

Best in Show

Healing Paws

A physically challenged cat-dog duo delivers hope to thousands in need.

By Arden Moore

Watch an inspiring video of how Tink finally got customized wheels so she can romp and play: www.FIDOFriendly.com/departments/best-in-show.

People of all ages in all places who face physical or emotional challenges are turning to an unlikely source for inspiration: a three-legged cat named Henry and a two-legged Dachshund named Tink.

Henry lost a front leg due to an unknown trauma, and Tink was born without front paws. Debunking the notion that cats and dogs don't get along, these best friends unleash healing messages of hope through their "spokesperson," Cathy Conheim, a psychotherapist from La Jolla, California.

In 2004, Conheim, a lifelong dog lover, reluctantly adopted her first cat, a stray who showed up at her doorstep with a damaged left front leg that required amputation. She began emailing friends about Henry, writing his daily tales in his voice. Written in a storytelling fashion with messages of hope, Henry has now answered more than 40,000 letters from his "paw" pals. Appearances on national and local TV shows, the publication of books, including *What's the Matter with Henry?* and educational materials packaged as "Kibble for Thought" teach lessons on how to cope with life's challenges. An educational spinoff of Henry's World is the nonprofit Just Me Project that has raised

thousands of dollars for animals and people from book profits.

Two years ago, Henry met Tink, a Dachshund puppy rescued from an irresponsible breeder. Missing her front paws, she was nursed back to health by Belinda Hein and Linda Hampshire, of San Diego, California. During introductions, the normally shy Henry bonded instantly with the spirited young pup.

Determined to find a way for Tink to be mobile, the women found a talented design engineer named Adrian Ravitz who agreed to make mobility devices for Tink. It took nearly a dozen tries before the right set provided comfort—and speed—for this energetic dog.

"Having a special-needs dog like Tink has taught me patience and perseverance," noted Hein. "Every day, I am inspired and amazed by Tink's can-do attitude. There is nothing that this dog 'tinks' she can't do."

Henry's and Tink's challenges yield endless opportunities to teach people to feel empowered, turn obstacles into opportunities and hopelessness into hope. More than 500 stuffed animals with amputations plus Henry's books and workbooks are being delivered to young children in Haiti who lost limbs due

tipbit


To learn more about the Just Me Project as well as updates on Henry and Tink, visit www.henrysworld.org

to the recent devastating earthquake. The books are now being translated in Creole, the native language of that country.

Most recently, Tink accompanied Conheim to teach more than 1,000 elementary students in Sacramento that mistakes are learning opportunities and failure is only failure if you quit. Seeing the little dog sprint around on her wheels brought and delivered a lasting life lesson.

"Children relate to Henry and Tink," said Conheim. "They are symbols of overcoming challenges."

Conheim also works closely with military groups to reach out to children whose parents return from Iraq and Afghanistan with missing limbs or serious injuries. More than 4,000 books and workbooks have been provided to military families.

"Animals like Henry and Tink teach us to play the paw we're dealt," said Conheim. "They teach all of us that it is our responses to challenges that make us who we are." 

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