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**Charlie: Once blind, now he can see!**

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**Teddy**

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**Happy boy**



Steve and Alayne with Dexter, an elderly Dachshund who came to the ranch earlier this year from a shelter in California.

## If they need it, they'll get it

Whenever we agree to take an animal, we make a commitment to provide whatever medical care he or she needs for the rest of his or her life. A few – like Dexter in the photo above – require urgent medical care even *before* we can bring them to the ranch. In his case, we had to arrange emergency surgery for oral abscesses from rotting teeth before he could travel.

Others arrive and we find out they need immediate medical attention. Most of those have happy endings, but sometimes – as with dear little Teddy – we lose them no matter how much veterinary care they get.

Some animals are with us for years and never need anything other than routine vaccinations.

But we've had three cancer cases so far this year, two requiring weeks of radiation therapy at a veterinary teaching hospital and the other is undergoing chemotherapy.

Then there is Charlie, our happiest ending. For us, the ultimate joy is giving the gift of sight to a blind animal.

In short, it doesn't matter what kind of medical care they need – because they'll get it. And that's only possible because of *your* wonderful gifts for the animals at the ranch. Too often people like to give us the credit for the amazing things that happen here, but in reality it's *you* who deserve the credit. None of this would happen without your support! On behalf of the animals, thank you for your generosity!

*Alayne Marker and Steve Smith, Co-founders*

## Make a gift for the animals

There are many ways you can help the animals:

- Make a **cash donation**. You can mail a check, make a secure online donation at our Web site, or call us to process a credit card donation over the phone.
- Donate **stock** (we can work with your broker on the details).
- Make a **bequest** to the sanctuary in your will. See our planned giving page for more info at [www.rollingdogranch.org/support/planned\\_giving.html](http://www.rollingdogranch.org/support/planned_giving.html)

The sanctuary is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization and runs 100% on donations. Contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you!

## In loving memory: Teddy



The director of Missoula Animal Control asked if we could take this little boy, who had been dumped on a sidewalk this summer. He was blind, emaciated, and matted. We named him Teddy.

Our vets quickly discovered Teddy suffered from severe diabetes that was never treated. Further testing revealed he had multiple bladder stones and a

gallbladder about to explode – literally. We realized it was amazing he was even alive.

He survived the necessary surgeries and we began the challenge of trying to regulate his runaway diabetes. Of the 10 weeks we had this sweet tyke, he spent half of that time in the hospital. But he quickly gained weight, became perky and even bossy. He loved nothing more than to lie on our laps for some cuddling. We became optimistic about his long-term health and well-being.

Then, early on a Sunday morning, he died suddenly from a heart attack, triggered by a shower of blood clots that also lodged in his kidneys and lungs. Our tough little survivor had gone as far as he could. But he died knowing he was loved, and in the end, that's all we could ask for.

## The Henry Bergh Award



The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals announced the winners of their 2009 Humane Awards, and we were honored

to win their Henry Bergh Award, named for the ASPCA's founder. The ASPCA flew Alayne to New York City for a special event in late October. We were thrilled and humbled by the award, and delighted for the recognition it brings the special animals at the ranch!

## Help us win the prize!

The Animal Rescue Site is holding an online contest called the Shelter Challenge, with \$100,000 in total prizes. In the first round earlier this year, we came in third nationwide and won \$3,000 for the animals. In the current contest that ends on December 20th, we're also doing very well – at press time, we are No. 1 and thus on track for the \$20,000 grand prize. It's easy to vote, and you can vote every day! Please go to our blog at [www.blog.rollingdogranch.org](http://www.blog.rollingdogranch.org) for the details. Thank you!

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## Charlie: Once blind, now he can see!

We've only been able to do this once before, several years ago. Ever since, we've waited for another chance to come along, because there's nothing like giving a blind animal his or her sight back. Usually our animals have gone blind from causes that can't be reversed.

But when Charlie arrived as a blind Beagle from Georgia earlier this year, we noticed his pupils reacted to the camera flash when we took his photo. That meant his retinas were detecting light. Maybe he could see behind his thick cataracts? We tried not to get too excited, because only about 50% of dogs with cataracts are candidates for surgery – usually because the retinas aren't working well enough.

Our vet also found the same pupillary light reflex we had seen in Charlie while taking photos. Next came an electroretinogram, or ERG, to confirm whether his retinas were really working. The answer: Yes! He could indeed have surgery to restore his vision!

Steve then drove Charlie to our ophthalmologist in Spokane, Washington. Normally the surgery takes about 75 minutes; Charlie's cataracts were so old and dense it took 165 minutes. But when he awoke from anesthesia and started to get his bearings, it was clear Charlie could see. During his post-op evaluation, he saw the exam room door was open and walked out.

Back at the hotel, Steve took Charlie for a walk and watched as he looked in awe at everything around him. Vehicles moving, birds flying, people strolling – Charlie soaked it all in. In the hotel room, Charlie kept going over to the mirror to stare at himself. It's as if he was thinking, "I'm as handsome as I thought I was!"



But nothing compared to his excitement the next day when he saw Alayne for the first time. Charlie kept jumping up and down, trying to get closer to her face. His tail wagged so fast we thought it might come loose. He could barely contain himself.

How can it get any better? A wonderful couple from Olympia, Washington, Julie and Richard S.,

just adopted Charlie as a companion for their other Beagle, Hugo. They take Charlie and Hugo for a walk every morning, and Charlie gets to see all the sights along the way!



## Recent arrivals

### Buddy and Jake the blind dogs

Buddy and Jake were scheduled for euthanasia in a western North Carolina shelter when a lady in Washington, D.C., Simone R., found out about them. Simone contacted the humane society and offered to sponsor the dogs if they could place them with a reputable rescue group. The shelter sent the two blind dogs to a rescue group in Nashville, Tennessee, who then – incredibly – turned them over to an animal hoarder.



It was only after Nashville's Metro Animal Control raided the hoarder's property and seized Buddy and Jake, along with 60 other animals, that Simone learned what happened to them. She then contacted us and we agreed to take them, but neither the director of Animal Control

nor other staff would respond to our calls and emails. The court case had been settled and the animals had become the property of Animal Control, so there was no legal reason they couldn't release the two dogs.

That's when we learned this facility was euthanizing 30 to 50 animals a day, six days a week – and we feared for Buddy and Jake's safety. Finally, Simone arranged for an attorney at a big Nashville law firm to contact the director of Animal Control ... and Buddy and Jake were released to us that very day.

Simone placed them in a boarding kennel in Nashville until we could fly them to Montana. At long last, they arrived safely at the ranch!



### Mitch the blind dog

Mitch had been abandoned in an outside kennel at an Indiana animal control facility on a cold Saturday night in January. The shelter is closed on the weekends, and since there was a pattern of people dumping their dogs in these

kennels, a husband-and-wife team who run a local rescue group regularly checked the kennels on weekend nights. That's when they found Mitch. The wife emailed us to say, "It was my opinion that such a pretty dog with such a gentle disposition was adoptable even if he was blind. I posted pictures of Mitch and the info about him on Petfinder and other sites. To my dismay we have not received one inquiry."

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**For daily updates, visit our blog at [www.blog.rollingdogranch.org](http://www.blog.rollingdogranch.org)**



Alayne is holding blind Rosie while our equine vet, Dr. Erin Taylor, is giving blind Bo his dewormer. It's a funny thing how horses can suddenly grow an extra 8 to 10 inches of neck when they realize they're about to be dewormed. Medically there's no explanation for it, but we've seen it happen enough times now we call it the "giraffe syndrome."

## About the sanctuary

The Rolling Dog Ranch Animal Sanctuary is home to many types of disabled animals. Our residents include blind dogs, blind horses, deaf dogs, blind cats, and animals with other neurological and orthopedic disabilities.

Although these animals may have disabilities, they do not consider themselves handicapped. They just want to get on with life and enjoy themselves. Thanks to the support of the sanctuary's friends, that's what they get to do here.

Yet these are the animals who are the least likely to be adopted and among the most likely to be euthanized in traditional shelters. That's why we focus on the disabled.

Steve Smith and Alayne Marker founded the sanctuary in 2000 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization known as a private operating foundation. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

The ranch covers 160 acres of grassland in the Blackfoot River valley of western Montana. The sanctuary cares for about seventy animals, and is supported 100% by donations. Thank you for your kindness!

## Did not! Did too! Did not!

Before he was adopted, and while he was still blind, Charlie and his friend blind Austin would engage in a wonderful play session every morning that included lots of wrestling, roughhousing and general tomfoolery.

Alayne got this photo of Charlie (on the left) and Austin having a very spirited discussion one morning. We're not sure what the topic was, but obviously there was a lot of emotion involved!



## I'm so happy

This is blind Cedar, a 'ranch original' we described in our fall newsletter as "one of the happiest dogs we've ever known." This photo captures his very nature perfectly!