



### No question about it: This cool cat is ***Turbo***-charged

By every measurement, except the one that counts most – the heart – Turbo should be in that great purr palace in the sky.

But as much pain as this little kitty must have been in, as he was examined at Thompson Animal Medical Center, Dr. Thompson said “he purred up a storm. It was like he was pleading his case.”

“He didn’t allow that thought,” Dr. Jean Heyt said of the possibility of his not surviving.

As a result, he not only has survived, Turbo has become a super star, bringing in visitors from a wide area just to see this incredible kitten who because of paralyzed back legs scoots around the clinic on a modified skateboard or a specially-designed cat caddy. He moves so fast, the name, Turbo, was a natural.

It all began on November 8, 2004, when neighbors of Dr. Tom Thompson and Dr. Jean brought a kitten they found on the side of Hwy. 14 to their home. They took him to the clinic, where they quickly realized he had a broken back. Treatment included steroids to reduce swelling, antibiotics and six weeks of water therapy.

“He didn’t care that his back end didn’t work,” Dr. Jean said. “We’d put him on the floor and he would run and play and act like he was a perfectly normal cat. That’s why we knew we should get him a cart because he wanted to go all the time. When he pulled himself, he looked like a little seal.”

Don’t call him handicapped or even disabled. To Dr. Tom, Turbo has “altered abilities.” And, he makes the most of them. With a whoosh, he moves from the reception area to the laboratory to the doctors’ office.

He cannot use a litter box because of his paralysis. His bladder is expressed several times a day by a clinic staff member. Often a little stool comes out at the same time.

Turbo uses one of two devices, a skateboard that is strapped to his back legs or a cat caddy created by 9 year old Brody Hackbarth as part of an inventors fair at his school. Brody had seen a story about Turbo on News Channel 8 and decided to create a wheelchair for him. “My teacher gave me a 4. It’s like an A+,” Brody said. “We wanted to make the back legs able to move so that he can learn to walk again.”



**Veterinary assistant Brooke Riley has clearly bonded with Turbo.**

Veterinary assistant Brooke Riley is among staff members caring for Turbo. She loves his cute face, communicative eyes and spirit. “He knows we’re talking about him. He knows he’s special. He goes up to people who want to see him,” she said. “He has more friends than anybody in La Crosse.”

And do they ever. Receptionist Phyllis Arendt worries that so many people come to see him that others waiting to check in or out are inconvenienced. “I do understand the interest. People have so many questions,” she said. “He is just so fascinating.”

Kari Ordorff, certified veterinary technician, said, “He’s our wheelie man. He’s just a sweetheart. How could he not touch your heart? This little boy hangs out with us all day long playing and getting into trouble. He purrs no matter what you do to him – until you give him a bath.”

While he may still improve his mobility – he’s already gained a little movement in his hind end, it is unclear how far he will develop. Regardless, he’s having a great life with all the attention this super star kitten could want and more.

“He’s a very, very special cat who is meant to have a very, very long life,” Dr. Tom said.



**Brody Hackbarth** visiting his good buddy Turbo, who is using the kitty wheelchair that he created as part of a Cashton Elementary School inventors program.



### Turbo: just the facts

- Born about August 2004
- Broken back and paralysis of his hind end as a result of being hit by a car in November 2004
- Treated with steroids, antibiotics, water therapy
- Neutered male
- Name comes from his ability to scoot all over the clinic quickly
- Gained some movement in hind legs since coming to the clinic
- Learned skateboard in about a week, first going backwards and then forward
- Learning to use his new cart made by 9 year old Brody Hackbarth
- Tricks: shaking for treats
- Likes: eating, meeting new people, exploring, scooting
- Dislikes: baths, being told no and holding still
- Up for adoption? Never. We’d miss him too much.