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Advancing Cancer Treatment



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Cadence

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By Rachel Montellano and Salina Cobos

July 8, 2013

Salina and I moved from El Paso, Texas, to Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2002 where we were about one thousand miles away from our families. We often took long drives around the city looking for new things to do together and one day we found ourselves, for no particular reason, stopping at a pet store. We had with no intention to buy a pet as we already had a dog back in El Paso waiting to join us at Christmas.

As soon as we stepped into the store we were drawn to a litter of tiny puppies. We didn't know the breed, but we could not pull ourselves away from the adorable pups. We picked one up and actually contemplated buying, but they were expensive and we had no intention of acquiring a new dog.

We were leaving when the woman next to us put down the puppy she had been holding and, as soon as we saw her, we knew she was the one for us! She completely stole our hearts and we found ourselves pulling out credit cards and heading for the check-out counter. Although we will never buy another puppy from a pet store, this little purchase was the best we ever made!

We named her Cadence! Salina and I are professional musicians and music teachers, so the name suited her because she made us want to sing. Cadence brought us closer together as a little family. We took Cadence and Chase, our other dog, with us wherever we went: playing in the water at Lake Mead, hiking the Red Rock Canyon, and playing in the snow at Mount Charleston. We loved our lives together.

In 2005, we moved back to El Paso to be close to our families and encountered some very difficult times. Cadence always made us feel better by licking away tears when we were sad, keeping us warm when we were ill, and making us laugh every day.

Sadly, we lost Chase, our sweet cocker spaniel/golden retriever mix, to cancer at the age of 15. We thought Cadence would reach 15 years easily because she was never sick, but in the summer of 2012 she began to have trouble urinating. Our veterinarian, Dr. Johnsen, found crystals in her urine which indicated bladder stones and prescribed changing her diet to a prescription dog food. One month later, it was worse. Returning to Dr. Johnsen, we discovered she had a tumor on her bladder.

Transitional cell carcinoma, Dr. Johnsen said. We were truly devastated. You see, just a week before



Cadence' diagnosis we had to euthanize Lali, our beloved boxer. We had no money for treatment and now we faced the possibility of having to euthanize our baby Cadence within the few weeks. We were so distraught! Dr. Johnsen, feeling sympathetic, made several calls on our behalf. The next day he told us that [Dr. Sue LaRue](#) at the CSU Flint Animal Cancer Center in Fort Collins, Colorado, might be able to help. We called and it was the best decision we could have made. Dr. LaRue reassured us there was hope and told us to come to Fort Collins to figure it all out.

That was good news, but we still had no money and didn't know what to do until some research brought us to [The Magic Bullet Fund](#).



[The Magic Bullet Fund](#) (MBF) is a non-profit organization that helps families that have pets with cancer and can't afford treatment. MBF donated part of Cadence' treatment cost and helped us raise the rest. The founder, Laurie Kaplan, contacted the FACC for us, paying with funds from the MBF and donations from our family and friends. Then, we just had to get Cadence to Fort Collins.

In September 2012, we drove for 12 tense, worried hours from El Paso to Fort Collins. On arriving at the hospital, we were greeted with such kindness and enthusiasm our minds were immediately eased. Volunteers comforted us, saying we were doing the right thing; the students, nurses, and

doctors reassured us and made us feel so much better. We knew this was the best place for Cadence to have a chance at life.

After undergoing diagnostic tests, Cadence' team of doctors, including [Dr. LaRue](#), [Dr. Mairin Miller](#) and [Dr. Barbara Biller](#) explained that Cadence would have to stay at the hospital for a month of radiation and chemotherapy treatments. It was her best chance. So, with a heavy heart we left her in their capable hands. She would be away from us for an entire month and we would be unable to hold her when she felt bad.



Jennifer Hardy, a wonderful nurse from the Intensive Care Unit, volunteered to foster Cadence while she was in their care. We were so very thankful that she would have a "temporary mama" to keep her company, love her, and help her feel better. We received daily progress reports through e-mails and/or calls; and Nurse Hardy regularly sent pictures. We were she would never want to come home again because in just a month, she had become the hospital mascot and everyone knew her! We thought she was an amazing dog, but this was ridiculous!

In October, after one month of radiation and chemotherapy treatments, we picked up our baby. It was the best day ever! Although we were still worried, the doctors reassured us and [Dr. LaRue](#) said she didn't want to give us false hope, but she "got that cancer good!"

It is now almost one year after Cadence was diagnosed with transitional cell carcinoma. She just turned 11 years-old on June 26th and is in good spirits, showing no sign that anything was ever wrong. Although we know she is not cured, we are grateful to have had more time than we expected thanks to the doctors, staff and volunteers of the CSU Flint Animal Cancer Center!

Words cannot express our gratitude to [Drs. LaRue](#), [Biller](#), [Miller](#), Nurse Hardy and the entire Cancer Center team. You have given us a wonderful gift, a little more time for Cadence to spend with us and her two dog sisters, Cameryn and Cadie. She is still fighting and appears healthy and strong.





Thank you! You are truly the best doctors in the world!

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