

Prince Chunk Officially Adopted by N.J. Family

Cat slims down in new home; family to establish foundation for struggling pet owners.

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Prince Chunk, pictured here at his heaviest — 44 pounds — has lost weight and found a permanent home with a New Jersey family. Vince Damiani plans to use the popularity of his new cat, named Prince Chunk for his hefty body size, to help pet owners who might be struggling to feed their own animals.

Damiani, 18, and his family have been Prince Chunk's foster caretakers since August, when they took him to their home in Washington Township, N.J. The cat's story made national news when word spread of a 44-pound cat who was taken in by the Camden County Animal Shelter after his owner could no longer afford to feed him.

His media appearances included several TV talk shows, including "Live With Regis and Kelly," and New York tabloid covers.

As of Feb. 17, Prince Chunk's stay at the Damiani home became permanent with the signing of the adoption papers. Vince Damiani said the cat's weight was closer to 23 pounds when they first took him home.

Since then, Prince Chunk has been on a veterinarian-prescribed diet and has dropped to 20 pounds. While the cat's story turned out to have a happy ending, Damiani said that the same can't be said for countless other cats who are abandoned at shelters during tough economic times.

By establishing the Prince Chunk Foundation, the Damiani family plans to raise funds to enable homeowners to keep their pets during times of financial crisis. Damiani said the foundation — which is still being formed — will seek to provide temporary assistance to pet owners throughout the United States.

People shouldn't be forced to choose between feeding themselves and feeding their animals, he said, adding, "This aid is crucial." The goal is to have the foundation up and running by summer, he said.