

The Story of Sinaia

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Before the Dog

Five days after our beautiful Sinaia was born in 2001, she got very sick and we had to go to the Children's hospital and stay there for one week. She needed a lot of time to recover. When she was six months old, she got physiotherapy.



She was our first child. I was only 17 and had absolutely no idea about children. She was very quiet and didn't cry a lot.

My brother and sister also had babies the same year, and as time passed, I compared them, and noticed Sinaia was different. She didn't react to her name, didn't really play, and couldn't walk till she was two.

At two-and-a-half years, she had been in the hospital a few times and had already had one operation because she couldn't breathe properly. You still always tell yourself she will be okay: she will catch up and be "normal," but actually inside you know that your child will always be different.

When she was three, it started to get really difficult. Meltdowns, running off, and not understanding danger. I had locks on every window and closed off the kitchen so that she couldn't play with knives when she woke up in the night.

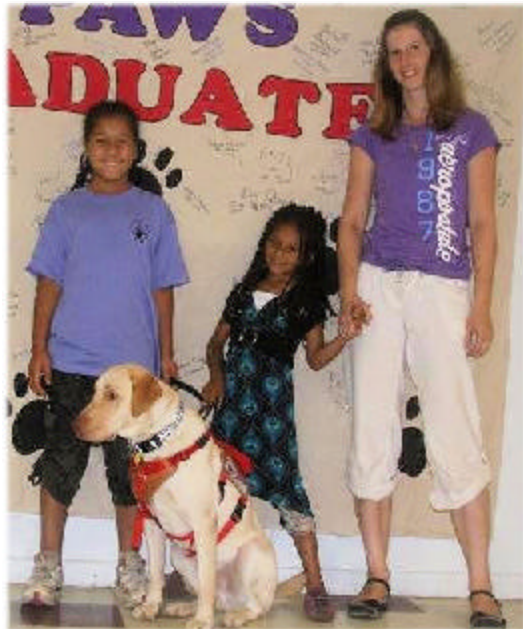
Still no one told me what was wrong with her. I visited endless therapists with her and visited many pediatricians. When she was five, we heard of the Coffin-Siris Syndrome for the first time. It is very rare, and until 2006 there were only 50 cases on record!

Mental retardation, Autism, Seizures, Cerebral Palsy...Time passes by and you love your child, you try to help and fit her into the community.

I have no car and need to use public transport. I hate the glances given by people: how they stare at you and your child when she is screaming or behaving in an odd way.

Although her younger sister started to have friends, Sinaia was always alone. As she got older, it was also more stress for me. She got bigger and stronger but still had her meltdowns.





Here's how the interest in service dogs began: during a festival in the hospital we saw women with Therapy dogs...so I'm thinking a friend, a dog, also something that shows the public that Sinaia has a disability and helps her, and me. I already knew that something had to change. I wasn't sure if I could take care of Sinaia much longer.

I asked some organizations in Europe, but forget it. So I started searching the Internet. That is where I found 4 Paws for Ability. Okay, but sooo far away, nevertheless, let's ask.

And yes! They would train a dog for Sinaia! Sinaia could get a service dog! I could not believe it.

To get the money was something else (that's a whole other story), but we did it. We got the August 2010 training class. The nine-hour flight was horrible!

The Dog

We were matched with Pandora, a beautiful Labradoodle. The training was stressful for Sinaia. She screamed and screamed and had to go two times to the Emergency Room. After 4 days we had to switch the dog: we got Travis, now Bumblebee, a yellow lab. It was very hard at first and we all missed Pandora, but there was a reason this happened, and we would never, ever give Bumblebee back.

His character is so cool! He's quiet, likes to play, and is nice to everyone.

At Home-Now

First you get to know each other, and understand the signs. Bumblebee likes Sinaia. He loves to play with her and doesn't mind when she pulls on the tethering leash.

Because Sinaia can't take BB to school, he did bond more with me, but he still loves Sinaia, and when I send him to her, he goes. She and he are looking for food the whole day, so when they are alone and quiet in Sinaia's room I know they found something to eat.

Sinaia feeds him twice a day, plays with him, cuddles with him, but when she has a meltdown BB still can't go near her, because she kicks and just wants to be alone. I hope as time goes by she will seek him out more.



If she's not okay or there are too many people around, she asks for him. She watches TV with him and lays her head on him when she needs to be close. When she goes to sleep, he has to lay next to her on his pillow and she sings him goodnight songs or speaks with him.



Sometimes he comes out and I have to send him back to her, but it is working better and better. Before, I didn't really go anywhere with Sinaia on my own, but now that has changed.

She still has meltdowns, but they stop much more quickly. When they are finished, she wants BB to come over and then she wants to cuddle with me and tells BB she's sorry.

Now people still look at me, but more because of the nice doggy and not because of Sinaia's behavior!

They are much more nice to me and Sinaia, and since we got BB, no one ever calls on the Police again (They used to think, "Oh my goodness, this mom is pulling her screaming child and hurts her!!!"). This takes a lot of stress from me!

BB once woke me up when Sinaia had a seizure, and he was not even trained for it. The tethering is great too: we can walk next to the street or go in a shopping center without my having to be afraid that she will run off.

Bumblebee means as much to me as the kids. I love him for what he does. He makes Sinaia to have a friend. He takes a lot of stress from me. He makes us to have a life again.

We still need to work on some little things. Sinaia and BB still need to learn how to be a team, but already in less than a year, our lives have changed.

Thank you 4 Paws, for our new life and making Sinaia happy again!



Find 4 Paws for Ability a nonprofit agency, at <http://www.4PawsForAbility.org>