



# THE BUTTERS F·U·N·D



## Meet Pedro, a Butters Buddy!

**W**hen life changes in the instant after a brain injury, it can also disrupt a formerly independent survivor's ability to care for a beloved pet. Often, these animals are instrumental in the survivor's recovery journey. The Butters Fund aims to connect brain injury survivors with community resources to help them maintain their pet while they adjust to life post-injury. Thanks to donor support, survivors can apply for help from The Butters Fund to fill the gaps that exist in services for their furry friend's temporary needs. Pedro, pictured at right, is a recent recipient of assistance from The Butters Fund.

Tawnya Padilla's life changed forever in 2008. While at work, she suffered a vicious attack at the hands of a disturbed client that left her permanently disabled. All of a sudden, she found herself at first fighting for her life and then struggling to recover from a traumatic brain injury. Tawnya, a wife and mother, was overcome with doubts and uncertainty about her future. Not

only did she have to deal with severe anxiety after her accident, but also depression, a common symptom following traumatic brain injury, often resulting from fears about whether life will ever go back to "normal." Tawnya struggled daily with the side-effects of her TBI, which included daily neuro-fatigue, headaches, and Acquired Tourette's Syndrome. Even grocery shopping, which had formerly been a task she could perform on auto-pilot, was now an exhausting struggle that required careful planning.

For Tawnya, the increased level of fatigue and its impact on her ability to support herself was a shock. Neuro-fatigue is often called an invisible consequence of brain injury. While everyone can

identify with feeling mentally or physically fatigued after a long day, for brain injury survivors, the fatigue can be significantly worse. In persons with TBI, fatigue often occurs more quickly and frequently than it does in the general population. The cause may be due to the extra effort and



attention it takes to do even simple activities, such as walking, or talking clearly. Brain function may be less efficient than before the injury. Exercising, socializing with friends, and even talking on the phone can become excruciating tasks. Tawnya also was trying to manage the involuntary, repetitive movements and vocalizations that came with her Tourette's.

Through it all, the shining star that helped her day-in and day-out was her young, long-haired Chihuahua named Pedro. In an instant, Pedro could ease Tawnya's anxiety and was constantly by her side as she underwent years of occupational and vocational rehabilitation. Her positive experiences with Pedro led her to want to give back to others, which she did by actively participating in support groups and speaking at brain injury events. As time went by, she settled into a routine of managing life with her invisible disability and striving to go back to work part-time, a goal which can take years for brain injury survivors.

Eight years into Tawnya's recovery, her be-

loved pup had a health crisis. She took Pedro to the veterinarian, who diagnosed the dog with a heart condition. Every day, Pedro needs to take medication, and twice a year, he must be seen by a cardiologist.

These extra expenses threw Tawnya into a panic; if there's a silver lining from Pedro's illness, she believes it's that it forced her to return to work. She now works a few hours a week as a cashier at a dollar store in order to afford Pedro's heart meds, but her TBI still makes doing certain tasks difficult for her.

Tawnya's desperation to help her dog enjoy a high quality of life grew in proportion to the rising expenses of his medications and echocardiograms. Fortunately, a friend who knew of Tawnya's situation informed her about The Butters Fund, established by Evan and Allison Marshall through the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona. The fund's namesake, Butters, helped his owner, Evan, come out of a coma after he was hit in the head with a 105-mile-per-hour line drive while pitching at a game for the Reno Aces. Once the Marshalls realized how instrumental Butters was in aiding Evan's recovery, their brainchild, The Butters Fund, was born.

Thanks to the generosity of The Butters Fund donors, the cost of Pedro's medications will be covered for five months, allowing his doting owner to focus her efforts on chipping away at the medical bills incurred from visits to the canine cardiologist.

Also, due to the generous support of donors, there is ongoing financial support available for other TBI survivors facing financial hardships similar to those of Tawnya and Pedro. Since there's no love that quite compares to that of our pets, programs like The Butters Fund are a special way to show how much we truly love and value them.



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