



Above: Phoenix, less than three weeks after he was rescued.

# Being loved was painful for her.

Her owner was killed suddenly in a vehicle accident and she was left behind, needing immediate vet care. The Helping Paw Project found a temporary home for her on a Sunday afternoon and



Right: Desi, after several weeks of treatment.

**Submitted by Carol Rodgers**

As much as Desi wanted to be loved, just being petted was painful for her. Her back, tail and legs were covered with open sores and scabs from severe flea dermatitis that had never been treated. Just touching her sensitive skin caused pain. Her ear canals were nearly swollen shut from untreated infections, so even rubbing her ears was out of the question.

started her medical care the following morning. The road has all been uphill from that point on. It seems like such a small thing, but it was incredibly rewarding when Desi came up to us to have her ears rubbed. Desi is

now enjoying life for perhaps the first time. She has a big yard with a privacy fence, more tennis balls and squeaky toys than she knows what to do with, and more love than she has ever known in her entire six years of life.

The Helping Paw Project was established in July, 2013, to assist people who genuinely want to adopt elderly dogs, but are

hesitant because older pets often have more medical needs. For adopters who can afford the day-to-day costs of food, heartworm and flea preventative, and routine vet care, this program is available for those unanticipated needs. The Helping Paw Project is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation that operates entirely on donations. According to program founder Carol Rodgers, the organization has assisted nearly 100 senior dogs in the past two years.

“Our organization works closely with Dr. Gary Minder, owner of Grace Veterinary Clinic,” Rodgers says. “We start with a complete vet exam to determine what care is needed. We usually do blood tests because we don’t know a dog’s background or history of vet care, especially if abandoned at a pound. Sometimes a dog needs dental care, an echocardiogram or a tumor removed. Other times, all it takes is proper medication to clear up an ear infection or dry eye. Many older dogs need pain medication for arthritis. Our goal is to keep every senior dog as healthy and comfortable as possible.”

### Every case is different.

“We work with Sangamon County Animal Control and other area facilities that need help



Dr. Gary Minder examines Princess, one of the first dogs taken into The Helping Paw Project program.

finding homes for elderly dogs. When possible, we assist owners who need to find new homes for their senior dogs ... to avoid the traumatic experience of being abandoned at a pound after years of living in homes,” Rodgers explains.

“Recently we rescued an 11-year-old Poodle mix with the worst eye infections any of us had ever seen. Dr. Minder and

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