

My Beautiful. Brave & Resilient Oliver

I don't know how many of you can relate to the story of my beautiful, fragile and magnificent little mini-Dachshund, Oliver, who has, in his short 18 month old life lived countless lives and experienced too many tragic events to fathom. My little man was used as a stud dog at a puppy mill, was sold at a garage sale, spent time at a Shelter, spent time as a Rescue Organization "saved" dog and was even fostered for a week or so before I learned of his situation and need and offered to provide him with a stable, loving family and home. This tiny (8.5 pound) chocolate and tan dog had been through more turmoil and suffering than I can possibly understand for no logical reason whatsoever.

I saw Oliver's photo on the Internet and knew I must come to his aid. I adored him instantaneously – those wide hazel eyes reminded me of Oliver Twist. He was wearing a collar but could have easily worn a bow-tie. He looked like such a proper "little gentleman." He was magical and magnetic and triggered so many feelings within me – love, sadness, pathos, and the overwhelming desire to bring some degree of love, happiness, respect and appreciation to this lovely little creature that had so far experienced so little compassion or respect.

Oliver had spent most of his life in a wire-mesh crate and lived in his own feces and urine. He did not know what grass felt like under his tiny little paws. Yet, somehow, inexplicably he loved everyone – people, cats, dogs, and so on. His stance and posture were proud and strong. His intelligence and cleverness were immediately apparent, as he seemed to possess an uncanny ability to accommodate and adjust to all of the circumstances and people to which he was exposed. I had fallen in love with Oliver (whose previous name was "Hershey" along with many other names) reminding us of how many places in which he had temporarily resided or spent time.

Oliver was timid, but so loving and friendly at the same time. It was obvious that he had been "broken" at least once, and we have done our best to "fix" him. We have been socializing him since we first met, and there isn't a living person or animal that has not fallen in love with this tiny, delicate baby.

I feel with all of my heart that Oliver would make an outstanding Therapy dog- as he can so easily relate to the many "broken" children and adults he encounters. I was deeply and profoundly disappointed when Oliver did not pass his Delta Society Pet Partner's Evaluation test. He was deemed by the evaluator as "not ready." This deeply disturbed me, as I have personally seen Oliver love and play with children as well as adults and adjust beautifully and sensitively and compassionately to their needs. No, it does not come easily to socialize or ever again "trust" another human being. But, with time, patience and perseverance, I know that Oliver will develop into a remarkably wonderful Therapy dog. During our AAT exam, my other little Dachshund, Oscar, flew through the test and passed with flying colors. He once had a family who loved him although they surrendered him to a shelter) has never experienced the kind of isolation suffering, or abuse that Oliver has. He is happy-go-lucky and good-natured and friendly to everyone.

I am so deeply saddened that Oliver and I must constantly “train ourselves” to be social and friendly to any stranger we meet. Oliver is being trained for his next Delta evaluation. No, he will never be as easy-going or relaxed as Oscar, (his best buddy), but he has so much to give, so many gifts to offer – especially to those who have experienced loneliness, abuse or neglect. If it is not intended that Oliver pass his Delta AAT test, we will explore and find other avenues and options of sharing his beauty, intelligence and loving, gentle disposition with those who are privileged enough to recognize and benefit from them.

God bless my brave little baby. He will be evaluated by a Delta evaluator again on May 21. Please keep your fingers crossed for my beautiful, loving and sensitive little man. I can think of NO dog that will ever make a more effective Therapy dog than my little Oliver Hershey Gambler Olivier...Far too often, we fail to see the gifts they bring that are not necessarily compliant with every rule or regulation. I will never give up on my baby boy's ability to help others!!!