

chestnut hill local

Good Samaritan saves life of blind, deaf Fox Terrier



Chloe DeGrate holds on to Reily, a blind and deaf Terrier she rescued with the help of Sam's Hope, a nonprofit organization based in Wyndmoor, although Chloe insists, "I love him so. He actually rescued me!"

The Craig's List ad simply read: "7-year-old dog that needs a new home and love." Chloe DeGrate, 28, was in search of a little Terrier to call her own for several months; having rescued three terriers in the past nine years, she longed for the loving companionship they provide. Upon seeing the Craig's List ad, she responded immediately, and within two days the tiny dog, shivering and wrapped in a blanket, was delivered into her arms. The tiny, neglected Toy Fox Terrier, after bouncing from home to home, has finally found the forever home, love and care he waited for all of his life.

The first stop in their new life together was to the vet for an exam and immunizations. Unfortunately, the visit revealed issues that Chloe was just not prepared for. First there was a diagnosis of glaucoma. The eye needed to be removed, or the sweet little dog needed to be put down because of severe dental disease, blindness in both eyes and deafness.

But the story of Reily and Chloe was not meant to end there. It wasn't a matter of returning Reily to his previous companion; it was a matter of finding help for him, getting him well and embarking on their life's journey together.

Though Chloe and Reily live out of our service area in Delaware County, and our organization, Sam's Hope, is based in Wyndmoor, after reading their story and the plea for help, how could we turn our backs on this beautiful pair? (We provide assistance for people who would otherwise take their pets to a shelter because they can no longer afford them.)

Chloe drove 38 miles from her home to bring Reily to our partner vet in Southampton. Little Reily is indeed blind in both eyes, although his left eye reacts to light, has cataracts and vascularization in the right eye, is deaf and has severe dental disease. Our own vet, who believes Reily is closer to 12 years old than 7, says Reily does NOT have glaucoma, nor does he need to have his eye removed, contrary to what the previous vet said. Our vet said Reily has retinal atrophy, a progressive and incurable eye disease in which the retina degenerates and the affected animal suffers impaired vision and often blindness. The condition is not painful, and most pets who have it function well, even when they lose their vision completely.

The day of Reily's dental surgery, a week after his initial assessment, Chloe reported that the prescribed eye medication visibly reduced the protrusion of his right eye, and his hair is growing back. She also wrote: "You have no idea how happy I feel to be on the right track with Reily. He has helped me so much! To see his resilience and how he gave me a chance, even when he cannot see me, is remarkable.

"He gets along very well with my cat and absolutely loves children. Many close friends of mine still wonder why I chose to adopt a pet with so many issues, not knowing where his help would come from or assuming he would be useless and indeed a burden. But I have always felt that genuine love is expansive and should include space for the less fortunate. I too have dealt with the various ebbs and flows of life, and it's only appropriate to reach out a hand of hope, even if your means are few at the time.

"Reily loves to perch on my shoulder like a bird when I come home. He has gotten accustomed to my house and doesn't bump into things like he used to. Of course, I have taken the precaution of blocking off the stairs, etc. He now has the

confidence to walk around outside. We are getting to know each other better every day. I love him so. He actually rescued me!

"I believe Reily came into my life for a reason. I am a nanny as well as the primary caregiver for my 88-year-old grandmom and 62-year-old aunt with advanced Multiple Sclerosis. My grandmom has had a morbid fear of dogs for over 80 years after being attacked as a little girl, but upon meeting Reily and hearing of his condition, not only did he melt her heart, but on his second visit to her house, she petted him and let him walk around; even dropping him a few morsels from the dinner table.

"He has also brought the best out of my aunt. Because she suffers with lymphedema in both legs, it is very painful for her to walk, even to the front door. She hadn't sat on the porch for six years, but when Riley came, she sat on the porch with him. The neighbors walked by in awe, asking, 'Who finally got you out of the house?' Yes, it was Reily."

Thank you, Chloe and Reily, for letting us be part of your beautiful story! We wish you a long and happy life together!

Marianne laquinto is a spokesperson for Sam's Hope, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based at 901 A Willow Grove Ave. in Wyndmoor. Donations are needed and gratefully accepted. More details at 267-753-0510, www.samshope.org, samshope.org@gmail.com, www.facebook.com/samshope1 or www.twitter.com/samshope. Chloe's blog is <http://theculturednanny.com/>