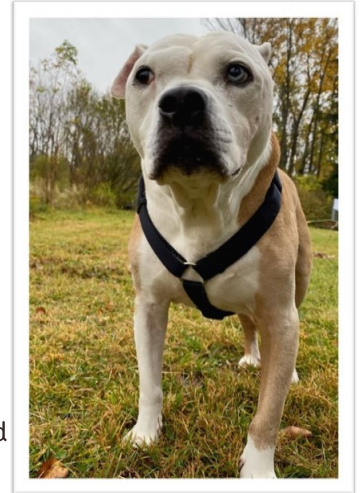# With Love for Baxter

Pet owners who have loving relationships with their animals often don't hesitate to pay for medical costs needed to save their pet's life. Sometimes, though, doing everything possible still doesn't lead to a positive outcome. That's the case for Amy Fowler and Baxter, her 12-year-old, 55-pound pit bull mix she obtained from the Buffalo Animal Shelter when he was 4 months old.

"Baxter's like my kid and I don't have kids," Fowler said of her dog with one blue and one brown eye. "He's the most docile, loving dog ever. Everyone loves Baxter when they meet him. I have had a lot of traumas in my life and this dog is right there. He knows when I'm upset and is just the most amazing dog I've ever come across." Baxter has a brown mark on top of his white head shaped like a heart.

Baxter had excellent health throughout his life until this past September. That's when Fowler saw blood coming out of her dog's nose. She assumed at first that Duke, her 4-year old pit boxer, had bumped him in the nose while playing. But when Baxter sneezed a couple days later and blood poured out, she rushed him to Orchard Park Veterinary Medical Center, a 24-hour veterinary care hospital. The bleeding stopped, but the veterinarian determined a lump developing next to his right eye was a tumor in his sinus cavity.

X-rays showed the cancer had not yet spread to his lungs. Fowler considered chemotherapy, but decided against it because the tumor was close to his brain and the survival rate was low. Instead, Baxter was given medicines to make his life as comfortable as possible, and an herbal treatment to stem the bleeding, which hasn't returned. The lump, though, continues to grow. "He still gets bursts of energy and acts like the puppy I love," Fowler said. "Every day I cry over him. It's going to be a terrible day when I put him down. He hasn't told me it's time yet, but I know it's only a short matter of time because of how the lump has grown."

Fowler incurred $1,200 in veterinary costs trying to save Baxter's life and then to keep him as comfortable as possible. She put up $200 and a friend, Tina Wiepert, contributed $600. That still left $400. "That would have drained everything I have in my savings," Fowler said. Her vet then approved a $400 contribution from the Pet Emergency Fund. "It was a weight lifted off my shoulders," Fowler said. "I was so grateful that they decided to help me out. In return, we wanted to 'paw it forward' and raise money for them."

Fowler, who runs the East Aurora Flea & Farmers Market, and Wiepert organized fundraisers that brought $275 for the Pet Emergency Fund and $275 for Hope before Heaven, a non-profit organization in Collins that also helps pets with medical emergencies. Although not all medical interventions lead to a happy ending, Fowler said she wants everyone to have a chance to do all they can to save the lives of their pets. "I don't ever want someone to have to choose between paying their bills or taking care of their dog," she said.