

What a beautiful boy! Charlie has a shiny red coat, with white splashes and black freckles. His eyes look almost human, they are bright and sparkle in the light. He is 4 years old and loves to feel the sand beneath his paws on the beach and the grass below his belly as he rolls in the garden. Charlie is a cattle dog / pit bull mix who we adopted from the South Pacific County Humane Society 6 weeks ago.

It was a journey for us. When we met this gorgeous boy, we still had Poppy our lovely Parson Russell. Full of character and her very definite personality, Poppy was not going to share her home with another dog - so adoption wasn't an option. We continued to visit Charlie in the shelter, take him for walks and ventures out. But every time had to return him.

Poppy was 15 and in failing health. We came to the very hard realization that time was running out for her. In a heartbreaking decision we decided to have her euthanized, at home surrounded by her family and by love. This will remain I think for us both one of the greatest losses in our lives, and we still miss her greatly.

What this left was a huge, Poppy shaped hole in our lives. And a sweet dog in need of a home at the shelter. Here we were at different places. While I would have adopted Charlie almost immediately, my partner Ramey needed time to mourn and grieve a Poppy - which I fully understood. So we continued to walk him and play with him. Take him for adventures in the car, and let him rest and relax away from the stress of the shelter environment.

After 4 months agreed we would try to give a home to Charlie. We fostered him for the weekend first. It was wonderful and exhausting in equal measure! Being in the shelter for so long he had little structure or routine. He was awake every 2 hours the first night! But even into the second day we could see him beginning to settle. By the end of the weekend we both knew we were going to take him.

Several of the wonderful shelter staff and volunteers were there to see Charlie off, which was so lovely. Charlie had been at the shelter for 18 months. A firm favorite with many of the folk at the shelter, it was a long stretch for this boy. It's really not clear why he waited so long. Perhaps he didn't 'show well' when potential adopters went to see him. Perhaps the longer the animals are there the more overlooked they become. Perhaps he didn't engage enough when people came to his kennel. Sadly perhaps the pit bull in him put people off. The stereotype of pit bulls as aggressive is so sad and unjust because so many are the friendliest, sweetest pups.

Six weeks on and Charlie is doing amazingly. Have there been challenges along the way of course. We have had to work with him not to pull our arm off on the lead! We have spent time training him to come back off lead and are working on stopping him jumping at people (he is very friendly!) He has responded brilliantly to this work. He has

got into a routine, he understands when we leave that we return again. I think he feels safe in the world and that finally he really can relax. The joy, and fun and love he has bought into our life is immense. From a dog who was a stray, who almost died from distemper and who spent a year and a half in the shelter, we are seeing the real Charlie emerge and flourish. His spirit and tenacity shine through everyday.

If you are thinking you want a pup or a kitty in your life, please visit the South Pacific County Humane Society. Everyone there does a wonderful job of caring for the animals, but all of them need stable secure homes. Please remember many of the animals are not at the best in that environment. You may want to ask to meet a dog away from the shelter to get more of an idea what they are really like. Taking Charlie through the kennels and out for a walk was terrible as he pulled so hard and tried to bite all the other dogs. This was a total shelter reaction. He has never pulled like that again and is completely friendly with other dogs.