

Up from the ashes

A puppy named Phoenix was well-named by his rescuers, because he has figuratively risen from the ashes of his old life to start a new one.

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Advertiser Editor

It was not the sort of scenario that people expect to end well. Deputies received an anonymous phone call, concerning a dog in bad condition.

"Bad condition" seemed to be an understatement. The dog, tethered in back of a residence in the county without food or water, was an awful sight. Large pieces of skin were hanging off as if the dog had been burned.

The Sheriff's Department contacted the Forrest City Area Humane Society, which took the dog.

Photos were taken of the animal's condition, too graphic to be reproduced in a newspaper. It was reported by the Humane Society, however, that the mistreated creature's survival instinct was incredible.

"Having had no access to water for days, after drinking he would dig a hole, regurgitate some of the water and cover it with leaves as if he were hiding it for later," a report from the Humane Society states.

The Humane Society named the dog, a nine-month-old terrier mix, Phoenix, and put him under the care of a local veterinarian.

And Phoenix's story went out on the Internet.

Many responses came in from around the country. Perhaps the most touching came from Massapequa, N.Y., where two young girls raised \$44 at a lemonade stand to help pay for Phoenix's medical expenses.

Along with a check, the girls and their nanny sent a poster, which reads in part, "We have a

dog named Phoenix, too! We never want her to get hurt. We are so sorry that you were hurt and we hope you get all better soon. We love you. Love always, Michaela, Gianna, Maria and Phoenix."

Meanwhile, Phoenix seems to be making an almost-miraculous recovery.

"He's doing good," said Janie Hicks, president of the local Humane Society. "He's progressing really well, according to the veterinarian. His skin is healing. It's not completely healed — I'd say 50 to 75 percent. And his fur is starting to grow back."

Something else is happening. "His personality is starting to come out. He's a totally different dog than he was when he came in," said Hicks. "He's a typical puppy. He's really playful and he loves human attention and affection."

Playful, loving? After all that has happened to him?

"That's what's so amazing," said Hicks. "With dogs, it's just unconditional love. He's a lover."

When he is released from the doctor, Phoenix will be put up for adoption. According to Hicks, that won't be a problem.

Potential adopters are lining up.

"We've had so many people wanting to adopt him, it's going to be hard" finding the best possible home for Phoenix, she said.

In the meantime, what was done to Phoenix is considered a crime.

Phoenix's former owner, Sheretha Hayes, had a court appearance last week, and a trial date was set for Sept. 6 on a charge of felony animal cruelty.



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