

Bella Becomes an Emotional Support Animal

By Maggi Hall, February 14th 2019
FloridaWild Veterinary Hospital Rescue Page
www.FloridaWildVetHospital.com



Beautiful Bella was found wandering a busy highway, dazed, and probably wondering what had been done to her and why. A saint pulled off the road and Bella shyly wandered toward her. When urged, she pushed her weary body into the stranger's car. **Rescue Stage #1.**

Bella, the abandoned Catahoula Hound, was brought to FloridaWild Veterinary Hospital in DeLand and turned over to capable affectionate hands. Immediately staff began an exam. The veterinarian gave her shots, dewormed her, tested for heartworms, scanned for a microchip. Of course, there was none. Worn out Bella was finally allowed to settle in with a warm bed and nutritious food. I doubt she'd ever slept on a bed. Obviously worn down by breeding again and again and again and again, she wasn't spayed. The following day I picked her up, named her, and off she went to meet my parade of rescued wild ones. **Rescue Stage #2.**

Very shy, quiet and calm, Bella refused to step on grass; thus, my belief she was a concrete breeder and had never had the joy of experiencing a romp in a yard. She obviously was used to being outside but boy did she take to a soft bed in my living room watching TV with the crew when offered that opportunity. However, peace and quiet was something she would not be allowed to experience: enter Onyx whose heartbreaking story is found on this site. **Rescue Stage #3.**

Onyx decided there was no way he would leave Bella alone; he wanted her up and out. It was interesting to watch how Onyx began on the asphalt driveway then transitioned after a few days to the expansive grassy yard. At first, Bella was unsure what was under her feet but after a couple of days of torture and prodding by Onyx she began running, romping, and rolling like she'd discovered paradise. Even when she came inside and wanted to rest Onyx would torment her! Eventually they began sleeping together. **Rescue Stage #4.**



Her need to be with me became obvious as if she'd never had a human willing to connect with her. And so, Bella became my shadow between dog nips, runs, and naps with Onyx. After several weeks I realized she'd make a superior **Emotional Support Animal** and thus advertised her as such. Within days Roy called. **Rescue Stage 5.**

Roy, retired and a Vietnam Vet suffering from PTSD, lived with his wife Elizabeth several hours south of DeLand. Roy needed a dog just like Bella. Even though she wasn't strong enough to be spayed I invited him to come for a visit. When he arrived, we sat in the field supposedly to watch Bella and Onyx romp. But this time Bella refused to cooperate with Onyx's mischief. It was surreal. Bella ignored me from the moment Roy appeared. While we visited Bella stayed at his side. Onyx finally giving up went off to pout. After an hour of conversation Roy said, "I'd really love to take her home." I was so impressed with him that I agreed.

Roy walked to his car, Bella at his side. He opened the back door, she jumped in, and looked straight ahead. I closed the gate, tears streaming down my cheeks, and whispered a prayer for their success. Bella never once looked back as they drove away. **Rescue Stage 6.**

Bella instinctively knew she was heading home. Over the next few days and weeks Elizabeth kept me posted as to Bella's adjustment. There was none. She was renamed Gigi, and never once seemed disturbed; it was as if she'd been with them forever. She was eventually spayed, gained weight, lost that forlorn look, and became healthy and robust. Though there were some complaints from Roy though like – *"Hey Gigi, you're supposed to be my ESA – not Elizabeth's!!"* But when Roy suffered a heart attack it was Gigi who remained at his side.

Several years have passed and I am fortunate that Elizabeth continues to give me updates on Gigi sending photos and videos. Gigi got a playmate, Olive, a puppy as energetic as Onyx had been. Thankfully Gigi continues to blossom into the valuable companion God had intended. Though Onyx is no longer with me his memory with Gigi gives me hope for others in need and proves that animals often are much more aware of another animal's needs than a human. **Bless you Onyx. You and Gigi will always be in my heart.**

Thank you, Roy and Elizabeth, and God bless your growing family. Especially thank you Gigi for gracing my life and that of my rescues. **Rescue Stage 7 – THE END!**

Here is the latest report on Gigi and her sister Olive. It seems that Saint Gigi, yet again tormented, remains stoic and patient: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBH6qDkkR6M>

