

# FAMILY BY CHOICE



877-738-7874 • [PetsNationwide.com](https://www.PetsNationwide.com)



**Nationwide®**  
is on your side



Starting a family is a big step in many people's lives—but expanding one's brood doesn't always mean the pitter-patter of two little feet. For some, like Chicago couple Jatón and Lea Jackson, four little paws were the perfect beginning.

### Puppy steps

Deciding to grow their family led to many firsts for the lively husband and wife, starting with getting their first pet. They considered it a dress rehearsal before having a child of the two-legged variety.

"We had no clue what it's like to be locked into something other than ourselves—something that's not capable of taking care of itself," Jatón says, describing the thought process that led to getting a dog. "My wife decided before we have children, to give this pet thing a shot."

"We thought that having a dog would be a great first step," explains Lea. "Can we really do this and be wholehearted and committed to it? Because that's the type of commitment we want to give to our family—and [our puppy is] the first one in our family."

“  
My wife decided before  
we have children, to give  
this pet thing a shot.  
”



### Finding 'the one'

With their life-of-the-party personalities, the Jacksons knew that not just any breed of dog would do.

"I've seen several guys out here walking these really little dogs [with] these really squeaky barks: 'Erf! Erf!'" says Jatón, doing his best small dog impression. "And I'm a really big guy."

"He said, 'We ain't getting an erf-erf dog!'" Lea chimes in, laughing.

It was clear Jatón wanted a big dog, but because they live in a condo, space was a concern. He searched for breeds that would meet all their criteria: friendly, good with kids and, of course, just plain fun-loving. Ultimately, the English bulldog fit the bill; its tough-yet-adorable underbite coupled with its sweet disposition was a perfect match for the Jacksons.

After carefully researching reputable breeders and looking at what seemed like hundreds of photos, when Jatón came across one of a wrinkly, red puppy who exuded personality even in a snapshot, he knew Lea had to see it. He was right—she felt an immediate connection with the little guy.

"When that picture came across my phone," she says, "I called my husband back and said, 'He's the one.'"





“  
I heard a ‘chomp’  
and a ‘gulp-gulp.’ I was like,  
‘Oh my God.’  
”

### This apple didn't fall far from the tree

As soon as Jatón and Lea brought home their new addition, they started exploring names.

“I love our last name, Jackson,” says Lea. “We thought about maybe Maximus and some of those cool names, but we wanted something that would be a little bit more ‘us.’ And I was like, ‘What about Jackson?’” Jatón liked the name, but came up with an alternate spelling: Jaxon.

“It just recently dawned on me that his name is J-A-T-O-N and he just changed the T and made it an X,” Lea chides jokingly. But as it turns out, their names weren't the only things daddy and doggie had in common.

“It's funny, because my wife says we have similar features,” says Jatón.

“They both have big shoulders, are loving, cuddly and maybe a little bit intimidating, but are complete pussycats,” Lea explains. Cracking up, she adds, “We could have birthed the dog!”

### Oh deer!

Several months into their new adventure, life as parents seemed to suit the couple. They found themselves happily doing things they had never expected to do for their puppy, like vigilantly cleaning his wrinkly bulldog skin to prevent hot spots, and even wiping his backside. (“Like a baby!” exclaims Lea.) But even more unexpected? A trip to the emergency hospital when Jaxon was just 8 months old.

While tidying up around the house as Lea was on her way home from an out-of-town trip, Jatón had put Jaxon in his kennel with his favorite treat, a deer antler, to keep him busy.

“I thought this would give me enough time to clean the floor,” Jatón recalls. “As soon as Lea walked in the door, I heard a ‘chomp’ and a ‘gulp-gulp.’ I looked over and there was no antler. I was like, ‘Oh my God.’”

Though they were panicked at first, Jaxon seemed fine, so they decided to monitor him overnight. But by the next morning, the poor pup wasn't looking well. When he couldn't keep breakfast down, his parents knew they had to get him to the veterinarian right away.

A series of X-rays showed that the antler was lodged in Jaxon's large intestine. Without emergency surgery, there was a significant chance that the antler could begin moving and puncture his intestines. Without hesitation, Jatón and Lea gave the operation a green light.

The only problem? Their regular vet didn't perform that kind of procedure—and the surgeon who did was on the other side of town.

### A race to wait

As Jatón and Lea sped through traffic, they did their best to keep Jaxon calm, trying to prevent the antler from causing any more injury.







"I'm like, 'Just don't poop!'" says Jatón, laughing as he recounts the story.

Upon arrival at the animal hospital, Jaxon was whisked straight into surgery. After several seemingly endless hours, the couple finally got the good news that their boy had pulled through just fine and they could come see him.

"[He was] hooked up to an IV, sedated, so tired," says Jatón. "But he saw us and he just looked at us and licked at our hands."

"We saw his little heart rate go up [on the monitor] and I thought, 'Ohhhh, puppy!'" adds Lea.

#### **Um, I beg your pardon?**

Although the worst was over and Jaxon was on the mend, the first-time pet parents now faced the reality of paying for an emergency surgery.

"We never knew what the cost could be for something like this," Jatón says. "I had [an idea] in my mind that it would be \$1,000 to \$1,500." But the situation became real when he was presented with a \$4,000 bill.

"My wife wasn't with me at the time, so I called her to tell her. I told her the figure and her response was, 'Excuse me? Say that again?'" he continues, laughing.

But despite the initial sticker shock, Lea remembers thinking, "We can't let this

dog die. It's not fair. If this was a child that swallowed a piece of something, we'd do whatever it took.... That's how we knew our love for this dog was real, because we didn't even wince when writing that check to make sure he was okay."

#### **Parent planning pays off**

When asked to share their words of wisdom for other families thinking about adding a four-legged family member, the normally ebullient Jacksons turn serious. "A lot of times, people want a pet they think is cute to take to the park," says Lea. "The purpose of having a dog is to love it and care for it, to make sure you give it a healthy and safe environment where it can thrive and really live a good life."

They also knew that an important part of keeping their puppy safe was choosing the right pet insurance plan. And just as Jatón had carefully researched the right dog for their family, he researched their pet insurance options just as thoroughly.

"[Nationwide] was truly one of, if not *the*, best. It just made sense," Jatón says. "Not all companies provide pet insurance. Nationwide provides life insurance, car insurance, homeowners insurance and so forth, but to provide pet insurance as an entity within it is huge. That is a testament to the organization—that they see us as a whole family." 🐾

**Protect your pet today.**  
**877-738-7874 • [PetsNationwide.com](https://www.PetsNationwide.com)**

