

GETTING A Paw Up

If your dog is injured or sick,
financial assistance is available.

By Elaine Waldorf
Gewirtz



When I was 8 years old, my family's 2-year-old Boston Terrier Archie began limping.

We took Archie to our veterinarian and learned that he required an expensive surgery to repair the injury. My father was out of work and my parents couldn't afford the unexpected cost. One thing was certain: Euthanizing or giving up Archie was out of the question.

Our family explained the situation to our veterinarian and offered to do odd jobs around the clinic and to make payments. The vet accepted the terms and after treatment, Archie's leg healed quickly.

If you face a similar predicament, working proactively with your vet should be your first step. This solution doesn't work for everyone, and when bad things happen to good dogs, owners without pet health insurance or adequate financial resources may think their only choice is relinquishing their dogs to shelters, neglecting canine medical needs, or ending their pets' lives.

No one likes these options; fortunately, a special group of charitable organizations funded by private, corporate, or foundation donations is helping dog owners on restricted budgets by easing the burden of costly or emergency veterinary bills.

In most cases owners apply online, and the organization evaluates the application and consults with the veterinarian treating the dog. Once the procedure is approved, the veterinarian receives a grant that covers part or sometimes all of the procedure.

Some organizations limit funding to specific breeds, or only rescue, service, or senior dogs. Other groups prefer to assist dogs who need mobility equipment or treatments for specific illnesses, such as cancer.

Here's how three people found help for their dogs through the generosity of charitable groups.



Modest Needs

www.modestneeds.org

Modest Needs was founded in 2002. This national non-profit organization based in New York empowers people to make small, emergency grants to low-income people, with or without pets, through crowd funding, the practice of raising money from a large number of people on the Internet.

"We believe that anyone can make a huge impact in someone else's life by giving as little as \$10 or \$15 at a time," says Amy Wink, communications director for the Modest Needs Foundation. "Since 2009, we have helped 24 applicants with animal/pet-related funding, for a total of \$16,307.64. I'm continually amazed at people's generosity."



COURTESY EMILY SZYMANSKI

Emily Szymanski of Las Vegas and Allie, a 3-year-old Bulldog mix service dog. The Modest Needs Foundation of New York granted \$531.98 for a mobility harness for Allie.

A former dancer, Emily Szymanski of Las Vegas now suffers from seizures and nerve damage in her legs. Working with a physical therapist helped Szymanski regain some lower-limb strength. Szymanski can walk short distances, but mainly uses a wheelchair.

In December 2013,

Szymanski adopted Allie from the Nevada SPCA in Las Vegas, and trained the dog to be her mobility service dog. "I wanted Allie to wear a special harness that I could lean on for balance to help me walk, so I'm not completely dependent on the wheelchair," Szymanski says. "Most harnesses are heavy for

dogs to wear and the handles are too short for me to use, so I was hoping for a lightweight custom design with an extra-tall handle."

But a custom harness cost \$500, which was not in Szymanski's budget, as she lives on a fixed income that barely covers her rent, food, and utilities. "When my phys-

ical therapist suggested that I contact the Modest Needs Foundation to pay for the harness, I hated to ask for help, but it was either that or never walk again on my own," Szymanski says.

Action came swiftly. On March 15, 2014, Modest Needs approved Szymanski's application and two days later posted her request on its website. Within 24 hours people fully funded the harness, and on March 19, 2014, Modest Needs sent a check to Bold Lead Designs LLC in the Denver metro area to pay for it.

"I never expected anything, let alone the whole amount in one day," Szymanski says. "People who didn't know me stepped up to help, and I hope the day comes that I can do the same for someone else."

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 **Natural
Product Guide**
p. 41

BEST BUDDIES
PHOTO CONTEST
WINNERS p. 36

**RUSSELL
TERRIER
PROFILE**
p. 54



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p. 1

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on page 50

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