

## **On the Positive Side: Jaxon Leads Family Down Loving Path**

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Our 8 year old daughter is passionate about soccer, biking, basketball and all things active. Finding out she could not use her leg due to a knee injury was the worst news to start her summer vacation. Worse is that she and I had signed up to volunteer Saturdays at the Farmer's Market with the local shelter's adoption events. With crutches she could not be much help with care and walking of the animals. Seems we faced a long summer.

Then in early June, I met Jaxon, a very unhealthy German Shepherd shelter dog at the Farmer's Market available for adoption. The thing was Mr. Jaxon would bark at any man approaching his cage. Everyone knew this would not get him adopted. I worked with him at the end of the event and spoke with a woman and her daughter about how beautiful he was and how he definitely needed TLC. I volunteered to take him home and care for him. I was approved and so started our journey as foster parents. Within days we decided we loved him so much that we could not let him go. He was a great fit for our family; sick but also alert and intelligent, he amazed us. My husband was initially upset that I brought another dog home saying "I knew when you decided to volunteer for the shelter you would bring home more animals." But he, more than all of us, fell in love with Jaxon. We decided to adopt Jaxon.

The following Saturday I returned to the shelter's offsite event as I have done now for the last 4 months. The woman I had spoken to about Jaxon the prior Saturday found me and explained how she could not stop thinking about Jaxon. She had tried to track him down to no avail and really wanted to find him. I explained I had taken him home and cared for him since. When she said she wanted to adopt him my heart sank. I had already given my heart to Jaxon and so had my family. Still, I could not bear to tell her we would be adopting him on that following Monday. I knew my husband would be very upset and stubborn about giving up Jaxon, and yet, I felt he belonged with this stranger. I told the woman I would call her the following day to meet with her and Jaxon hoping if my husband met her he would relent and see things my way. It worked.

My family let go of Jaxon to this wonderful woman with the decision that we would fill our home with one foster after another, finding homes and saving lives. Since Jaxon got his forever home in mid June we have placed 12 other animals from the shelter into new homes. These animals not only enriched our lives, but made us realize all we had, not focus on the things we did not. My 8 year old has loved actively participating in the fostering of these animals. They have been wonderful therapists enriching her summer as well as the rest of the family.

Each foster that has come into our home and hearts has left an everlasting imprint and made us each better people and a closer family. They have given back to us in ways that are unexplainable. My daughter still cannot participate in the sports she so loves, but her outlook and attitude are both bright and positive. While I attribute some of this to her wonderful person, these animals have taught us each a better way to look at life – live in the moment. These moments are better sharing them with our foster animals.

Valina M. Hamilton, guest author, is a passionate and active volunteer with Humane Society of Southern New Mexico and the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley as well as mother of two, wife to a loving supportive man and leader of a great group of people. Interested authors can contact Humane Society of Southern New Mexico, 575-523-8020