

I first met Lucius on October 11th, 2010, the day that I adopted him. Earlier that morning, as I was scrolling through my news feed on Facebook, a precious face appeared: a kitten with poor eyesight, appearing full of life, inquisitive, and, to me, perfect. I see so many adorable cat/kitten photos and videos online every day, but had never experienced an instantaneous surety to adopt a first sight, as I had then - I wanted to bring "Cormic" (as he was known at the time, and still answers to) home.

I didn't know what to expect in adopting a special needs cat, but knew that we'd overcome any hurdles, should there be any along the way.

At his first several veterinarian appointments (seeking second/third opinions), doctors didn't give Lucius a good prognosis. They cited multiple birth defects, questioned what kind of quality of life a blind cat could have, and suggested euthanasia (which I *never* considered - there was *no* reason to - I let Lucius guide me). One doctor said "He's kept himself alive for this long (2-3 months, at the time), maybe he'll keep himself alive a little longer." Despite Lucius being by my side, in the same room while I worked, for at least ten hours a day, it didn't seem to matter when I told doctors that Lucius seemed happy, that he wanted to live, that he didn't know there was anything different (than other cats) about him. It was shocking to hear veterinarians question quality of life for a cat, based solely on lack of eyesight, and asking questions such as "How will he find the litterbox?" (he's never had difficulty finding it); it was shocking to realize how many veterinarians (that we had visited) didn't know the basics of life with or the functionality of blind cats. Those doctors didn't give him a chance, but I wasn't *ever* going to give up on him.

We eventually found a veterinarian to work with us. Lucius had, by then, lost his vision completely (one eye was removed, the other stopped growing due to microphthalmia/"small eye"), and was diagnosed with recurring Feline Herpesvirus (which he was born with) flare-ups. The doctor said, "I don't know how long it will be, but it's all on him (Lucius) now. Someday, his immune system will kick in." I'll always remember those words, as it meant hope. Lucius was treated with six months of antibiotic therapy and supplements to strengthen his immune system.

Lucius celebrated his eight birthday on July 24th of this year. He is the most affectionate and loyal cat that I have ever met. He's more active than my other cats - lack of vision has never stopped him or held him back from anything. He has taught me that lack of information can sometimes be the difference between life and death, to get a second or even third opinion. He has also taught me that special needs animals do not consider themselves handicapped - they don't know that they're different from any other animal. **They adapt to life with what they have, not what they lack.** He has taught me that blind cats are as functional as cats with eyesight, and that the quality of life of blind cats can be great, if given the chance.

Through Lucius, I have shared this information via stories, photos, and videos of him on Facebook, in hopes that more blind cats - or any special needs animals, may be given more chances, more second glances, and more consideration for adoption, if people can see his happiness and functionality for themselves.

Lucius was entered into the 2018 Purr-fectly Fiesta Photo Contest to show his love of life. Often, he looks as if he is smiling. Also, Fiesta photos of him are a yearly household tradition, but, by entering his photos into the contest, I was hoping to spread awareness or shine the light on a special needs cat on behalf of all special needs cats. I knew that even if he didn't win, he'd be seen by the judges. Sometimes it only takes one person to make a difference, change a life, or save a life.

There's no way to adequately put into words how Lucius has changed my life, my words could not do him, or his energy, personality, perseverance, bravery, ability to inspire, or my love for him, justice. Simply, he has transformed my life, and is the light of my life. I am grateful every day to have him in my life.