

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

MIZZOU

Boosting Spirits

Booster is a hero Lab healed by MU vets.



Booster is a 10-year-old Labrador retriever who got his name when he stole (boosted) a toy from PetSmart as a puppy.

Story by Marcus Wilkins

Photos courtesy of Davis Hawn

Published Jan. 15, 2015

In 2005, Davis Hawn's roommate attacked him with a knife and stole his truck. After authorities recovered the vehicle in 100-degree Louisiana heat, a tow truck driver discovered in the cab a 10-week-old Labrador retriever Hawn had given

to the thief as a birthday gift.

“They broke the glass and saved the puppy’s life,” says Hawn of the pooch who earned his name by “boosting” a chew toy from PetSmart.

Fearful he wouldn’t be able to care for a dog given his mental state, Hawn reluctantly adopted Booster.

But the relationship between man and dog developed, and Hawn believes Booster saved his life as he battled post-traumatic stress disorder and subsequent suicidal thoughts.



Hawn has spared no expense to get Booster premium veterinary care at Mizzou and elsewhere. Two years ago, a cancerous tumor on the dog’s head took Hawn to Affiliated Veterinary Specialists in Maitland, Florida, then to the universities of Florida and Minnesota for additional surgery and treatment.

A trained service dog, Booster and his owner, Davis Hawn, received degrees from Bergin University of Canine Studies in Rohnert Park, California. Hawn, left, who was attacked at knifepoint in 2005, credits the dog for saving his life as he dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts.

In summer 2014, when Booster began to exhibit mysterious neurological symptoms such as walking in circles and head butting his cage, Hawn brought him to Mizzou’s College of Veterinary Medicine. Melissa Carpentier, a neurology and neurosurgery resident, teamed with staff from emergency and critical care, anesthesia, oncology, radiology, and internal

medicine to diagnose and treat the pup for Rocky Mountain spotted fever.



Booster's fun-loving personality makes him a natural in front of the camera.

“The MRI ruled out the cancer; however, it did show evidence of meningitis,” Carpentier says. “Seeing everything that Booster has overcome in his lifetime, there is no doubt in anyone’s mind that he is a pretty special dog.”

Hawn and Booster have since traveled to the Bahamas, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, South Korea and Thailand to tell their story.

Booster has even inspired Hawn to earn his master’s degree in canine life sciences at Bergin University of Canine Studies in Rohnert Park, California.

At 10, Booster is getting up there in dog years. But Hawn is determined to continue Booster’s legacy — he is in talks with Sooam Biotech Research Foundation in South Korea to clone his beloved pet.

“Booster loves children,” Hawn says. “My favorite pastime is sharing Booster with others to brighten their lives the way he has brightened mine.”

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Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone:
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