



A CELEBRATION  
OF PIT BULLS  
DOING A WORLD  
OF GOOD.



PIT BULL HEROES

MURRAY

# PIT BULL HEROES

49 Underdogs with  
Resilience and Heart

GREG MURRAY

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# CHAD

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Six puppy siblings were rescued from the streets of Chester, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 2012 when a concerned passerby saw a man trying to sell them from the street corner. The litter was taken to the Providence Animal Shelter to get the care they needed to be adopted out. A few weeks later, a girl named Danielle eagerly called her mother to tell her that she had visited the shelter and found a beautiful brindle puppy named Brewsky, one of the six rescued puppies and the only one with white paws. She was leaving for college soon and wanted her mother, Chrissy, to have a furry companion when she left. Danielle and Chrissy visited the shelter together and came home with Brewsky that evening. They renamed him Chad.

Chad was a happy, friendly, and loving puppy. He was comfortable around children, loud noises, and other dogs. Chrissy had a feeling that he had a lot to give to the world, so she enrolled him in a basic obedience class to train and socialize him. To say that Chad did well is an understatement. He did exceptionally. Passing the basic obedience class enabled him to enroll in the advanced courses, all of which he completed by the age of one. The dog trainer saw a lot of potential in Chad. Not only was he learning very quickly, but the trainer also noticed his amiable and calming disposition. He asked Chrissy if she would be interested in training Chad to become a therapy dog. After doing some research on the process, Chrissy decided to move forward with training.

There is a lot of testing involved to become a Canine Good Citizen (CGC) and therapy dog. Making a single error during the tests is an automatic fail and requires starting over on another day. That is exactly what happened to Chad after passing his







## CHAD

his CGC certification. He failed his first therapy dog test by slipping up with the “treat test.” On his second try, Chad (led by Chrissy) successfully walked past five sausage treats purposefully placed on the floor to distract him. After succeeding at that test and the other requirements, he earned his therapy dog certification in April 2014.

Chad began his therapy dog duties with Chrissy immediately. They spent time in local nursing homes and assisted living facilities where the presence of a dog has been shown to help reduce stress and depression, and even defuse some of the common symptoms associated with conditions like Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. Everyone loved his presence.

Chad’s success with the elderly encouraged Chrissy to seek new opportunities for him to help others as a therapy dog. Chad had always done well around children. He was even more careful around them than with adults, often licking their hands, feet, and faces when he met them. Because of all the work Chad and Chrissy were doing in the community, they became known to many, and one day Chrissy was approached by the program coordinator of the pet therapy program at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. They knew Chad loved being around children and felt that he would be an excellent fit for the program at the hospital. Chrissy and Chad agreed.

The screening process was rigorous. After the official interviews, Chad was medically

and behaviorally screened at the University of Pennsylvania. Chrissy had to go through a background check, FBI fingerprinting, child abuse clearances, and health clearances. Once those were complete, Chad and Chrissy went to an orientation and received hospital-specific training. In November of 2014, Chad was accepted as the first “pit bull” in the pet therapy program at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

In 2015, Chad was nominated for the American Kennel Club Humane Fund Award for Canine Excellence in recognition for his services to humankind as a therapy dog. In 2016, he was honored with the Ginger Award from his alma mater, the Delaware County SPCA. This award is given yearly to an exemplary pit bull-type dog who serves as a breed ambassador in their community.

Today, Chad and Chrissy regularly visit schools, colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, anti-bullying meetings, and the Domestic Abuse Project of Delaware County to share his love and comfort to anyone in need. They also attend local events that educate communities about the stigma that is placed unfairly on dogs like Chad because of their appearance. Chrissy and Chad teach responsible dog ownership, explain what breed discriminatory laws are, and increase awareness of pit bull-type dogs as therapy and service animals.

Chad has been giving back since he was a puppy and looks forward to helping the people that need him most.





# ELVIS

Elvis was taken to Orange County Animal Care in 2013 as a stray and labeled by the staff as “dog and people aggressive.” A Priceless Pet Rescue volunteer saw Elvis on a social media post promoting his adoption and shared him on a message board with other volunteers. Elvis was scheduled to be euthanized the next day and could only be adopted out to a rescue organization that was willing to rehabilitate him before adopting him out to a forever home. Everyone wanted Elvis out of the pound, but only one person was available to foster him at that time. John arrived at the shelter just hours before Elvis’s euthanization was scheduled to occur. He took Elvis in as a medical foster and the plan was to put Elvis up for adoption once he was healthy.

John was very excited to work with Elvis since he was his first foster. It became quickly evident that Elvis was mislabeled as “aggressive.” He didn’t have any issues in John’s care and was likely acting out in the shelter because he was living in a kennel surrounded by unfamiliar dogs and humans. John, a dog trainer, witnessed how well-behaved Elvis was in every situation. He didn’t even have to train him! After fostering Elvis for four weeks, John decided that he couldn’t let him go and adopted Elvis himself.

In 2014 John created a blog titled *I Pitty the Bull*, about his journey through life with Elvis, his other dogs, and the dogs that he fostered. Inspired by Elvis, the blog was an outlet that helped John cope as he dealt with some serious health issues. Today, it is a







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# LEXY

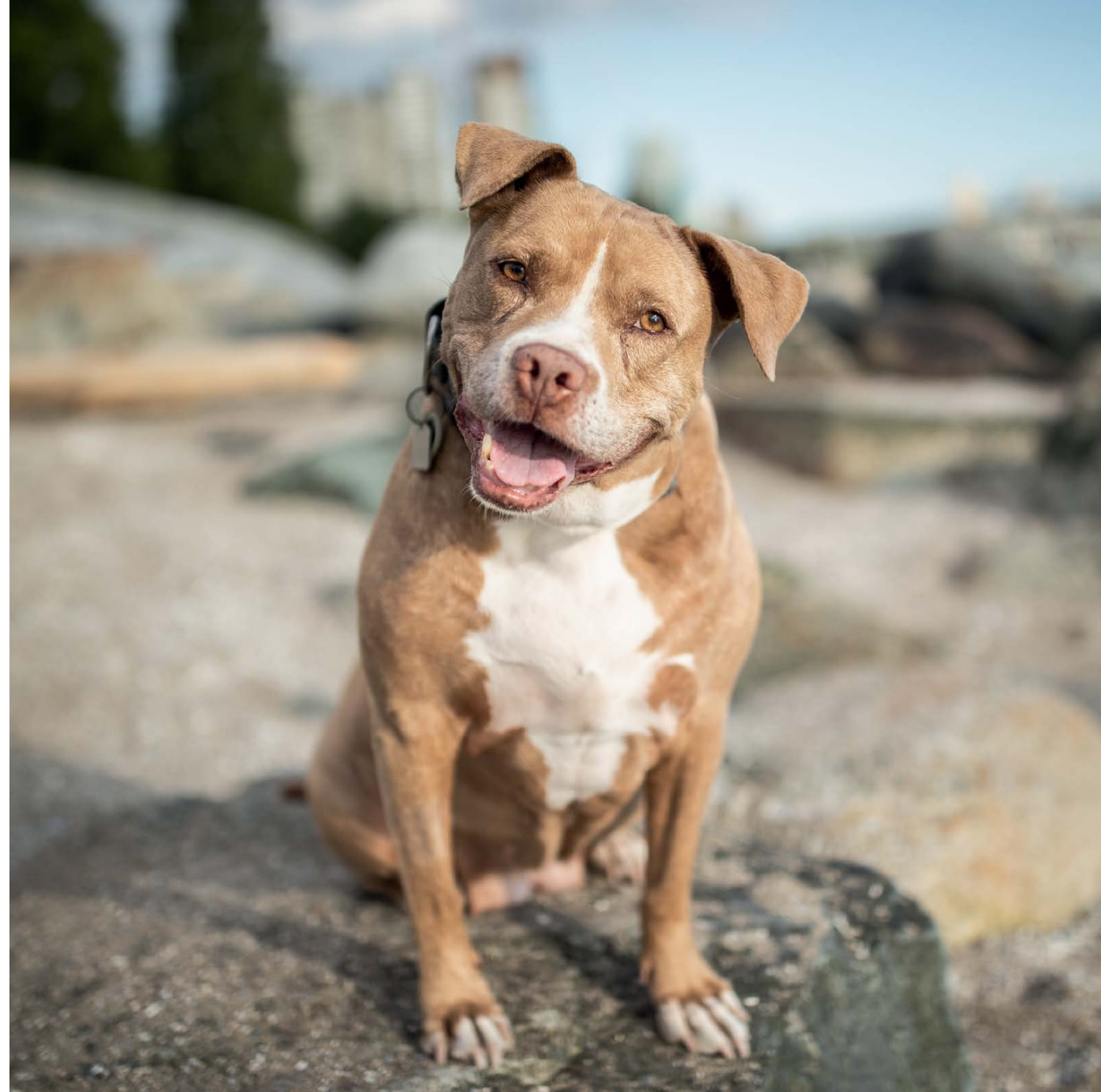
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Much of Lexy's first eight years of life were spent as a breeding dog for a backyard breeding operation near Vancouver, British Columbia. She was found neglected and in terrible condition. She was skinny and her belly was nearly touching the ground as she walked. Based on her condition, it was likely that she had never been outside to experience the world. City noises terrified Lexy, and she didn't even react to the words "walk" or "treat."

Jenny and Lexy first met when Jenny came to the British Columbia SPCA seeking a companion for her rescue mix, Pete, whom she'd also adopted from there. Pete was hurting from some medical issues, and Jenny was hoping a new companion would lift his mood. Unfortunately, because their energy levels were so different, Jenny felt that Lexy and Pete would be incompatible. Jenny left the shelter that day without a dog, but hoping that Lexy would soon find her forever home.

One week later, Pete passed away. At that same time, Lexy had been moved to foster care to help boost her spirits after being in the shelter for many months. Jenny began visiting Lexy and decided to adopt her just a month later. In all Lexy's months at the rescue, Jenny was the only person to submit an adoption application for her. She saw a dog that deserved love in her life and wanted to be the one to give it.

With time, Lexy began to grow healthy and open up to the world as she became more comfortable with living the city life in Vancouver. Lexy loves visiting the beach,







"In addition to being an ambassador for pit bulls, Lexy is a powerful voice for senior rescue dogs."



## LEXY

which is only a few blocks from their home. She enjoys swimming, jumping into the water, and racing after the Frisbee. Lexy always manages to carry the Frisbee all the way home, like it's a prize.

In the winter, her favorite place to visit is the space right in front of their fireplace. All she needs is a blanket and Bruce, a plush shark toy who has been her best friend for more than four years. Lexy had never acknowledged toys before, then one day at a local pet store, she grabbed the shark toy, and they've been attached ever since. Bruce has become a security blanket for Lexy and keeps her safe from loud trucks speeding down the street and during fireworks. When Lexy needs a quiet moment by herself, she takes Bruce with her and cuddles up next to him.

Lexy has quite the social media following under the moniker "Lexy the Elderbull." In addition to being an ambassador for pit bulls, Lexy is a powerful voice for senior rescue dogs. In January 2018, Lexy turned twelve years young, and Jenny focuses a lot of her attention on educating people that age is just a number. According to Jenny, the key is healthy and balanced foods, outdoor activities, and lots of

love and support. Lexy is healthier and happier now than when she was rescued more than five years ago.

Jenny promotes three things through Lexy's social media accounts: adoption, senior dogs, and supporting rescues and shelters through activism, fundraising, and education. Over the years people have told Jenny that they view pit bulls differently because of the work she and Lexy do. Their advocacy and educational website, [LexyTheElderbull.com](http://LexyTheElderbull.com), has raised more than nine thousand dollars for pit bull rescue organizations throughout the US and Canada. Lexy also has a modeling career, and flew from Vancouver to Philadelphia to be photographed for the 2019 Pinups for Pitbulls calendar.

Lexy is very sweet, curious, and intelligent. She has managed to figure out how to open the refrigerator and will sometimes store blocks of cheese in the couch for eating later. Lexy believes that laps were put on this earth solely for her to sit on. She also likes to snuggle next to Jenny and have her hold her paw. Her favorite treats are blueberries, dried tripe, and she even gets ice cream on special occasions, like book photo shoots!



# TIPS TO HELP END BREED-DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION

The amount of work required to end discrimination against dogs where you live will vary. It isn't easy and takes a lot of time, patience, and hard work. You get what you put in when it comes to improving laws and making change on a governmental level. Here are some tips based on my experience helping to end breed-discriminatory laws in my hometown of Lakewood, Ohio, in 2018. Some of these tips may not apply to you depending on the amount of resistance you are getting from city leaders. Some tips may prove to be invaluable.



## WRITE TO OR MEET WITH YOUR LEADERS

Find out what their stance is on the current legislation affecting dogs that look a certain way. If they support breed discrimination, find out why and use that information to your advantage. Maybe they rely on false information, or they had a bad experience with a dog in the past. It's an opportunity to provide them with factual resources, debunk myths, and find out about the experience that shapes their opinion. In some cases, I've found that leaders were unaware that their city had any form of breed discrimination and were quick to remove it from the law.

## RALLY A LARGE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS BEHIND THE CAUSE

This is the most important in my opinion. The more residents involved, the better. It says a lot when 99 percent of the residents packing city council meetings are there to end breed discrimination

and 1 percent is there to support keeping it. Often, zero pro-discrimination residents attended our meetings in Lakewood. In the words of Lakewood Councilman Dan O'Malley after the vote to end discrimination in Lakewood on April 2, 2018, "You can pretend to care, but you can't pretend to show up."

## ATTEND COUNCIL MEETINGS ON A MONTHLY BASIS

Be seen and be heard. The more you go, the more you get noticed. If you go consistently and don't give up, city leaders will know that this isn't a short-term push to end the discriminatory legislation. The city will be forced to address the issue and make their stance public. Our goal in Lakewood was to make this a part of every city council meeting. By doing this, we forced it on the official agenda and eventually got them to have a vote on the issue.

## FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY AND STRENGTHENING LAWS

Safety is the number one priority. Your push to end discrimination isn't just about dogs with blocky heads. It's about breed discrimination not working to make cities safer. It's about this form of legislation creating a false sense of safety, and not focusing on real objective laws that are proven to equate to safety. While your goal is for all dogs to be recognized equally, the leaders that you're speaking to have safety on their mind. You can show them all the photos you want of children with pit bull-type dogs, but it won't make a difference.

Breed-discriminatory legislation is highly subjective and relies on someone's opinion when identifying a dog. We all see things differently. Subjective laws have no business being part of any government. Effective, objective, and robust breed-neutral laws do. Objective

laws are easily enforceable and don't impact certain types of dogs based on looks. They affect all dogs and hold all owners accountable when enforced. When the ban ended in Lakewood, the city implemented much more effective and stronger laws. Our city no longer has breed discrimination and we're safer.

## REQUEST PUBLIC RECORDS

This is one of my favorites, and we found it to be invaluable in our fight to end breed discrimination in Lakewood, Ohio. There is a lot of helpful information that can be found via public records requests. Start broad by asking for all emails between city officials over the past few years with the word "pit bull" or "dog ban" in them. Do you know about a dog that was kicked out of the city for being or looking like a pit bull? Find all the correspondences related to the case. Often you will find damaging information that will help your case to end the discriminatory legislation.

Request dog bite reports and statistics. The records often show that all types of dogs are causing injuries to residents. If your city doesn't keep track, then how do they know the discriminatory legislation is working? In most cities, correspondence between city employees and police or animal control records is public to residents.

## BRING IN THE EXPERTS

Share studies and prominent organization's stances on breed discrimination. Did you know that there are no reputable organizations that support breed discrimination? In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Bar Association, American Kennel Club, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), American Veterinary Medical Association, Humane Society of the United States, and



many more do not support breed-discriminatory laws.

Invite professionals and experts that work with all different types of dogs to attend city meetings. Reach out to other cities that repealed breed-discrimination laws and invite their leaders to speak about their positive experience with repealing the laws.

For cities with breed discrimination, it is highly likely that their animal control officers were trained by the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA). Did you know that the NACA is against breed discrimination and even addresses the difficulties of dog identification in their training? Use this info to your advantage.

Bring breed identification studies to meetings or send them to your city leaders. Pit bull-type dogs come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. They're difficult to identify and there are many studies that show this. Dogs are often misidentified by experts, so imagine how often they're being misidentified by police, residents, and animal control officers.

### UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA

Spread the word about your fight to end breed discrimination where you live by creating a group page. Create Facebook events for each council meeting you are going to to maximize the attendance. The more people that show up, the better. Large crowds in support of repealing the legislation make a statement and grab the attention of the leaders and local media.

Share stories online. In Lakewood, we made slideshow videos to share specific instances of the discriminatory laws not working. For instance, Lakewood approved a dog based on looks that DNA tested at 87 percent American Staffordshire terrier (pit bull). They approved the very dog they deemed dangerous to live in the city. Time and time again, we

found cases of misidentification by our animal control department.

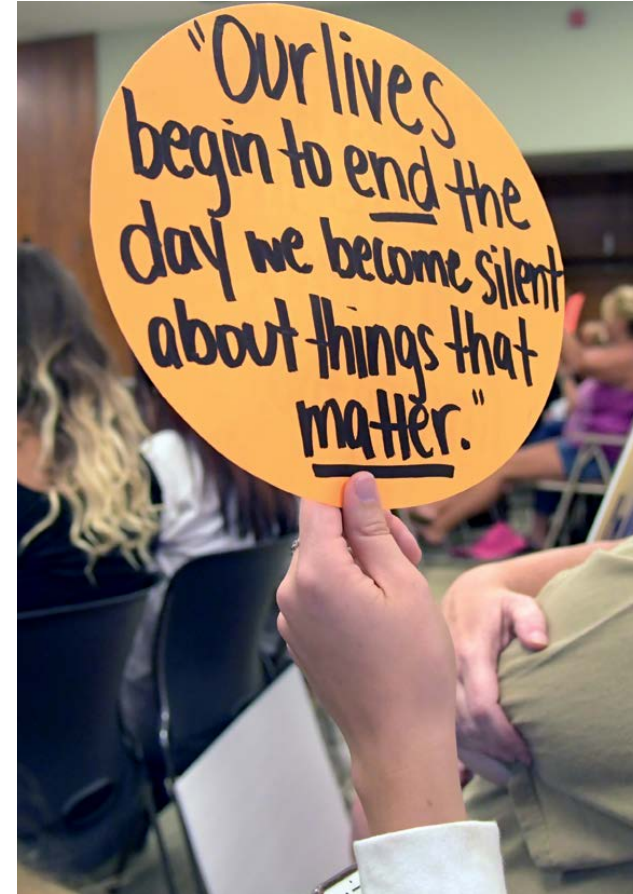
We also shared the story of a woman that was visiting Lakewood with her pit bull-type dog. She was on a dog-friendly patio, patronizing a restaurant with her well-behaved dog. Animal control arrived after being alerted by a meter reader and kicked the well-behaved dog out of the city based on its looks. This is not the message you want to send to visitors spending money in your city. Get these stories out. They put pressure on the city to make a change.

### VOTE

Our successful push to end breed discrimination in Lakewood started one year prior to city council elections. Three out of seven of our city council members were up for re-election that year. Once we knew who supported the pit bull ban repeal (and who didn't), we went to work campaigning for the anti-discrimination candidates. Two of the three incumbents who supported the pit bull ban were voted out, and we helped vote in two anti-discrimination candidates. This was the first time in more than twenty-five years that an incumbent at-large council member running for re-election was voted out in Lakewood. And we got two out! We needed five of seven council members to vote in favor of repealing the discriminatory legislation, and the election brought us that majority. The vote to repeal ended up being 7-0 because the others on council saw how those who supported the ban were not re-elected.

### CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

Give yourself the right title when you communicate with your city, other residents, and the media. "Pit Bull Advocate" sounds great, but "Safety, Education, and



Anti-Discrimination Advocate" sounds more professional. Plus, you're utilizing the very important word "safety" in your title.

When speaking at meetings or emailing your leaders, it's very easy to get emotional. Many of us are guilty of this, including me. Speak with facts, science, and stories. Avoid getting angry; be professional.

### ALERT THE MEDIA

Let as many people as possible know about your cause. Local media is usually very happy to share stories like this. News stations know that breed discrimination can

be a divisive topic, so they are happy to share these stories on the news and social media in order to get viewers to tune in or visit their websites.

What mayor or council member wants to be seen by thousands as someone who supports discrimination? What mayor wants to see their city on the news in a negative light? Not many. Getting the media involved is a great way to get breed discrimination on the agenda and possibly force a vote.

### BE BETTER

Many pro-breed discrimination advocates only have one method of operation: instilling fear in others while sitting behind a computer.

Get out, show up consistently, be professional, focus on safety, educate others, attack the effectiveness of the laws, vote, and most importantly, never give up.

When it comes to rescue animal and pit bull advocacy, we're not going to agree 100 percent of the time. And that's OK. We learn and grow from disagreement and having different opinions. However, we must not let our disagreements divide us. I see it all too often in the pit bull and rescue animal advocate world. This division keeps us from achieving our mutual goals of ending discrimination, ending animal cruelty, ending dogfighting, and getting every shelter animal into a good home.

Respect one another. Acknowledge that we're not all going to agree on every part of rescue and advocacy. Acknowledge that we all come from different backgrounds and situations that shape who we are. We can't move forward if we fight. But we can move forward if we have constructive and respectful conversations when we disagree. We can't move forward by disrespecting the very advocates that have the same goal as us: ending discrimination.