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This is what makes HALO stand out from other rescues. We find out what the dogs' issues are, work on those behavior issues, then find just the right home for them. Read this heartwarming story about Zeus and his owner, Regina Willen.

Zeus's Transformation

By Regina Willen

Zeus, a 3 year-old great dane lab mix, arrived to Halo's behavior facility with everything he owned. His owner said a quick good bye and walked out. You see, she decided to return him to the rescue that she had adopted him from as a pup. She expressed concern about his behavior to the rescue and I was called to do a behavior assessment a month prior to his stay at the facility. I met Zeus in his home where he jumped, barked, and acted vicious to me while the owner stood by with no idea how to handle him. So here I stood a month later not sure what I was thinking when I agreed to take him to board and train. I was staring at a 70lb dog with no socialization, guarding issues, trust issues, and who knew what else I would uncover. In fact, he began to guard his room as soon as his owner left and he would not allow me near his door. I sat next to the door throwing pieces of chicken into his room. After a few trips to his door, I opened the door to his room, asked if he wanted to potty. He immediately ran from his room to the outside door. I followed, grabbing his leash that was dragging on the floor and began walking this out of control dog. I made no eye contact, did not attempt to talk to him, and walked around the field over and over. This ritual took place for several days and the bond was created and I began working with his issues.



I found that he was extremely under-socialized and would not allow anyone to approach him or touch him without snapping. I immediately utilized a basket muzzle for him which he tolerated very well. He was introduced to numerous people, allowed to stay in my office and the living room and he was introduced to the numerous visitors that we had. We walked daily on a busy bike path, visited McDonalds for ice cream, ran errands, and spent many days hanging out in the busy areas to get Zeus comfortable with people. We worked for months on end and what I discovered was that he was an amazing dog, very loving, obedient, and loyal to his person. The more time I spent with Zeus the more I fell in love with him. In fact, the volunteers and regular visitors fell in love with him too. He was becoming more and more social and to our surprise he loved to be around people and wanted to be in the living room whenever we had visitors. I was convinced that he was a great dog for the right person, and although he still guarded, I placed Zeus up for adoption. I was completely honest with his bio and waited and waited for the perfect person to apply to adopt him, not expecting much interest. I prayed the person could look past the muzzle that I would most likely have to place on him for the meet and greet.

As I recall the email from a desperate mom, I am convinced that this dog was destined to come to Halo. You see, a young girl with severe anxiety, who could not sleep at night and insisted the lights stayed on because she was fearful, needed a dog just like Zeus her mom explained. As I spoke to her, I was completely honest with the mom and explained that I would have to muzzle him, and they most likely couldn't pet him at the initial meeting. I suspected that they would briefly visit and leave with no intention of returning. But on the contrary, the family met Zeus and the young girl named Janyia, knew immediately that he was her dog. She told her mom that she had a lot in common with Zeus. "He has anxiety and fear and so do I," she said. It took a few weeks of training Zeus and the family but I have been crying happy tears for days because Zeus is now living in his forever home. He is keeping his girl safe and anxiety free. The first night Zeus stayed overnight, Janyia's mom told me the next morning, "I was able for the first time EVER to turn her light out. Janyia has a sense of security that I couldn't give her. Janyia said she had the best sleep of her life." I will never forget the lesson that I learned from Zeus. I struggled to modify Zeus' behavior, but that behavior was exactly what his family was looking for. He is Janyia's light in the darkness and the center of her world!

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