may be a bit harder to find. All it takes is the ability to look beyond euthanization and the willingness to sacrifice some time, effort and money to help your pet.

"Simple ramps, rear-end harnesses or wheelchairs can make it possible for a dog to live a 'normal' life—just like people who might need a little extra help if they become disabled in some way," says HandicappedPets.com's Lisa Murray. "There's a lot out there, from products to information to support; HandicappedPets.com is a good place to start to 'talk' to people on our message board," she continues. "Many people are amazed to find out that it's easier than they thought to care for a handicapped dog because there are more resources available than they had imagined."

Two Hands Four Paws' McMahon urges pet owners to look into alternative treatments early on instead of as a last resort. "A lot of times vets will send me their disaster cases because they've given up on them and say they can't do anything more for them," she says. "Had they sent me the dogs a year earlier, they would've been fine. Physical therapy is just so important: Getting those dogs moving, and getting them to do exercises, even if it's just walking on the treadmill with assistance or moving around in the pool."

Another proactive step you can take to help your dog is purchasing pet insurance. Many plans are available to help cover the cost of your dog's medical expenses so that money won't have to be an obstacle to providing him the care he needs. A great place to start looking into policies is www.petinsurancereview.com. As you would for your own health insurance, be sure to look into each policy's coverage and exclusions.

Most importantly, remember that no matter how bad you think a dog's condition may be, there is still hope for him to recover. "My biggest pet peeve is when vets tell people, 'The dog is a lost cause. Just give it up,' because you can do so much to help these dogs," says McMahon. "Just know not to give up—even if they get to a stage when they're not doing so well." 🐾

Olivia LaBarre is a writer and editor based in Los Angeles, CA. She can be reached at olabarre@gmail.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THIS STORY:

- Doggon' Wheels, www.doggon.com
- Veterinary Specialty Center, www.vetspecialty.com
- Two Hands Four Paws, www.twohandsfourpaws.com
- Evergreen Animal Protective League, www.eapl.com
- OrthoPets, www.orthopets.com
- Heeling Friends, www.heelingfriends.com

Find additional resources to help your injured, elderly, or handicapped dog on www.dogslifemagazine.com/born-to-run