

Karen Genereux and Jason Bouris on Adopting Bruce, a Senior Lab



After moving into our new home, we decided it was time for a dog. Both of us had had dogs in the past. I was pushing for a puppy just to get some more of that short, precious time that you share with your best friend. I started talking to a local breeder of English Labs. My fiancée, who volunteered at an animal shelter for many years, was totally against buying a dog from a breeder. She kept telling me that there are many wonderful dogs at shelters and rescue groups that need homes. Then she mentioned that she wanted to adopt an older or special needs dog because they're always the last ones to get adopted. I resisted, but, eventually I agreed.

I searched Pet Finder constantly. We inquired about two senior labs, Bruce and Grace. Debra Ginn, who was fostering both dogs, described them as "an old married couple." Unfortunately, they were both down South and we weren't comfortable adopting any dog sight unseen. A few months later, I noticed Bruce was moved to a foster home in New England. We went to visit him and fell in love with him instantly. When we arrived, he slowly walked up to us and rested his head in my lap for the longest time while I scratched him behind his ears. I was sold.

When we picked Bruce up, he had difficulty getting into the car and sat with his head hanging down the entire one-hour ride home. When we finally got home, he fell getting out of the car. The fact that we adopted a senior dog finally starting to sink in and I was beginning to second-guess our decision. The first week we had him, I must have cried every day thinking about this wonderful dog who, based on how decrepit he seemed, might not be with us long. My fiancée kept telling me that we can't think about losing him, we have to love, spoil and enjoy his company for however long we have him. That day we made him a promise to Bruce to make the time we shared with him the best he could ever have.

We put Bruce on a special diet and adding daily glucosamine supplements and vitamins. Before, he could barely get off of his dog bed. Now, Bruce runs (well, his version of it ☺), stretches like a cat in the morning and even jumps up for food.

Whenever we look at Bruce, it's hard to describe the overflow of love we feel for him. If either of us has a bad day, all we have to do is look at Bruce and he brings a smile to our faces. He's canine Prozac. He is one the sweetest, most loving dog we've ever met. Bruce is always happy to meet other people, children and dogs. He doesn't ask for much except scratches behind his ears, car rides, food, food and food. Oh, and did I mention food?

Bruce has many endearing traits. Whenever he drinks, his big, droopy lips will drop 80% of the water over the next 20 feet of floor. He can't see that well, so every so often he nibbles on our fingers thinking they might be treats. When we pet him, his body "melts" and he collapses on top of us. When you stop petting him, he lifts his head and stares at you, as if to ask, "Is that all?" He won't put his head down until you start petting him again. Needless to say, we sit on the floor for hours with exhausted arms because it's so hard to deny him anything.

Adopting a senior dog isn't for everyone. It is probably one of the most rewarding experiences when you can give an older dog a loving home.

We are most thankful to Debbie, who recognized something special in Bruce and refused to give up on him until he found his forever home. When the time comes for another dog, we will definitely look at seniors again. And we will check with Debbie and see if she has taken in any other wonderful old souls.

-Jay & Karen