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SAVING LIVES, ONE DOG AT A TIME

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KodiakCare Steps Up After Devastating Home Fire

Ashley Billingsley was looking forward to a peaceful Easter Sunday with her 13-year-old daughter and beloved dog Zelda when disaster struck.

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A fire broke out in her Chicago home and, as emergency crews arrived, her 105-pound hound mix panicked and ran back into the burning house. Firefighters recovered the unconscious dog and administered oxygen, but Zelda was staggering, passing out and urgently in need of treatment for smoke inhalation.

Even amid the turmoil of the house fire, Billingsley swung into action and drove Zelda from vet to vet seeking help, but no animal hospitals in the immediate area would admit the badly injured pooch. Billingsley was on the verge of giving up when Chicago Animal Care and Control reached out to CRISP (Chicagoland Rescue Intervention and Support Program), a KodiakCare partner organization.

Thanks to CRISP, KodiakCare, and her devoted owner, Zelda has recovered from the near-fatal experience and is back to her old self. “I was at my wits end, thinking, ‘My dog needs help now, or she will be put down,’” said Billingsley, a home health-care provider. “Y’all came through. I’m thankful for you.”

First at Countryside Veterinary Center and then at Premier Veterinary Group, both in the Chicago suburbs, Zelda received round-the-clock care, including an oxygen kennel, antibiotics and nursing support to rehabilitate her lungs. On day three, after a visit from her family, Zelda turned the corner: she began eating again and was weaned off oxygen. Zelda was able to go home the following day.

Billingsley had lost everything in the fire, so funds from both CRISP and KodiakCare were vital. Prior to the fire, Zelda was a well-cared for dog, up to date on shots and spayed, said Ana Del Rio Program Manager, CRISP. “She was willing to do everything for her dog but in the emergency situation, she couldn’t afford it.” Thankfully, KodiakCare and its partners are there during critical moments. Together, KodiakCare and CRISP covered the over \$4,000 vet bill.

Billingsley, Del Rio said, “was not going to give up, the dog was not going to give up, and of course we were not going to give up.”

As of late April, Billingsley, her daughter, and Zelda were living with relatives and still searching for a new house. Having lost a pet guinea pig in the fire, the family is especially grateful for Zelda’s emotional support at this challenging time. As Del Rio said, “Owners like Ashley can’t stop saying thank you. She wanted to do everything for her dog. It is such a hard thing when there are heartbreaking stories, it’s good having someone so happy that we were able to help.”



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