

chestnut hill local

‘Brother dog’ dramatically changes autistic boy’s life

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“Not long after Gemineye entered their lives, Eli’s autistic symptoms and behaviors began to subside, and he started to become the precious, amazing little boy he was meant to be,” said Eli’s mom.

by Marianne Iaquinto

Ed. Note: Marianne Iaquinto is the founder of Sam’s Hope, a non-profit based in Wyndmoor that provides pet food for pet owners who can no longer afford pet food. Sam’s Hope enables the owners to keep their pets in their homes rather than turning them in to overcrowded shelters, where their chances of survival would be very slim. The mother of Eli, the autistic child in this story, asked that we not print her name or the town where she lives.



Eli was diagnosed with moderate to severe autism prior to age two. He did not speak or maintain eye contact; he walked on his toes, grunted and screamed and did not interact socially.

His mom, a survivor of pancreatic cancer and a divorce, thought her life had been through most of its ups and downs and that her blessings were more than enough to sustain her. However, there was more in store for the family, which eventually brought understanding and depth to the tragic reality of domestic violence.

Eli was in an autistic support program, with one-on-one staffing and special instruction in school and at home. While the family was learning sign language and other means of communication to bring their two worlds together, Eli finally spoke. He did not speak in conversation but in one statement. He told a teacher he was being hurt by someone, and it was bad.

The details that followed were an evil that Eli no longer feared bringing to the attention of his world. It did not take long for the depth and magnitude of abuse, domestic violence, societal denial, addictions and corruption to be exposed.

It was through divine intervention that people who loved, honored and believed in this family began to show up in their lives in real ways.

This is how Gemineye, a 9 month old Peke-a-Pom came into their lives as a super-hero of a pet, family member and most importantly, an emotional support companion to Eli.

The family believes that Gemineye was simply created and delivered to Eli in perfect timing. They bonded so quickly and established trust, faith and friendship in each other. From day one Eli and Gemineye seemed to “know” each other.

Not long after Gemineye entered their lives, Eli’s autistic symptoms and behaviors began to subside, and he started to become the precious, amazing little boy he was meant to be. Eli, now working through post traumatic stress, is thriving with Gemineye by his side. Gemineye is always there to comfort in times of sadness, play in times of joy and share the quiet in times of peace.

Now 6 years old, Eli is getting ready to enter first grade, and 2-year-old Gemineye celebrates his existence in beautiful, furry, fun-loving ways, with attitude and protectiveness as well as unwavering support for his best friend.

Call it God, The Universe or the Bigger Something, it knew exactly how, what and why in the creation of these two souls, one a little boy and the other a dog. It is beyond the teaching of feeding, grooming, walking and training. It is love, pure, plain and simple.

"I thank all of those who provided the safety, trust and encouragement for my son and his little brother dog to be together," said Eli's mom last week, "and I sincerely thank Sam's Hope for all of the assistance, service and belief in the importance to recognize and honor all life, whether a boy, an animal or a tree. All life matters; all lives matter!"

*For more information about Sam's Hope, whose motto is "Keeping Pets and Their People Together," call **267-753-0510** or visit www.samshope.org.*