

“Senior dogs can true power of love!”



Lionel's Legacy makes sure senior dogs spend their golden years happy and loved

After her family fostered a terminally ill senior dog named Lionel, Laura Oliver was moved to help all the other furry ‘golden oldies’ in need of caring homes, and created a nonprofit that has saved more than 1,000 dogs—and brightened the lives of the people who love them!

Laura Oliver’s heart twinged as she looked at the frail dog curled up beside her. The San Diego mom had just planned to drive Lionel, a 15-year-old pit bull mix with terminal cancer, from the veterinarian to a foster family. But when the people backed out, Laura just couldn’t return him to the shelter.

“I’m taking you home with me,” she told Lionel.

“We’ll give him a lot of love for however long he has,” she told her family.

That love proved magical. Laura and her husband, Jeff, set up a special room where Lionel could rest comfortably. And after a few days of nourishing food, he began to gain strength. Laura and her daughters, Madi and Reina, then 4 and 7, started taking him on little walks through the neighborhood. Even the family cat, Hercules, would tag along. People would come out of their homes to watch the daily parade. And their hearts melted when Laura shared Lionel’s story.

With each day, Lionel seemed to have a little more pep in his step and pushed himself to go farther. He ended up outliving expectations. Instead of just a few weeks, he enjoyed eight months with the family.

They all missed him terribly, but were comforted knowing Lionel’s final days were happy. Laura knew many other senior dogs weren’t so lucky.

We’ve got to do something about this, Laura told herself. *There are a lot of Lionels out there who need help.*

Legacy of love

Realizing she would need help herself to be able to provide the day-to-day and medical care senior dogs require, in 2011, Laura founded the nonprofit Lionel’s Legacy Senior Dog Rescue (LionelsLegacy.org). It took a while to get the organization off the ground. At the beginning, she and her family took in a few



“These dogs give as much love as they get,” says Laura, with two of her senior pups, Rudy (left) and Mufasa (right)

teach us a lot about the



Lionel,
Laura's
inspiration



Despite health
woes, senior dogs
never give up



They may have
gray in their
fur, but they are
young at heart

more senior dogs who faced euthanasia in shelters. But after about a year, thanks to social media and an article in a newsletter for a local animal shelter, word spread. Donations started coming in, and other animal lovers began volunteering to foster and even adopt senior dogs.

Adopting a senior dog was one of the best decisions; you can tell he is grateful every day. We take Brave everywhere, he fits so perfectly into our lives, shared one Chihuahua adopter.

Lionel's Legacy saved her, gave her the major surgery she needed and allowed me to be her family. I will be forever grateful as she was truly special, enthused the adopter of a boxer dubbed Penny Lane.

I looked at that face, and I knew I could give him the best life. A year later, I can report that he is sweet, lovable and a gem of a dog. How lucky we are to have found each other, wrote the adopter of a schnauzer named Fritz.

Laura always smiles reading these messages, as she knows firsthand the joy senior dogs bring to the people who love them. She credits Lionel with teaching

her family to slow down and savor life, instead of rushing through it. To appreciate simple pleasures, like a walk or snuggling on the couch.

Her heart swelled as each year, the number of people adopting a "golden oldie" grew.

You've done good, Lionel, Laura beamed.

"Lionel taught my family to slow down and appreciate life's simple pleasures"

Never give up

Today, Lionel's Legacy has not only rescued and re-homed more than 1,000 senior dogs, the organization helps pay veterinary bills for pets of senior humans facing financial challenges. Having a furry companion can enrich a senior's life in so many ways, says

Laura. But living on a fixed income can make it difficult to take on a pet. Lionel's Legacy eases that burden.

The organization also offers free counseling and advice to people struggling with the day-to-day care of older dogs to help keep pets with the families who love them.

"We can learn so much from senior animals," Laura says. "They adapt to challenges in such amazing and incredible ways. If they go blind or lose their hearing, they don't give up. They're like, *Alright, I've got to figure this stuff out. This is my new life.* And they find a way to move on. That's a great lesson for us humans to take to heart."

—Jen Reeder



3 easy ways to build a legacy of love!

1 Start a journal!

Pick up any kind of notebook you'd like and set a timer for 10 minutes a day to jot down things you're grateful for, significant events of the time or your thoughts and prayers. Your handwritten messages will spark joy and inspiration to look back on in the future and for your family to cherish forever.

2 'Tend' to your loved ones!

Start planting flowers and herbs in your kitchen or backyard and label each plant for the person it reminds you of. While you tend to your blooms, list all the things you love about that person and, once it's growing, deliver them for a lasting keepsake you both can cherish for years to come.

3 Share your recipes!

Pick a recipe you'd like to try, and invite a loved one to cook and eat with you. While trying the dish, ask them to recall a memory they have with you. Write their response on the back of the recipe card. Then download the free app Recipe Keeper, where you can digitally save the recipes and memories.

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