

# PETS

## Owner builds wheelchair for paralyzed pup

By Ashley Varese  
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Bacio Martin is a 30-pound ball of energy. At 2-and-a-half years old, the beagle mix refuses to slow down, even after undergoing spinal cord surgery.

While playing with his favorite toy, a stuffed pig, Bacio let out a yelp, and his human, Brian Martin, said his two hind legs splayed out and his neck was arched.

"He was body was as stiff a board," Brian said.

It was around 9 p.m., so Brian and his wife, Dana, gave Bacio Tylenol with the hope that it would relieve some of his pain. But he cried through the night.

The next day, they took Bacio to Navarre Animal Hospital, which referred them to a veterinarian in Mobile. The veterinarian performed a myelogram, opening the back of Bacio's neck to check out his spinal cord. The vet determined Bacio had Intervertebral Disc Disease, which is common in dogs with short spines.

The veterinarian operated on Bacio by opening his spine and draining the fluid. The doctor wasn't very optimistic, and gave Bacio a 50/50 chance of recovery. In fact, Brian said when the doctor pinched one of Bacio's



Photos by Ashley Varese

**Bacio, a beagle mix, was paralyzed for three months after he was diagnosed with Intervertebral Disc Disease. His human, Brian Martin, built a wheelchair for Bacio so he could still exercise and go to the dog park.**

nerves with forceps, there was no response.

"There was no movement, and the doctor said it didn't look good," Brian said.

But the dog, a rescue from PAWS, would surprise the doctor.

Following surgery, Bacio's hind end was completely paralyzed for about three months. He had a long road ahead of him, and so did the Martins and their 11-year-old daughter, Bella. Since Bacio couldn't walk, he had



accidents in the house.

"We'd usually have to carry him out in the morning and take him outside," Dana said.

Brian said they would have

recovery, the couple never considered giving up.

In fact, they went above and beyond when Brian made a wheelchair for Bacio, allowing him to go for walks and "be a dog."

Pet wheelchairs retail for around \$500, but after looking at photos online, Brian decided to make one himself. He headed over to ACE Hardware on Navarre Parkway, and with an employee's help, he said they basically built the wheelchair

to depress Bacio's bladder so he could go to the bathroom.

"He had plenty of accidents," he said.

But throughout Bacio's

in the shopping cart.

Made of lawn mower wheels, PVC pipe and fittings, Bacio's wheelchair cost around \$30. Brian put together the body of the wheelchair, and Dana sewed a sling that would hold up Bacio's belly, as well as little socks to keep his feet elevated.

Now Bacio can go to the dog park and socialize with his four-legged friends, while still getting exercise. Dana also exercised him – the dog equivalent of physical therapy – and they put him in the pool, which also alleviated some of his pain.

Dana said when her parents visited with their Dachs-hund, Sam, a few months ago, they noticed Bacio really trying to walk again.

"He really wanted to play," she said. "I don't know if Sam was the motivation to get him to start walking."

The family spent around \$4,000 between the surgery, doctor visits and medication, and while some of their friends thought they were crazy for spending so much time and money on their pet, they couldn't imagine doing anything differently.

"He's like our child," Dana said. "If your child got hurt, you wouldn't just say 'That's it, if you have a dog, you have to take care of him.'"

Brian agreed.

"When you have a bad, day your dog gives you unconditional love," he said. "You don't turn your back on him."

### Pet Briefs

**Lost cat found alive after woman extended vacation to search**  
 A cat that was lost after a fatal crash on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula is back with his owner.

KTUU-TV reports that Charles and Robin Wiesneth, of Miramar Beach, Fla., have found their missing cat Tucker weeks after he disappeared after the Aug. 5 crash.

A pickup truck with two people crossed the highway centerline and crashed into the Wiesneths' motorhome. Both people in the truck died. The Wiesneths suffered minor injuries.

Robin Wiesneth extended her vacation to continue looking for the 10-pound black and white cat. She says someone at an auto shop in Soldotna spotted him on Tuesday. A search party spent four hours trying to coax Tucker out of hiding. Robin Wiesneth says he is skinny and tired but no worse for wear.

**Kangaroo-type pet on the loose in Arizona**

Authorities say one or two wallaroos, a type of kangaroo, have escaped from a north Tucson home.

Pima County Sheriff's Department spokesman Tracy Suitt said a person reported that at least one pet wallaroo went missing Monday afternoon.

A video captured the kangaroo-type animal hopping down a far north Tucson street. Suitt said that a second animal may also have escaped.

He said it's legal in Arizona for the animals to be kept as pets and that they are not considered aggressive.

The breakout mirrors one by two llamas who escaped from an assisted-living facility in the Phoenix area in February, causing a social media spectacle as live video footage showed the animals averting authorities numerous times.

**Phoenix police rescue puppy trapped in pipe after 10 hours**

Police serving a drug-related search warrant at a Phoenix home found themselves part of a 10-hour rescue effort to free a puppy trapped in a sewage pipe. Authorities say officers went to the home Thursday morning and found a very young puppy alive but stuck in an open pipe that went under the home. They also found adult female dog and two dead puppies, all believed to be strays. Authorities say a plumbing company's camera pinpointed the pup's location, and rescuers pulled out the shaking animal around 10:30 p.m.

Arizona Humane Society officials monitored the dog during the entire rescue and estimated the puppy, a pit bull terrier mix, was between 1 and 2 weeks old. The puppy is receiving medical care at a local animal hospital.

### Trouble in Navarre



Dogs' lives are too short. Their only fault, really.

—Agnes Sligh Turnbull

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