

Differently Abled Kittens Form a Fast Friendship

BY DEBORAH BARNES

Anchovy, an adorable calico kitten, was hit by a car when she was only 2 months old, which resulted in permanent loss of mobility to her hind legs and rendered her incontinent. It seemed unlikely she'd have a fairy-tale story with a happy ending.

A Good Samaritan found Anchovy and took her to Austin Pets Alive! as part of its P.A.S.S. Program (Positive Alternatives to Shelter Surrender) for Texas residents, which provides emergency medical assistance, temporary fosters and behavioral/training recommendations to save at-risk animals.

Foster mom to the rescue

Halle Eckel Hamilton, cat adoption manager for APA! and frequent foster cat mom was immediately smitten with the patchwork princess and couldn't resist bringing Anchovy home for some TLC.

"She was so small, she couldn't go into a group room with bigger cats ... and I have space," Halle says. "She needed the opportunity to safely explore, to play, to just be a kitten, and I also knew due to her incontinence, she'd require some help when it came to her bathroom needs."

When the spirited calico went to her foster home, she needed a buddy. Enter Jeff Goldbum, a dashing, 3-month-old, ginger Manx kitten who suffers from, aptly enough, Manx syndrome, a condition in which the spine and spinal cord are shortened because the last few vertebrae and spinal segments have not developed normally. It can cause an array of problems, including nerve damage and incontinence.

"They adored each other," Halle says. "Jeff was immediately so excited to tackle Anchovy and romp around with her. She has that same kind of energy, too, just different abilities because she's paralyzed on her back legs."

Not only did the duo play together, but they also groomed each other and slept cuddled together (often "holding paws").

Halle says neither cat seems to feel differently abled. Anchovy is fearless and loves to climb tree towers and catch bugs, while Jeff is a purring, cuddling love machine. Jeff can poop on his own, and while Anchovy needs assistance in that regard, she has a keen sense of smell, so she often buries the "gifts" Jeff leaves in the litter box, as she has better manners than he does!

Fur-ever homes

Halle would have liked the duo to be adopted together but is happy to report they have both recently found loving homes. She will miss them but is grateful to be part of their adoption journeys.

Without people like her and the APA!, those really "needy, needy cats, the wonky ones," would be euthanized



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at other shelters due to the lack of resources and knowledge we can provide to potential adopters, Halle says.

She is proud of her local nonprofit, stating it had a record year finding loving homes for their incontinent cat population. APA! "pre-adopts" cats for at least 60 days to get them into a routine. The shelter also gives adopters access to internal vets and techs, as well as training — all at no additional cost so that people can take a chance on a cat who didn't have a chance. And what better example than Anchovy and Jeff — two happy "pees" in a pod! 🐾



Deborah Barnes is an award-winning author, including the book *Makin' Biscuits — Weird Cat Habits and the Even Weirder Habits of the Humans Who Love Them*. She's past president of the Cat Writers' Association and cat mom to seven felines featured in her blog Zee & Zoey's Cat Chronicles.

