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FEBRUARY 6, 2016

Special Needs Dogs

Different is Beautiful!

Guest blogger: Lauren Kramer-Theuerkauf



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My husband, Matt, knows that I have a huge heart when it comes to animals. What he did not know was that we were both about to fall in love with adopting special needs dogs.

I discovered Penny on petfinder.com. She is a gorgeous Chiweenie that was born with a severe overbite and a deformed front paw causing her to be a tripawd. We were very nervous on the day of Penny's home visit. Questions swirled in our minds. Would we be able to care for a three-legged dog? Would she need any special accommodations? But, as soon as Penny hopped into the room, she stole my heart.



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After meeting the rest of the pack, Penny did a grand leap right onto our couch. We were stunned and embarrassed for having such silly preconceived notions about Penny's "special needs." A few weeks later, she managed to scale our three foot pet gate...twice! Penny is also starring in her first children's book, *Priceless Penny*, that chronicles her amazing adoption journey from a solo stray in California to a pampered pooch in Illinois (www.pricelesspennyp.com).



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Two years later, I came across the Dachshund Rescue North America website and was completely smitten by Hope. She is a double dapple miniature Dachshund that was the product of backyard breeding. Hope was born without eyes and is completely deaf. Her former "owner" surrendered her to DRNA

with a choke chain around her neck. Matt was extremely hesitant about adopting Hope. "How in the world can she function if she can't see or hear?" he asked. We were about to find out.

When Hope arrived, we watched in amazement as she followed her nose to get her bearings. She then navigated her way over to Matt and stood on his shoe. We discovered that this is her special signal that she wants to be picked up and given kisses. I will admit the first week was very rough. Watching Hope run into the walls and furniture was simply heartbreaking. Yet, she never made a sound. She simply took a step back and tried again.

One week was all it took and Hope was running down the hall, racing to beat her fur siblings to the water bowl in the kitchen. She can now climb stairs, open the bedroom closet doors with her nose and jump onto the furniture! Hope has even garnered almost 2,000 followers on Instagram (@havinghopealways) and has been called an inspiration by all who meet her. Even after all that she has been through; she loves to meet new people and cover them in kisses.

Matt and I love to attend pet events and often have Penny and Hope in tow. We wish to show the world that special needs dogs are truly amazing creatures that deserve to be adopted, loved and treasured. To quote Penny's moto: **Different is beautiful!**

LOVE AND RESPECT ANIMALS!

Guest blogger: Lauren Kramer-Theuerkauf lives in Freeburg, Illinois with her husband, Matthew and their beautiful fur babies. She has a passion for rescuing animals in need and giving them the second chance they deserve. Lauren is the proud owner of Theuerkauf's Tails, LLC <http://www.theuerkaufstails.com/>.

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