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The Pit Bull Protection Project – End Prejudice

Everyday Pit Bulls and other “aggressive” breeds face prejudices and misconceptions. Pit bulls are sweet, loving creatures that have a bad reputation because of years of mistreatment and abuse. Why should we discriminate against them because of negative stereotypes that aren’t true? Together we can end the prejudice and fight those stereotypes. It is time to act now and give a voice to the animals without one. Christine Slate-Kimel, Laina Darnell, and I, Camryn Sears, started a project to bring awareness to the true nature of this wonderful breed.

“Pit Bull” is a term applied to many different breeds of dogs – such as, the American Pit Bull Terrier, the American Staffordshire Terrier, the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and sometimes the American Bulldog. In fact Pit Bulls are often misidentified and are actually other breeds that have somewhat of a resemblance. Boxers, Bullmastiffs, and Bulldogs are commonly mistaken for pit bulls (*Facts-About-Pit-Bulls*). Originally, the dogs were bred to be athletic and strong as they were a working breed. Another interesting fact is that aggressiveness was bred out of the breed because they were desired to be family dogs. Pit bulls were known in the early 1900’s as “nanny dogs” because they were tolerant and gentle with children. Helen Keller’s dog, “Sir Thomas”, was a pit bull, and so was “Petey”, the canine mascot of the Little Rascals (*Facts-About-Pit-Bulls*). This contrasts with the reputation that they now have.

Pit Bulls are now viewed as violent and aggressive because of the fact that they became popular with gangsters and dog fighters like Michael Vick. The animals in fights were abused and that is how they became so aggressive. Despite this severe mistreatment, Pit Bulls remain sweet and loving creatures and family dogs. Pit Bull attacks and bites are known to draw more media attention than those of other breeds. In a four-day study of dog-bite reportage, the National Canine Research Council found an anti-pit bull media bias. Three separate fatal attacks by non-pit bull breeds were mentioned once or twice in local papers alone. On the other hand, one non-fatal Pit Bull attack was in national and international papers and covered on major TV news channels over 230 times ("The Truth About Pit Bulls."). Media bias like this, slanders the reputation of Pit Bulls. Now, because of this “aggressive” and “mean” stereotype against them, they “are the ‘most abused, misunderstood dog breed’, comprising an estimated 70% of dogs housed and euthanized in urban animal shelters” (*Facts-About-Pit-Bulls*).

Christine Slate-Kimel, Laina Darnell and I were enraged by these findings. Christine has owned seven pit bulls – all of which were sweet, loving pets. I recently adopted a Pit Bull mix from the Forsyth County Animal Control and have grown to love and adore him. Satch, my Pit Bull, is one of the sweetest and loving dogs that I have ever come across. Because of this, we decided to do our APES Service Project on the protection of Pit Bulls. Our project is The Pit Bull Protection Project. Our website is at http://thepitbullprotectionproject.weebly.com. It displays our logo, slogan, mission statement, and a public service announcement as well as our action. The public service announcement is in the form of a video and is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJyZiNBv38M and at http://vimeo.com/66986349. It displays the misconceptions about Pit Bulls, anecdotes from Pit Pull owners, facts about the true nature of Pit Bulls, and a challenge for people to get involved. Our action is in the form of a petition. It was created through Change.org and is available at http://www.change.org/petitions/

i-want-to-petition-the-world-to-change-their-mindset-and-embrace-pit-bulls-end-the-prejudices-and-misconceptions-targeted-towards-pit-bulls.

As of 27 May 2013 we have received a very positive feedback to our service project. Our website has received over 170 page views since its opening on 5 May 2013. We find that highly remarkable. A poll was also created on the page on Breed-Specific Legislation and that has been voted on 12 times. Our video on YouTube has received 82 views. Our video on Vimeo has received three views. The video was also posted on Facebook and has been shared by three people. Lastly, our petition has been signed eleven times but we expect more as it was just posted earlier today. We are very proud of the progress that we have made so far.

When I started this project I did not expect much to come out of it. I figured that I could finish the project fairly easily and get a decent grade and be done with the class. But once I started working and researching, I was hooked. I had always been somewhat of an animal’s rights activist – collecting donations for the animal shelter instead of birthday presents, not eating turkey and other animals treated inhumanely in the meat industry, etc. – but this took it to a whole new level. I found myself talking about it all the time and spreading the word to friends and family and even acquaintances. I even went as far as to get in contact with the man at the head of Forsyth County Animal Control and have a discussion with him about Breed-Specific Legislation and Pit Bulls. I expected that only a few people would take notice – if any at all. I was shocked. I didn’t realize how much I could do just by making a plan and doing some hard work. This project didn’t only change people’s views of Pit Bulls, it changed me. I plan on continuing my work with The Pit Bull Protection Project and keeping my websites and petition up to date. I will also continue collecting money for the Forsyth County Animal Control and bringing awareness to Pit Bulls and other animals still in shelters. I’ve come to really identify with a quote that we incorporated into our project and I will leave that as my closing statement.

"They live and die for us. The Pit Bull deserves our utmost respect to be that loyal. We should all aspire to be more like the Pit Bull – wearing our hearts on our sleeves, loyal to a fault and willing to die for those we love."

-Anonymous

Works Cited

*Facts-About-Pit-Bulls*. *Facts-About-Pit-Bulls*. Pit Sisters, 2013. Web. 27 May 2013.

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