

Lea Lee's story with us begins nearly 4 years ago. It was late September or early October 2010 when my mom and I were in the front yard winterizing the garden and preparing for relatives to come for a long overdue visit. As we were working in the yard a matted and haggard golden retriever wandered up the street and into the yard - she stopped and looked soulfully at us and then went to our porch and laid down. Having worked with some dogs in the rescue community we took her around to the back yard and placed her in our kennel run used for such emergencies. That night we posted flyers though out the neighborhood and the adjoining areas and scheduled a vet check for the following morning. We found she would try and raid the trash for food but would not eat kibble from a bowl - she was thin and looked weak but would not eat. The following morning we found she had several "minor" health issues that added up to some major hurdles for her to overcome before she would be healthy again. She had a horrible infection in her mouth that required several extractions, she had what appeared to have a UTI, her thyroid levels were nearly none existent, she had multiple puncture wounds that appeared to be bite marks of which most were infected along with an ever growing list of "problems". Over the next few weeks we had several people report they had seen her wandering the streets for several days and after a few more weeks it was clear no one was coming for her - no one was looking for her - she was alone in this world and she needed help - she needed our help.

After antibiotics and several tooth extractions she made an amazing recovery and has been the alpha of my house, always there to gaze at you with those soul piercing eyes and always willing to offer her paw when you're not feeling too great about the day. She was scheduled for her annual physical this past June - a few days prior she started bleeding from her mouth where we discovered a mass that she had chewed open/ruptured while eating dinner that evening. We took her in the following morning and it was decided that the mass would be removed the following day at her exam. Initially the mass was described as "A typically benign mass from appearance alone" but the pathology report indicated it was a melanosarcoma, a very aggressive form of cancer. Her expected life span was rated as 3 to 6 months (With mass removal)..... I was crushed and heartbroken that my companion would be taken from me after all she had overcome. As a 90% disabled veteran who suffered a traumatic spinal injury in 2006 my pups are my life, they are my family - simply put they are nothing short of my kids. Because I am unable to work a traditional job and have little income I thought it was a death sentence but after a few days we began researching and learning about cancer and that lead us to a few others in my area who had been dealing with the same sad news in their own pups. I was referred to a canine oncologist and with what little money I had I went for a consultation. It was determined that of the three course of treatment options (Radiation treatments, traditional chemotherapy and the canine melanoma vaccine) that the vaccine would be the best course of action. This was decided as Lea Lee has been losing weight and growing weaker in recent weeks - likely from the cancer - and would not do well with being anesthetized multiple times a week for radiation therapy. We also decided against traditional chemo as she will refuse to eat if she finds a pill in her food, chemo would have required four pills a day with a 5th every other day and with her already losing weight we felt this a poor option for that reason alone. This left the canine melanoma vaccine and with no pills to take and no anesthesia required it was the

most appealing option - the down side being the initial cost over the first 6 months.

I did not know how I would pay for her treatments but I had to try. I was literally calling all my lines of credit for a credit increase while they were doing x-rays on Lea Lee at the initial exam/consultation and finally, one could raise my limit by $500.00 and that was enough for the first injection. Lea Lee started the injections on July 09, 2014 and had her second and third injections on July 23, 2014 and Aug. 06, 2014. While she is still having good days and bad days Lea does seem to be responding to treatments and has started to slowly regain weight lost just before treatment started. She had lost about 15 pounds in the month prior to treatment and since starting the injections she has regained about 4.5 pounds and seems to be having more good days than bad now, nothing short of a blessing in and of itself. The greatest report thus far has been that her life expectancy has gone from not longer than 3 months to a 50% chance of 12 months or longer (so long as she remains under treatment)! This is why I am reaching out to foundations now as I have exhausted my limited resources to include loans/lines of credit, selling off things of value and borrowing from friends and family. I must keep Lea Lee in treatment for her sake, I feel owe her that much.

I encourage everyone who reads this to please consider a donation to Paws 4 A Cure, if it was not for organizations such as Paws 4 A Cure I would be facing taking Lea Lee back out of treatment and I would again loose hope for her longevity.

May Saint Rocco (AKA Saint Roach - the Patron Saint of Canines and Canine Rescuers) watch over and bless each of you.

We started visiting veterinarians in the area to see what clinic could offer her the most care at the most affordable rates and after only 4 visits my heart was crushed when one told me "She's not worth your time or effort and especially your money to help". He recommended euthanizing her as he did not feel she had more than a few months to live and, as he pointed out, Eu was a cost saving advantage over caring for her. I walked out of the vet's office shaken, angry and very sad - I sat in the parking lot and cried while I held her..... I then decided, I wasn't giving up on her and we set out to at least make her comfortable. Over the next few days several twists of fate happened that brought me in touch with a low income canine dental clinic that was about 3 hours way from me but they had a price cap that was less than most local vets would charge to pull 1 K9 tooth (She needed at least her lower two pulled along with several regular teeth). A few days later she had several extractions and quickly began to want to eat - a few days after the extractions we were able to start her on antibiotics for her kidney infection and a few days later we started seeing her skin infections clearing! We watched an amazing transformation happen before our eyes in that she started to eat and regained her weight, she regained her strength and her eyes were less cloudy each day.

Over the years she has been there for me on many occasions, I have owned several dogs over the years and loved each for their own qualities but Lea Lee - Lea Lee I can say without hesitation that she is the kindest and sweetest soul I have ever met. It doesn't matter who you are or why your upset but she has a way about her that she can come up and look into your eyes and it’s like she just knows what you’re going through. She's been there for me and she has helped me many, many times when I was down and felt alone in this world. Without her I don't know where I would be - over the years she has never left my side - never told me she was too tired to listen to my worries and woes - she's never given up on anyone she thought was upset and that is why now, in her hour of need I feel a moral obligation to help her, to ease her pain and the make sure her life is as long and happy as I can make it. She has given of herself without hesitation - even after being apparently abandoned on the streets and treated poorly by some people who turned their back on her while she suffered, she still offers her paw to you when she believes your upset - why? Simply put, she has taught me a great many lessons over the last four years and I believe she cares about others, perhaps her greatest gift to this world has been empathy and compassion.