



Duece stands proud with his loving owners, (from left to right) Alisha, Heaven and Heather Clement. Duece was rescued by his new loving family after being left abandoned after his owner's death. (Staff Photo by Ben Lundin)

Woman's heroics save abandoned Great Dane

By BEN LUNDIN
Staff Reporter

LAPLACE - There's an old saying that every dog has his day. But when a one-and-a-half-year-old Great Dane named Duece was left to fend for himself when his owner passed away in July of 2006, it appeared he would never have his.

For months Duece hobbled on wounded legs from a car accident he

suffered as a puppy, eating any scraps he could find - including Cheerios a nearby resident would throw him every so often - to keep himself alive.

But as the days went by and with no one to spend his time with but two abandoned horses, Duece's time grew ever shorter. His emaciated 80 lb. frame was only half of a typical Great Dane's weight and the brittle bones in his back left leg crumbled

with every step, causing him to cry out in agonizing pain and preventing him from doing the simplest tasks.

If capable of such thoughts, Duece may have welcomed death to escape endless suffering and a feeling of utter loneliness. But even if he didn't know it, a LaPlace woman who'd never met him carried the thought of Duece in her heart every day.

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Alisha Clement heard about the great dane when the sister of Duece's late owner told her the dog was left alone on a 10-acre plot in Hammond and would probably need to be put down or sent to an animal shelter.

"She said 'Alisha, I know you had two great danes,' and the guy was the only family she had left. I said I'd try - I can't just ship him off. He's going to get a new lease on life," Clement said.

For three months the 35-year-old lifelong lover of animals drove 40 minutes from LaPlace to Hammond every other day and spent hours scouring the land to give Duece the life he'd been stripped of when his owner died.

For three months she found nothing but 10-acres of neglected land.

"Finally I said when does the man come home from work? I said I'm going to go then on his normal time because I know he's got to be waiting for his master.

This particular day (in September) we pulled up and I knew he wasn't going to be there because he never was. But sure enough he was sitting on the front porch," Clement said.

Duece was a hobbled shell of a great dane's typical grandeur and he could barely bring himself upright after lying down. Clement had to hold his legs to help him urinate, he could barely eat without suffering from pain, and he had to lean on his side to avoid putting pressure on his disintegrating back left leg.

In a mere two days

Clement spent \$400 in veterinarian bills only to discover Duece needed major reconstruction for a new ball and joint on his hip, a \$950 surgery that she couldn't afford.

A friend recommended she speak with Orthodogs' Silver Lining, a non-profit organization that provides financial support throughout the country for animals in need. Two days after sending in a story and financial paperwork the company offered to pay for the surgery.

While she waits for the veterinarian to perform the

ectedly died leaving Great Dane to fend for himself

surgery, Clement is nursing Duece back to health. She's brought him up to 110 lbs. and regularly takes him to the veterinarian to pop his joint back into place.

The procedure gives Duece three days of health, enough time to go camping with the Clement family. He chases anything around with

his long tongue sagging from his grinning mouth and has happily joined the Clement family and their two Labrador mixes, two rabbits and a poodle.

"You'd be surprised at the amount of people who say why don't you just put him down. Well why would I do something like that? He

deserves a chance. He's a good dog. I'm not going to throw him in the trash that's for sure."

Duece's pure joy in life begets his history - perhaps he knew how close he came to passing. But with the help of Clement's warm heart Duece will finally have the day that every dog expects.