

**The lanky, underweight hound stepped into the passenger seat,** carrying herself low to the ground and winding into the seat next to me.

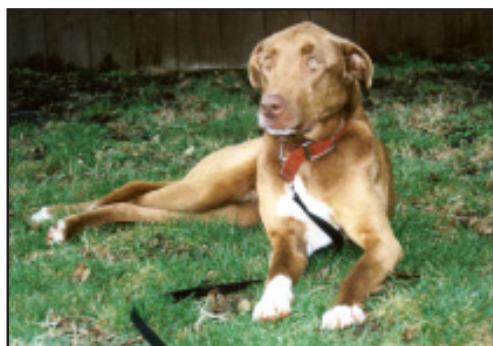
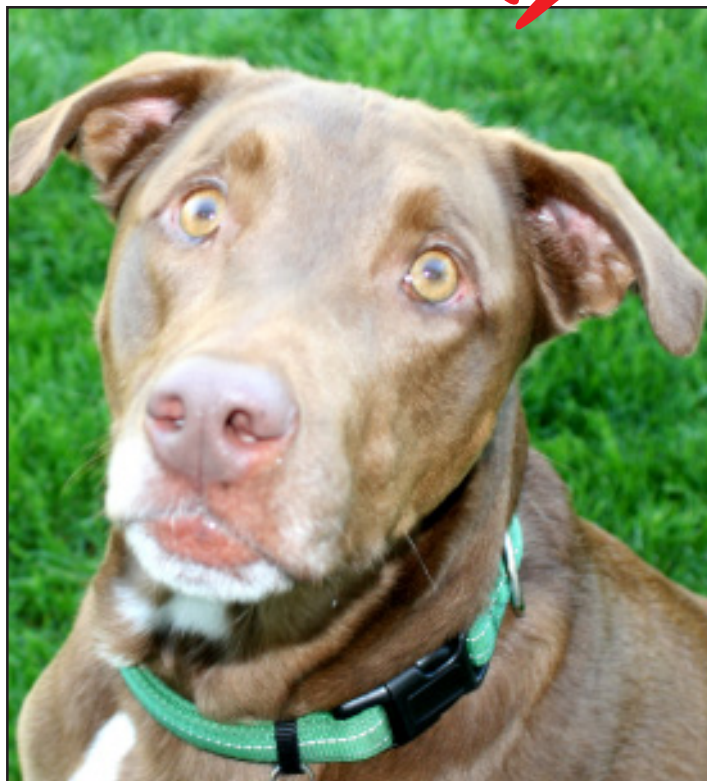
Litchfield and Montgomery County Animal Control had called with a plea. These officers have no shelter or humane organization to help them save the animals they bring in. Animals are kept for seven days at a veterinary clinic and then euthanized if not reclaimed or adopted. They dial through lists of central Illinois-, St. Louis- and Chicago-area rescue groups.

Abbey was the subject of such a string of calls. The officer was emphatic: This girl was a very sweet, touching animal, a special one who would make a great pet.

These are very difficult calls to receive. When weighing a call like this, we have to be mindful of all of the other demands on Illinois Humane's resources. The scales tipped in Abbey's favor. The decision to rescue Abbey started another remarkable journey, one powered by a quirky-yet-beautiful animal's spirit and the compassion of strangers.

As Abbey and I pulled onto I-55, Abbey took a couple of deliberate winding turns in her seat and settled in, leaning heavily toward me. There was a conscious-but-deadweight limpness. Something wasn't right about it. My mind quickly went into "justification mode." Abbey must know she is safe and finally able to relax, I told myself. Despite my efforts at justification, I made a mental note.

Abbey was delivered to the veterinary clinic that provides care for Illinois Humane's animals for boarding until a foster home could be located. The vet clinic staff was immediately able to provide two reasons for the lethargic condition: She was significantly underweight, and her heartworm test was positive.



Abbey put on weight quickly. Heartworm or not, Abbey was a new girl. She became an absolute handful. Josh, a strapping young clinic employee, was able to handle her without becoming emotionally and physically spent. Her stay at the clinic was longer than originally intended because it took time to find a home that could keep this wild girl relatively quiet during her heartworm treatment. If it hadn't been for Josh's empathy and determination, Abbey might have worn out her welcome.

As so often happens in this work, in dropped an angel. Abbey's angel was Suzanne, who contacted and introduced herself to Illinois Humane, offering to foster at that juncture. Suzanne had previously been involved with Border collie rescue, had trained dogs and was willing to take on a bit of a wild child. She visited with Abbey at the vet clinic. Yes, Abbey's eyes said it all to Suzanne. She would foster Abbey.

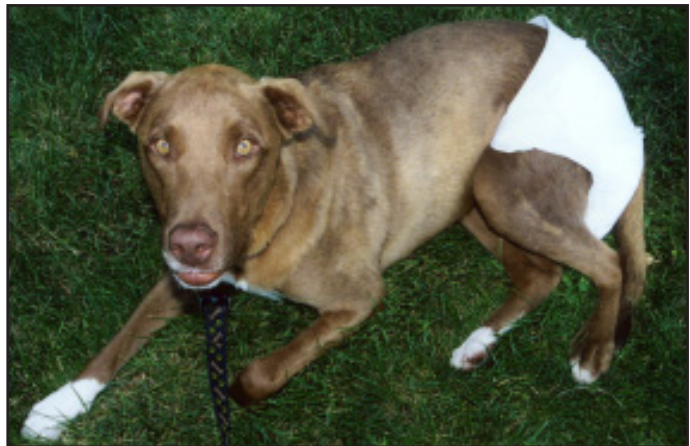
It wasn't but a couple of days later when Suzanne called with a report. Abbey was not house-trained. Another couple of weeks ... still no progress with house-training. Abbey would do well for a little bit of time and then be found dripping in her crate. She urinated when she had been out to relieve herself just a short while before. The veterinarian confirmed that Abbey was incontinent, and it was a permanent condition.

Abbey was started on medication, and Suzanne began using diapers with Abbey. Abbey was not really fond of the diapers, but there was no choice. Abbey once again was potentially wearing out her welcome.

Besides the medication, the veterinarian suggested Illinois Humane's taking Abbey to a specialist to see if the condition could be corrected with surgery. Purdue's teaching clinic was recommended due to its expertise in urology. Abbey had come in early March. The incontinence was diagnosed in April. Two different drugs, which had not worked, had been administered in April and May. Looking back on this time, what was a matter of weeks seemed like months as Suzanne and Illinois Humane struggled with the incontinency.

With the failure of the second drug, Abbey's case started to look like something more than Illinois Humane could support for the long haul, so we contacted Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Utah.

Kathleen, the woman who responded to the plea, had just started working in the animal assistance program. We sent Abbey's photo, and her eyes did it again. Abbey became Kathleen's very first animal case with Best Friends.



The response from Best Friends was that it was unlikely they could take Abbey. Best Friends keeps its dogs on sand, which was problematic for incontinent animals. Kathleen wasn't giving up. Something had spoken to her over the miles, and she was determined to do all she could for Abbey. If Abbey's condition could be corrected, Best Friends could take the dog because ultimately the sand would not be an issue and, also, Abbey would be adoptable. The only way we were going to determine if the condition could be corrected was for Abbey to be evaluated by a specialist. Best Friends might be able to help fund the trip to the specialist. Application was made for funding, and we waited to hear.

In the meantime, Suzanne and her husband were coming up on a long-planned weekend away. Kathleen offered to put Abbey's story on Best Friend's Illinois network to see if we could find someone to care for Abbey for the four days.

Tammy, about an hour and a half southwest of Springfield, responded to the plea. She would be home with her 3-year-old child and her own dogs. Soon Abbey – packed up with diapers and her own blankets – was on the road. She arrived at Tammy's home on Friday evening in the middle of a storm. At 10 a.m. Saturday, Tammy called. She wasn't sure she and

Abbey would make it through the weekend. Was Abbey wearing out her welcome once again?

It wasn't the incontinence. This time it was separation anxiety. Tammy had first thought it was the storm, but as the night wore on and the storm passed, Abbey would whine and cry if she was more than three feet from Tammy's side, and Abbey would not let the other dogs near Tammy. Tammy finally let Abbey stay in her bedroom.

This was the first time Abbey had been away from Suzanne. I asked Tammy to hold on, to give it just a little more time. If things did not improve by that evening, I would drive down to get Abbey.

At 3 p.m., I called Tammy, who reported that at about 1 p.m. a calm had settled. Abbey, somehow, had come to the decision she was okay, the other dogs were okay, and it was okay if Tammy put some distance between them once in a while! By Sunday Abbey's anxiety had completely subsided.

A couple of weeks later, Kathleen called with the good news that Best Friends would be able to shoulder the majority of the cost of Abbey's evaluation by a specialist.

Late in June, Michele, an Illinois Humane volunteer, drove Abbey to her appointment with the university veterinarians in West Lafayette, Indiana.

The problem was a dysfunctional sphincter, which is responsible for holding urine in the bladder. The weakness of the muscle could not be corrected with surgery. The specialist provided Illinois Humane with two options. The first was to dose in combination the two drugs that had already been tried. The other option involved collagen injections to narrow the lumen of the urethra. Suzanne immediately began administering the original medications in combination under the direction of local veterinarians.

It seemed to work, but we had to be sure it was a long-term solution. By the end of October, the veterinarians declared the drug combination a success, and Suzanne began to bring Abbey to adoptions.

The second weekend of November a young couple came to an adoption looking for a dog. The magnet that is Abbey's eyes and face performed its magic once again. The couple was drawn to Abbey. Suzanne told them everything there was to tell. This dog required medication and suffered from initial separation anxiety. She did not always appreciate other dogs.

There was no dissuading Troy and Emily. It was as if they had specifically come for Abbey that day. The couple was soon approved as the adoptive home. They took Abbey to the vet so that they might personally become established with the veterinarian. They also accumulated a library of materials on separation anxiety. Emily and Troy have since learned that Abbey may need knee surgery. They are prepared to handle this new responsibility. The couple has also committed to a regimen with a professional dog trainer to address Abbey's reaction to other dogs. Emily and Troy are everything we could have possibly wished for, for Abbey: *the* perfect, highly responsible and capable home. We received a resounding "Yippee!" with additional warm words of appreciation from Kathleen when we sent her the news of Abbey's new home

The Litchfield animal control officer, Josh, Suzanne, Kathleen, Tammy, Emily and Troy –



all wonderful individuals – became part of our world and family because of a hound with a very special look and some very special needs. Abbey, like so many Illinois Humane animals, came into our custody in crisis. She had special-but-not-insurmountable needs. These are animals that may not be attractive to high-volume, quick-turnover rescue groups. They are animals at the very heart of Illinois Humane’s mission.



This August, Illinois Humane celebrated five years as an incorporated not-for-profit organization. It was founded by humane investigators to ensure a safety net for animals who were the subject of cruelty and neglect cases, irrespective of breed. A portion of our work will always be dedicated to animals who have a critical need. They may not be the most immediately adoptable animals under the sun, but they, nonetheless, can and should be helped.

Since that start five years ago, we have added a wonderful program, known as New Hope, through which temperament-tested animals are taken from area animal control facilities so as to allow these animals just those few extra weeks necessary to find good homes. Our programs thus represent the yin and yang of rescue: We save both the highly adoptable and the less immediately adoptable who, with the right, tender, loving care will become equally cherished family members.

Current times have resulted in Illinois Humane’s receiving animals that local households can no longer afford, due to loss of employment, illness and/or increased living expenses. Also, we have recently received five animals displaced by the Iowa floods. Best Friends joined us in this most recent effort, with funding for the flood animals, but not enough to cover all expected expenses.



With this letter, we ask you to take this opportunity to participate in our work. We are asking you to open the door for the next Abbey. We are asking you to support this wonderful vehicle, Illinois Humane, that brings together perfect strangers and facilitates their contribution and the partnering of resources for the benefit of animals in great need. We ask you to look into Abbey’s eyes and tell her you will help.

Sincerely,

**Jane McBride**  
*President*