

Growing up, we always had dogs in our home, so when I finally moved out into my own apartment it only seemed natural to find a dog of my own. Looking in the local newspaper, I noticed an ad for beagle puppies and decided to give them a call. I'm so glad I did because it changed my life forever.

The moment I laid eyes on Emily, my heart just melted. There really is such a thing as love at first sight. She was the quietest, sweetest puppy of the bunch and caught my eye right away. She reminded me of myself in so many ways, sitting in the background, not getting much notice. I remember she was only six weeks old at the time and the breeder was very strict about taking home the puppies too early. I was very impressed by this and knew I was buying from a responsible breeder. It was so difficult to leave without her, but we made arrangements to visit her until she was ready at eight weeks old. She had a rough start. One of her brothers bit her, causing infection, and so the breeder decided to keep her a little longer until she healed. She offered to let me pick another puppy but I declined. My heart was already in Emily's paws!

I can't tell you how many ways Emily has saved my life. Life can be so full of disappointments, but coming home to that wagging tail and big smile (and yes she does smile!) takes away every worry and problem that comes my way. Time and time again people have let me down, but never Emily. She's given me hope and purpose, and allowed me to see the simple beauty in every day life.

When Emily was four years old, I met Kainoa. He took Emily into his heart, like so many do. We married just about a year later and became one small happy family. There is so much truth to the saying that a dog makes a house a home. With all that Emily brings into our lives, it was only natural for us to jump right in and help her when she became ill.

Our regular vet recommended that we see the staff at VCA in Northborough, where I met Dr. Fitzpatrick. He is an amazing, compassionate man and I am so impressed with how he took the time to explain what was going on with Emily and what needed to be done.

We found ourselves backed against a wall financially. A few years ago, both my husband and I lost our jobs on the same day, just four months after buying our home. We struggled and sacrificed. To make matters worse, Emily was sick shortly after that and needed to be rushed to Tufts, where she spent nearly a week. Anyone who's been to the ER knows how insane medical bills can be! We're still paying off the bill, so when we found out about Emily's cancer diagnosis last week, we started to panic wondering how we'd come up with the funds. It was Dr. Fitzpatrick who told me about Paws 4 a Cure.

I started the application process right away. Keri was so quick to reply. I was very impressed, not only by her quick response, but by the foundation itself. Keri showed

true care and compassion. With every email, Keri asked me to give Emily a kiss. That was no problem for me. I give her a kiss every chance I get!

I never thought I'd find myself in a situation where I needed help to pay Emily's medical expenses. It's a humbling experience and I am so thankful that Paws 4 a Cure exists. They've given me a chance to give Emily a chance. She's only ten years young and still plays and acts like a puppy! She has a lot of living to do and lots of love to share.

Thank you so much, Paws 4 a Cure! You've saved more than one life for this family.

Cheryl & Kainoa Shannon