

## December 2017 eAnimal



Johnny was clearly in distress. During his medical exam, he yowled and made his discomfort known. He was covered in foxtails and had abrasions on his underside and back legs from having to drag his legs behind him. Our hospital team cleaned his wounds and gave him medication to help him heal and feel more comfortable.

The next day, he was much brighter and began showing his playful side. He tried so hard to stand and walk, but his back legs were so wobbly that he'd just drop to an "army crawl", using his front legs to move himself around. X-rays showed no fractures, so our veterinarian began evaluating other causes for his limited mobility. He was also incontinent and prone to constipation. Unsure of his prognosis for a good quality of life, or of finding an adopter who could open their heart to him, we were certain of just one thing: Johnny deserved a chance.

Under the guidance of our veterinarians, "Team Johnny Walker" - comprised of his foster mom (SHS staffer Mollie) and several of our incredibly dedicated volunteers - implemented an intensive physical therapy program aimed at building his strength and coordination. SHS Board Member John Prouty built a special track with sides to help keep Johnny upright while he practiced walking. Johnny was also able to gain a little traction in a large fish tank with water up to his belly, walking back and forth for a few minutes at a time.

At his foster home each night, Johnny received other forms of physical therapy including range of motion exercises. He needed to wear a diaper and have frequent baths. He also needed soft surfaces to avoid abrasions when dragging himself around. Mollie enlisted the help of her husband and two small children to create routines to manage his extensive special needs. "Caring for Johnny brought so many smiles and tears along the way" she said. "Since we didn't know his prognosis at the time, we just needed to give him the best possible care."

Unaware that life was presenting him with any challenges whatsoever, Johnny just did what comes naturally to a kitten - he wanted to explore and have fun! At Mollie's house, he figured out how to climb stairs, get up on the couch, and climb up and down a cat tree. Still just using his front legs, Mollie shared "he would eventually FLY up and down the stairs chasing the kids or the dogs, hot on their heels!" He even started standing on his own while eating. "He'd balance for a couple minutes before getting distracted and scooting off to the next exciting thing. At that point I knew Johnny had a very bright future."

Our veterinarian consulted with neurological specialists at VCA Animal Care Center. They felt that Johnny was showing improvement but might never be fully ambulatory or have control over his litterbox habits. We agreed that he would need a very special adopter willing to commit to ongoing physical therapy to continue to help improve his muscles and joints, and to give him the care he required.

Recently, a wonderful family came in to meet Johnny. They'd fallen in love with his photo and description on our website and, after meeting him in real life, connected with his beautiful spirit and strength of character. They met with Mollie to discuss his unique needs. Mom's a nurse practitioner and dad's an EMT, and the kids are absolutely smitten. Mollie has been a reassuring resource to them as they help get him settled in his new home, and Dr. Reidenbach is here to answer questions. Johnny is in great hands.



Johnny's journey has been unique, just like every animal we meet. The common thread is a need for protection, compassion, love and care. With so many human and animal lives in transition in our community, we are grateful for [your support](#) which enables us to help homeless pets in so many positive ways. Together we give them - and each other - the hope of better days ahead.