

The afternoon of June 10th, 2011: The story began at Hill 'n Dale Park, east of Brooksville. There, according to Hernando County sheriff's deputies, a woman allegedly beat a pair of kittens with a metal baseball bat and then allowed her two boys, 8 and 5, to continue the torture. Four young witnesses told investigators that the boys kicked the animals, threw them and tried to slice open one's neck with a stick.

At the bottom of a trash can, one kitten died. The other, now known as Little Dexter, lived thanks to the intervention of one of the young boys who witnessed the actions.

After initial care at a local emergency clinic Little Dexter was brought to the PetLuv Spay and Neuter Clinic. Over the next several days he was examined by our vets, and cared for by technician Tiffany Sroka at her home. While there, Little Dexter showed improvement with each day. Slowly his injuries healed, and quickly his fan base developed. The story of the abused kitten was on the major news channels and in newspapers around the country. The PetLuv Facebook views went from 400 to over 2,000 within days.

The first week was touch and go; initially he was unable to hold his head up or ambulate well. He required hand feeding and IV hydration. But he slowly improved. Finally the day came when he could use the litter box, eat, and drink on his own! These were baby steps but great progress. His mobility started to improve as well. Of major concern were the seizures as a result of the head trauma. For a time, those subsided. There was an unsteadiness to his gait, and occasionally his front right leg would show signs of paralysis where his tiny paw dragged against the ground. He was also partially blind and had diminished hearing, but the doctors thought his chances to survive were increasing although still guarded. (The truth of the matter is that we were all amazed and grateful he was alive.)

His progress reports were put on the Facebook page for all his fans to share. With each picture and video he captured more and more hearts all over the world. This 2-pound little man had a team of people pulling for him. As he improved, his neurologic damage and limited sight and hearing didn't stop him. He played and ate and slept and worked his way into being the newest member of Tiffany's family. (We all knew that would happen!!!) His supporters, Team Dexter, all celebrated at his new-found forever family! Sure he had special needs, we knew it... but he didn't. He was living life to the fullest and we were all there along for the joyous ride with him.

It appeared that he had overcome all of his obstacles against all odds... he would live a long happy life with his new family. But then our worst fears were realized when his seizures returned. On August 11th there were signs of mild seizures, but by the 15th they were severe and continuous. He was not able to be stabilized. Tiffany held him tight through it all. He had her unwavering care and love as he did from the moment she met him. We held our collective breath, praying that he would overcome this too. It was a horrific day for all of PetLuv and for Team Dexter as we grieved alongside of Tiffany and her family when we lost our little man.

In the end, the abuse that he sustained that day back on June 10th took Dexter from us. However, his inspiration will continue on. To tell Dexter's story is to validate that his death was not in vain, to help other animals like him before they fall victim to abuse. Dexter's Fund will bring the message of respect for animals to as many children and adults as we can reach.

So ask yourself this, if a 2-pound ball of fur can do all this in 16 weeks... what can you do?

At this time the accused is awaiting trial. More than 40,000 people have signed an online petition demanding she be prosecuted to the law's fullest extent.