

Care teams bring dog back to health



By Michele Coppola, Special to The Oregonian

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Ann and Robert with Sunday the dog.

When they came to get her, she was skinny, nearly hairless, and tied to a wooden swing set with a short rope. But the worst part was her eyes: blank, hopeless, and so very lonely.

Her name then was Hermione -- a moniker likely given to her by the children in the family that left her behind when they moved. Lucky for this dog, a neighbor took her in temporarily; the overcrowded county shelter had told them she'd probably be euthanized given her condition.

It was enough time for a volunteer from [Fences for Fido](#) -- a group that builds free fences and doghouses for families that keep their dogs tethered outside -- to get to her. Hermione had been on their radar for a while; the organization had approached the dog's original owner a few weeks earlier.

On that cold February Sunday, Hermione became Sunday, too. It was the beginning of a new week. Maybe this sad girl could have a new beginning as well.

The vets at [Dove Lewis](#) offered free palliative care to relieve what they could see was a very painful condition that had caused Sunday to lose her hair. A canine skin specialist eventually diagnosed her with a severe yeast infection, exacerbated by exposure and poor diet. In addition to missing the family that abandoned her, it was obvious that Sunday had been physically miserable for a very long time.

But it would take more than antibiotics and decent food for Sunday to recover: Love and attention would be just as important. A dedicated foster home was needed, one willing to do the hard work of rehabilitation for an indefinite period of time.

Fences for Fido partners with [Family Dogs New Life Shelter](#) in Milwaukie to assist with the pets often surrendered to them. Janel Hanson and Ellie Davis, owners of [Dogs Dig It](#) daycare and veteran foster providers, saw a plea to help Sunday on the Family Dogs' Facebook page. They said yes.

What Janel and Ellie agreed to turned out to be nearly three months of weeping sores, antifungal baths, antibiotics, vet appointments and special food donated by the [Pongo Fund](#). It also included slowly coaxing Sunday out of the shell where she'd retreated to escape the pain and loneliness.

"It was so much fun watching her figure out what toys were, and how to play," said Janel.

Eventually, Sunday's excessively loving personality emerged -- so much so that she was dubbed "Mayor of Sugartown" by another volunteer. As people were touched by her story on the Family Dogs' website, the adoption applications poured in.

Sunday paces in circles on the end of a bright pink leash, her caramel-colored coat shining in the warm spring sun. "She spins," says Ellie. "That's all she could do when she was tied to the swing set, so now she does it whenever she's nervous."

Sunday is going home for good today. Ann and Rob Bennion have waited a while to adopt a dog, but they knew Sunday was the one when Janel brought her over for a visit a few weeks ago.

"She needed us," says Ann Bennion. "And we needed her, too."

Now they all stand in the parking lot of the shelter, everyone smiling. Eventually Janel kneels down and hugs Sunday one last time, before she's loaded up with the Bennions.

As the car approaches the stop sign in front of the shelter, a hoarse double bark floats back to where Ellie and Janel are standing. Sunday was never a talker, so perhaps she's just excited. Or maybe she's saying thank you -- and goodbye.