



FRANKIE TWO-PAWS

Rescued Cavalier King Charles Spaniel with disability gives hope & inspiration

Hope began July 4, 2009, the day Frankie was plucked from his bleak existence in a Missouri puppy mill and made his way across state lines into the caring hands of Helen Cordell and Jackie Spielman, two volunteers with the Greater Chicago Cavalier Rescue (GCCR) group. As a 12-week old puppy with no use of his rear legs, Frankie's fate, had he stayed at the puppy mill, was unthinkable. But this isn't a story about the horrors and atrocities of puppy mills. It's a story of hope and love, and inspiration and determination.

Cavalier spirit

Because he pulled himself around by his two front paws, this spunky little Cavalier lovingly became known as "Frankie Two Paws". Despite his first 12 weeks of life, Frankie remarkably maintained the true Cavalier spirit, with his sweet, loving disposition. Whether Frankie's ruby red color has anything to do with his spunk and determination is a topic for another time!

It takes a village

Helen's neighbor and fellow dog-lover, Peggy Ruh and her husband, John, agreed to foster Frankie. He was examined by Dr. Jason Long, a local veterinarian at the Yorkville Animal Hospital, who examines and treats many of GCCR's rescues. Without a lot of expensive tests, it would be difficult to determine the exact cause of Frankie's disability or make an accurate diagnosis. Because GCCR is still a relatively new non-profit rescue group, an extreme case such as Frankie's would absorb resources quickly.

To start, Dr. Long put a hobble on Frankie's back legs so they wouldn't splay, in hopes that he would learn to balance on them. The vet techs immediately started massages, as well as flexing and weight-bearing exercises to strengthen his muscles. Peggy scoured the web and found Eddie's Wheels in Massachusetts (www.eddieswheels.com), a

company who donated a cart to support Frankie's bottom half to help him become more mobile. She also began feeding him a carefully planned diet of protein-rich quality food plus select supplements to help him grow stronger and healthier. The food/supplement kit was purchased with a rescue discount from 1st Choice Naturals (www.firstchoicenaturals.com) and was donated by one of GCCR's volunteers.

A dim diagnosis

A veterinary neurologist examined Frankie and offered little hope. In his opinion, Frankie's disability was caused by "congenital spinal malformation, spinal trauma, or myelitis. The loss of deep pain sensation to the pelvic limbs is a poor indicator, with recovery considered unlikely irregardless (sic) of cause."

Next Frankie saw Dr Stephen Dullard, an orthopedic surgeon at Ancare Veterinary Clinic in Mendota. On a positive note, he said Frankie's spine was intact and he saw no hip dysplasia, but he did see a problem with his knee caps that might impact his walking, although not prohibit it completely. He recommended Frankie see a physical therapist on his staff, Teri Baughman. Perhaps Frankie could become a "spinal walker" -- dogs that have spinal injuries who sometimes learn to balance and walk reflexively. Teri began physical therapy to strengthen Frankie's rear legs and Peggy continued the exercises at home.

One small step

Because Frankie couldn't stand on all four legs, whenever he relieved himself, he needed to be cleaned. One day while washing Frankie's back legs in the sink, Peggy noticed he would splash the water with his paws. She shared this with Teri, who decided, now that Frankie's legs were getting stronger, to try an underwater treadmill.

At first Teri had to move Frankie's rear legs to show him what to do, but he showed marked improvement with each treadmill session. Soon he was walking on his own, supported only with a life vest and Teri's gentle hands to help balance him. You can watch Frankie's progress on YouTube.com. Search for GCCR70409 (the date that Frankie came from the puppy mill to GCCR).

A chiropractor helps

At the same time Frankie was receiving physical therapy, Peggy took him with her to see her chiropractor, Dr. Nick Kuennen, Clinic Director at Chiro One Wellness Center of Yorkville. After meeting Frankie and hearing his story, he volunteered to look at his x-rays to see if there was anything he could do to help.

He determined Frankie's hips were out of alignment, causing several pinched nerves and preventing signals from his rear legs from reaching his brain. He began to adjust Frankie's spine and hips 4 times a week to relieve the pressure. This no doubt helped with his underwater treadmill success.

A financial commitment

Encouraged by Frankie's progress, GCCR made a financial commitment for Frankie to seek additional treatments and tests. In October, an MRI at Veterinary Specialty Center in Buffalo Grove revealed his lower spinal cavity at T11-12 was filled almost entirely with fluid, leaving room for just a few strands of nerves. A neurologist said Frankie's condition was congenital – inherited and present at birth. A veterinary surgeon at Care Animal Hospital in Arlington Heights, said nothing could be done surgically to fix his condition. In fact, he was amazed Frankie had made such great progress.

Half empty or half full

While some viewed this latest information as discouraging, Peggy and Helen (who also serves as GCCR's President & Rescue Coordinator) viewed the glass as being half full, rather than half empty. They took Frankie to see Dr. Michelle Herlihy at PAWsitively

Balanced, Ltd. in Downers Grove, where she's currently treating him with Class IV Companion Laser Therapy. This state of the art technology is pain-free and delivers specific wave lengths of light, helping reduce pain and inflammation, and stimulating tissue healing. While still too early to tell, it's hoped the laser therapy will stimulate nerve growth in Frankie's spine and help his femur bones grow to fit more securely in his hip sockets. He also continues to receive regular adjustments from the chiropractor.

If Frankie can do it

The determination and spirit Frankie displays is an inspiration to the staff and patients at the chiropractor's office. Additionally, Peggy's sister wears a picture of Frankie in his cart on her work badge. As a pediatric nurse in Minneapolis, she works with children with disabilities. She tells the children, "If Frankie can do it, you can too!"

On days when Peggy doesn't feel like getting out of bed, Frankie comes rolling in on his two legs as if to say, "It's a new day! Let's get started!" He doesn't see his disability but only the possibilities.

The journey continues

They say every journey begins with one step. Frankie has come a long way in just a few months and his journey isn't over yet. But this journey has not been measured in steps, but in hope and love, and in inspiration and determination that he's received from countless volunteers and given back tenfold.

Greater Chicago Cavalier Rescue

www.gccavalierrescue.org

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