

The Cocker Home Companion

Cocker Spaniel Rescue of New England, Inc. (CSRNE, Inc.)

Vol 30 Fall/Winter 2010/2011

Since 1987, CSRNE has saved, improved and extended the lives of abandoned and neglected American Cocker Spaniels

It's a Wonderful Life

Cassie's Story

By Debra Gesimondo

You've probably seen the movie "It's a Wonderful Life" with James Stewart as George Bailey, or at least know the story line. One Christmas Eve, George is having a very difficult time, and he meets his guardian angel, Clarence. Clarence is just an angel-in-training and in order to earn his true angel wings, he must help George through this difficult period. If Clarence succeeds, he will earn his wings and a bell will ring to mark this achievement.



We at Cocker Spaniel Rescue of New England (CSRNE) want to take the opportunity to showcase a few "Cocker Angels" in this holiday edition of our newsletter. And we hope that you will choose to "earn your own set of wings" by helping to contribute to CSRNE this year and become a "Cocker Angel" too!

From Iowa to New England: Cassie's Long Journey Home

Cassie was found cold and scared in a small animal crate in a ditch in Iowa. For some reason, a couple in a car driving along a very quiet, remote Iowa road, just happened to see the crate, and luckily, thought to see if it was empty or not. To their horror, they found a dog – Cassie - who had been thrown out and left to die alone and scared in that ditch.

The couple knew who to call: Ann Blazek at CAARE (Centerville Area Animal Rescue Effort in Iowa). Ann willingly took Cassie in even though her organization was full at the time.

We don't know how long Cassie was in the ditch, but we know that if Cassie had been in that crate much longer, she surely would have died due to the elements. And it was obvious why Cassie was abandoned – she was blind. But imagine being tossed out like garbage simply because of a very manageable special need.

Ann has seen this, and worse, in her part of the country in Iowa. We know the horror of puppy mills in that region and, in many cases, the area farmers see wandering dogs as pests and just shoot them instead of calling an animal control officer. Ann tries to do the best she can in helping as many dogs as possible through her organization. In Cassie's case, Ann was actually aware of her before she was found in the ditch. A week or so earlier, a family had called and asked if Ann, through CAARE, could take the dog. The family was tired of dealing with a blind, special needs animal. Since CAARE was full at the time, Ann asked the family if they could wait a couple of weeks while she freed up some space. Obviously the family decided instead, to toss Cassie out rather than waiting for Ann's help. After Cassie was found and rescued, Ann called the family and they vehemently denied abandoning her. They claimed that they had found her a new home. Some home- a crate in a ditch!

Ann tried to find Cassie a new home and she called over a dozen cocker spaniel breed rescue organizations



Cassie with Ann Blazek

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Volume 30
Fall/Winter
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throughout the United States. Cocker Spaniel Rescue of New England doesn't typically take in dogs from outside of New England because of the high volume of cockers in need within our own region. However, this was a special case and given the fact that no other rescue group could help Cassie, CSRNE agreed to take her and place her in a new forever home.

By coincidence, JoAnn and Bill Weir, unbeknownst to them at the time, were becoming lined up as the perfect "forever home" for Cassie. Bill and JoAnn had fallen in love with the breed through their dog, Harley, who they adopted as a pup. The Weirs have a soft spot for dogs with special needs. And when they were looking for a companion for Harley, they focused on only senior and/or special needs cockers. Their search brought them to Casey, a senior, neglected blind cocker. Casey had been mistreated and had developed some behavior problems. But through their dedication and love, Casey and Harley became great pals. In fact, the Weirs had built their home with special needs dogs in mind – they have an open floor plan and no stairs; the perfect home for blind dogs.

The Weirs lost Casey two years ago and miss him every day, but they knew they would adopt another special needs dog. Their search brought them to Brodie. When they picked up Brodie, he had had one eye removed and was heartworm positive. What angels the Weirs are to even consider a dog like Brodie! After heartworm treatment, the Weirs brought Brodie home, but unfortunately Brodie lost sight in his other good eye. Brodie was now completely blind. The Weirs wonder if their Casey had a hand in bringing Brodie to them.

The Weirs attend CSRNE's annual auction every year. And at this year's auction, they happened to mention to one of the CSRNE volunteers that they would consider adopting another blind cocker. What serendipity! A few weeks later CSRNE called the Weirs with Cassie's story and sure enough, they wanted Cassie.

Ann Blazek was delighted when she learned that CSRNE had found a home for Cassie. Ann left Centerville, Iowa on December 9th and drove straight through, without stopping, to New England to deliver Cassie.

In an email from Ann, she said, "It was a horrible trip, 26 straight hours in the car in a terrible snowstorm. Most people stopped and from what I've heard, were stranded in the western parts of Ohio and Indiana. But I kept trudging along, sometimes at only 20 mph...lol...in all of the

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Cassie on her ride to New England



Cassie meets Bill and JoAnn Weir

Letter from a Forever Home...

Dear CSRNE,

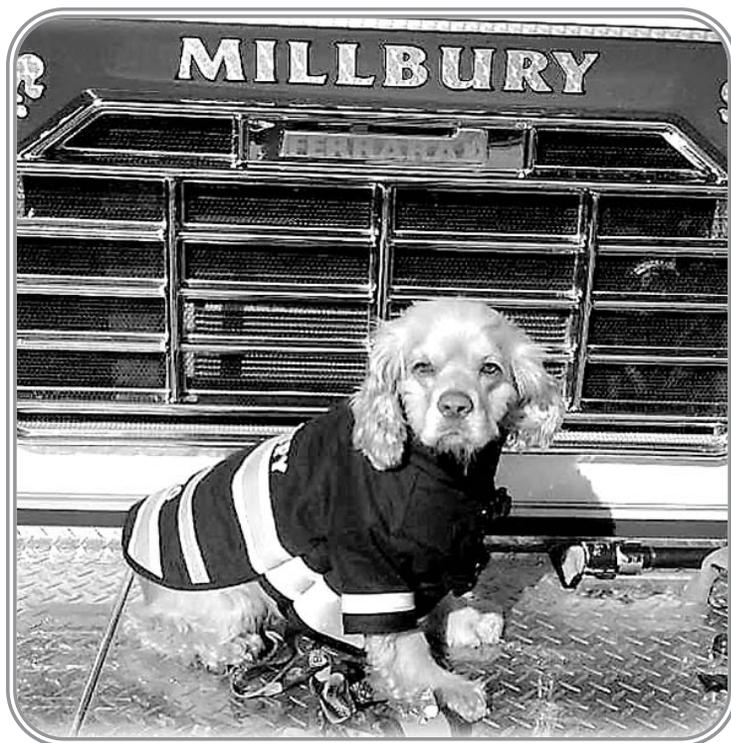
I'm settling in nicely in my new digs! Most of my days are spent exploring the paths around my new home, a little hiking and I even manage to squeeze in time for fetch with my football! (I'm expecting the Patriots to be looking to me for some pointers!)

Sometimes I get to join my dad at work at the fire station. I'm the handsome new mascot for the Millbury Fire Station. I even have my own handmade turnout coat to keep me looking good while on the job.

Thank you so much for bringing me to Jon and Kate's lives, we are a perfect match! They sure know how to scratch a belly!

Love, 

Rocky
Adopted by Jonathan Cuneo & Kate Fitzpatrick, MA



Who says you need spots to be a good fire dog?

Cassie's Story... from previous page

many years I have driven that trip out and back this was by far the worst! But I would do it again in a heartbeat to place Cassie in a good home! And the Weirs seem like wonderful people. THANK YOU ALL for everything your group has done for Cassie!" CSRNE is truly indebted to Ann for all she has done for Cassie. She is a real Cocker Angel.

Cassie was a great passenger and she did really well on the long trip. She is now with the Weirs and is adjusting to her new life and her two big "brothers," Brodie and Harley. Cassie has already seen a veterinary ophthalmologist and he has diagnosed her with degenerative retinas and cataracts. Even with cataract surgery, Cassie would never get her eyesight back but the Weirs are happy to be Cassie's "guiding eyes." Cassie also went to the groomer and had her nails done, ears cleaned and teeth brushed. She had to be shaved down because of her matted fur, but she is so much more comfortable now. She even smells like a peppermint candy cane after her spa treatment.

Throughout this entire process, Cassie has been a trooper. She has maintained her loving and sweet disposition despite everything she has been through. She slept soundly her first night with the Weirs and seems to love her new bed and blanket. She is already finding her way around the house – of course, she has found the



Cassie all cleaned up and pretty in her forever home

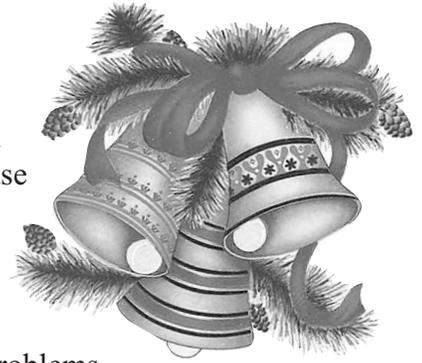
corner in the kitchen where the treats are kept on the counter. (JoAnn thinks her new brother told her...) And she and her two new brothers are getting along well.

JoAnn said, "To everyone who helped in Cassie's behalf, Bill and I thank you! You were all a part in getting her here safe and sound. And we will keep her that way from now on."

From all of us at CSRNE, a big THANK YOU to JoAnn and Bill Weir. They truly are Cocker Angels for opening up their hearts and home to Cassie.

Appeal from the President:

I was re-reading the appeal I wrote for last year's holiday newsletter and I was very tempted to say "ditto!" It's been another year of a slow economy and high unemployment. An ever increasing number of cockers need a safe haven because their owners have lost their homes and are relocating to apartments that don't allow pets. Others can just no longer afford to care for their cocker.



Almost all of these homeless cocker spaniels have not seen a veterinarian for a very long time and they're showing all the signs of that neglect – chronic ear problems, untreated dry eye, skin issues – in fact eleven year old Moxie had such advanced gum disease that he just had to have 15 teeth extracted. Without exception, all the dogs we've rescued this year have been dirty and badly matted.

A continuing slow economy, coupled with a significant increase in our expenses and a decrease in adoptions, means that we are struggling to stay afloat. **We urgently need your help at this difficult time.** It is only through your generous financial support that we can continue this work to help needy cockers.

It would be easy to agree with Clarence in the movie "It's a Wonderful Life" when he says, "There must be an easier way to earn my wings."

But then I think of the miracles that happen when rescue groups work together and overcome what seem like insurmountable obstacles. The miracle of devoted people like Ann Blazek, who drove Cassie 1,200 miles (each way!) from Iowa to Connecticut, sometimes going only 20 miles an hour in a relentless snowstorm. It took Ann 26 hours to make the trip, but she arrived safe and sound and made sure Cassie was safely delivered to her new family who were eagerly awaiting her arrival.

Imagine! All that effort for one blind cocker spaniel. And then there are the compassionate and caring people all over the country who read Cassie's story on our website and made a donation to help this little cocker waif. And we can't forget the volunteers with Ann's rescue group in Iowa and our own CSRNE volunteers who reached out and made Cassie's happy ending possible.

We see miracles like this all year long – wonderful kind people who adopt the older cockers knowing up front that they are going to have to spend significant money to care for that needy dog to maintain good health.

And then there is the miracle of YOU – our dear friends who give so often and so generously. **These miracles happen because you are there to support our mission "to save, improve and extend the lives of abandoned and neglected cockers."**

So is Clarence right? Are there easier ways to earn your wings? Maybe, but certainly none more satisfying.

For all you have done in the past and all we hope you will do in the future to keep this rescue effort going, we thank you.

Sincerely,

Gerry Foss, President

The Day the Toy Moved

By Marcia J. Monbleau

When Holly came to live with me in the fall of 1998, I'd already been told her sad history; she'd been abused, badly neglected, and, ultimately, abandoned in an empty house, to be discovered frightened and hungry a few days later and taken to CSRNE.

Everything else, I'd have to find out for myself. Was she housebroken? Mercifully, yes. Would she be happy riding in the car? Sublimely happy. Would she throw up there? Never. Would she be a good, non-finicky eater? She ate everything put in front of her and anything else she could reach by standing on her hind legs and stretching her neck to near-giraffe length.

Would she love to play? Play?

My new, still fearful, beautiful friend had no idea what a toy was or what to do with it.

And so I began.

Sitting on the floor, tossing a stuffed toy to a dog who sits motionless and staring makes one feel stupid. Getting down on all fours and smacking the floor while making goofy noises goes beyond stupid and all the way to silly.

I kept at it. Day after day, week after week. And still she sat staring.

Meanwhile, I was doing a similar routine with a brush. Holly was terrified by a hairbrush, obviously never having seen one before. I decided she thought it was a weapon—something that would hurt her.

So I sat on the floor some more, running the smooth back of the brush over her for less than a minute a few times every day. She sat, frozen, holding her breath, waiting for pain that never came.

Toys and brush. Brush and toys. Daily.

In late fall that year, I came home one day to find a soft, white stuffed dog in the middle of the living room floor. That's not where I'd left it. Toys were in a basket under the coffee table.

I picked it up and tossed it.

Holly went and got it, shook it a bit, then brought it to me. I threw it again. She got it again.

For the next 12 years, Holly played—sometimes taking every toy out of the basket until she found the just-right one for the moment. She batted it, shook it, handed one end to me for some tug-of-war, or just rested her chin on it.

And when she died in September, every one of those oft-washed toys was still in the basket. She never tore one apart, swallowed a squeaker or chewed off a leg.

I still hear her breathing at night. I still step around a food dish that hasn't been on the floor for three months. I still expect to see her face at the door when I come home. I still think she's in the back seat when I'm driving. I still don't leave food where I think the cocker mouth on a giraffe neck might reach it.

And I still think that the white toy in the middle of the floor was probably my best Christmas present of 1998.



Marcia and Holly - - - best buddies





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Murphy



Visions of Forever Homes Danced in Their Heads...

These are the cockers still waiting and hoping...



Bailey



Bud



King

