

COVID Ends Westie Show Dog's Career, Leads Him to Become Young Girl's Best Friend

By Teresa Barnes



EmilyGrace and Jack Sparrow

“COVID was a terrible, scary time,” wrote a young Illinois girl. A language arts writing assignment allowed her to open up about difficulties during the pandemic while writing amusing prose about how her show-dog-turned-house-pet calmed her fears and changed her life.

EmilyGrace describes herself as an introvert and a dog lover. Specifically, the 12-year-old from Illinois is a Westie lover with three West Highland White Terrier dogs who are important members of her family: Lilie and Bentley, both 7, and Jack who's 3. Though she and her nine-year-old brother, Matthew, her father, Paul, and her mother, Michele, love all their furry four-legged friends, Jack, officially named “Captain Jack Sparrow”, quickly became EmilyGrace's personal dog. “Mom says Jack is my boy. She is right. He is my boy,” EmilyGrace said.

The day her little West Highland White Terrier was to arrive, she sat in school, her mind happily wandering with great

anticipation. “As I sat in school that day I thought, soon I will have another true friend that makes me smile,” she said.

Almost three years ago, EmilyGrace, like most children across the country, was having a tough time dealing with the new normal of the pandemic. Her mom began to explore ways to help her daughter get through the particularly tough times for a child who was an introvert like EmilyGrace.

When she finally laid eyes on Jack in July 2020, EmilyGrace was overwhelmed by excitement. “I had to run to Jack. He was adorable with his long show dog hair. His long, coarse, hair was flying in the wind. The feisty, determined 10-month-old little rascal still had the puppy smell. He jumped on me with an energetic pounce. His paws felt like pillows against my face and chest. His intense eagerness made his panting sound like he was gasping for air. His little tongue ran across my nose like a salmon covered sponge. I hate fish but I didn't care,” she wrote.

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Jack and EmilyGrace were seemingly opposites, his being a show dog who craved the limelight and loved being the center of attention for crowds. The differences have made them perhaps unlikely best friends.

“Jack was not meant to be in my family. He only is because of COVID. Jack did shows, in fact, he lived in a Champion breeders’ home with other show dogs. . . . However, during COVID they canceled dog shows,” EmilyGrace wrote in her school essay. The breeder then allowed the Smith family to adopt Jack.

When her Girl Scout Troop closed down during the pandemic, EmilyGrace realized she could do something good with her portion of the raised funds – and what better than to help dogs like her very favorite dog on the planet? So, she donated more than \$800 to the Westie Foundation of America.

“When EmilyGrace heard about WFA and how it helps dogs and humans, she knew that was what she wanted to do,” said Michele.

“I came up with the idea because I want to make sure Westies and people don’t suffer and that loved ones can get the care for their babies,” said EmilyGrace who sees herself as a veterinarian or a human medical doctor someday.

It’s safe to say that EmilyGrace is in good hands, well paws, with Captain Jack Sparrow. “Every day since that day in July, Jack has made me laugh. Not any normal laugh but a til-you-can’t-breathe laugh. He is the funniest dog I have ever met,” she said. And the language arts assignment EmilyGrace wrote about Jack? She made an A.

GENOMIC TESTS® SHOW PROMISE OF EARLY CANCER DIAGNOSIS

By Kay McGuire, DVM, MS

Believe that most dog owners are aware that the incidence of cancer has increased in our beloved pets. Whether the cancer is due to genetics, habitat, exposure potential and/or increased life span, cancer is prevalent in 1 of 3 dogs. There is help on the horizon for tests involved in early cancer detection. How great would it be if our dog’s annual screening included a blood test for early cancer detection?

One of the latest diagnostic tools in veterinary medicine is a liquid biopsy, or multi cancer early detection test. The most common cancers identified in dogs are lymphoma, hemangiosarcoma, and osteosarcoma.

In April, 2022, a San Diego based company called OncoK9® developed a test that could show a 54.7% sensitivity and a 98.5% specificity in identifying three of the most aggressive canine cancers—lymphoma, hemangiosarcoma, and osteosarcoma. The OncoK9® test actually tests for 8 of the most common canine cancers which include lymphoma, hemangiosarcoma, osteosarcoma, soft tissue sarcoma, mast cell

tumor, mammary gland carcinoma, anal sac adenocarcinoma, and malignant melanoma—the detection rate was 61.9%.



Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences offers the Nu.Q Vet Cancer Screening Test® created by Volition, an Austin, Texas–based biotechnology company. Nu.Q® tests blood for cancer biomarkers and claims a 97% specificity rate. The test has been shown to detect 77% of lymphomas and 82% of hemangiosarcomas. With approximately 77 million pet dogs in the United States, there are an estimated 6 million pet dogs diagnosed with cancer each year.

The likes of these diagnostic tests can be added to the annual well dog screens over the age of 7. This could also be a complimentary test earlier in life for those breeds susceptible to cancers: Golden Retrievers, Bernese Mountain Dogs, Boxers, Beagles, Rottweilers, Shetland Sheepdogs and West Highland White Terriers. Early diagnosis can provide for earlier treatments and better long term outcomes for our pets.