

Pinups for Pitbulls, Inc.: "The Dog Island" Magazine

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The issue of stray animals today is an international problem - there are many animal rights programs and teams that exist in every part of the world, since ignorance, animal cruelty and treating living things as if they were objects has no national identity and, sadly, exist everywhere in the world.

As far as standing up for animals, the United States of America is one of the leading countries, having thousands of various organizations that strive to help animals each in their own way, finding the most effective ways of giving the animals the life they truly deserve. It is home to organizations like PETA (est.1980, that since spread all over the world and has representatives in Europe, India, and Asia), and many others.

The arsenal of ways to raise awareness and draw attention to the issue of animal cruelty is huge - it includes charity auctions, shows, concerts that gather donations to help homeless and abused pets; merchandise sales and sports events like marathons that are aimed at raising funds for building and furnishing animal shelters and starting educational programs to teach people about the issue of animal rights.

A very unusual way of helping the Pit bull breed has been chosen by an American non-profit organization named "Pinups for Pitbulls, Inc.", established in 2005 by Deirdre Franklin of New Jersey, who also goes by the name of Little Darling. Deirdre and other ladies of her group issue an annual pin-up calendar that contains pictures of them and their Pit bulls.

The very style of pin-up first appeared in mid 20th century, and became a whole milestone for American pop-culture. Photos and posters of that era are true works of art that show how Americans pictured the perfect woman. The popularity of this genre and its originality gave Miss Franklin the idea that it could potentially be used to save her beloved Pit bull breed from unjust treatment and the bad reputation it has unfortunately been gaining from the misinformed media and the country's lawmakers. Pit bulls and other bully breeds were once loved and respected in every family - these all-American dogs were the pride of the country, having shown themselves as war heroes, loyal friends, and perfect companions, to whom people would even entrust their children. In recent years, however, there have been much controversy that has resulted in the so-called BSL (breed specific legislation) that deprives these great dogs not only of normal life, but even existing on the territory of a certain state that has BSL. Behind such laws is an erroneous notion that all Pit bulls are *born* dangerous. The creators of this ridiculous legislature don't take into account the fact that one can't judge a whole breed based on a few incidents taken out of context, or on eloquent newspaper headlines claiming that aggression is an inborn trait of these dogs, and ignoring the fact that in just about any tragic occurrence involving a dog the owner is the first one to blame. This discrimination of once loved and respected American breed, however, did not convince true Pit bull lovers. Among them, Miss Franklin and her Pinups.

There was a time when Deirdre didn't even think about having a Pit bull. First time she ever met one was in 1996, while working at an animal shelter in the city of Philadelphia and dreaming about owning a husky.

One day, a very sweet and gentle Pit bull mix girl appeared in the shelter, and Deirdre fell in love. Unfortunately, the shelter's policy clearly stated that all Pit mixes must be euthanized, and weren't under any conditions allowed to be adopted or even fostered by breed-specific rescue organizations. Every attempt of Deirdre's to give the puppy to a more open-minded shelter was unsuccessful. Shocked and heartbroken over being unable to save the dog's life, Miss Franklin decided to adopt a Pit bull from a shelter in Texas. That's how Deirdre ended up with Carla Lou, and Carla Lou with Deirdre. But that was only the beginning, it turned out. Soon after, there was Baxter Bean - a difficult dog with a tough past who the previous owner gave up on. Then there were two more. But it was Carla Lou - the sweet, loving and loyal Carla Lou - who was the inspiration behind the idea of the first ever Pinups for Pitbulls, Inc. calendar.

Miss Franklin had some previous modeling experience, a love for Pit bulls and the unstoppable desire to fight the injustice towards the breed. All of that plus a humble sum of money, and Deirdre and her ladies were able to come out with their first calendar. The bright calendars featuring pretty girls and their loyal companions met a huge response not only from breed lovers, but from lovers of all things stylish. Soon after, the pinups added charity sales of custom accessories featuring Carla Lou and other Pit bulls. The girls were giving their all toward raising money for bully-oriented charities.

Today, Pinups for Pitbulls, Inc. are known way outside of the US, where they originated - it has tens of thousands of fans worldwide. In 2009 Miss Franklin and her lovely team raised \$ 20,000 selling their calendars and souvenirs that they donated to helping Pit bulls and American Staffordshire terriers that have suffered the consequences of breed specific laws, human abuse and evil and untrue rumors. Pinups for Pitbulls, Inc. also hold seminars that educate people about the Pit bull breed and its specifics, and promote responsibility amongst Pit bull owners. The organization works with canine specialists, dog trainers, dog behavior specialists and psychologists, anti-cruelty groups and animal shelters to gain access to the latest information and share it with people. That knowledge is passed on not only at seminars and other educational programs, but in the form of booklets, leaflets, and written recommendations that are used to train volunteers. The girls firmly believe that education, first and foremost, is the most vital step towards winning the fight with breed discrimination and animal cruelty.

Every day, Pinups for Pitbulls, Inc. works with people - be it educating those who for whatever reason are scared of Pit bulls, or busting Pit bull-related myths about the breed's unpredictability and aggression, or explaining how to correctly interact with animals. They do it passionately and effortlessly, and as a result the number of their fans grows day to day, as more and more people give up their prejudice towards the Pit bull breed and other bully-type dogs. Of course, there always will be skeptics that stand by whatever the mass media tells them about Pit bulls, and consider these dedicated girls crazy, but in most cases, it's the love for animals and common sense that prevails, and that gives all of us

hope that in the nearest future, not just in the US but worldwide, there will be no more ignorant lawmakers that would think of taking away a dog's life just because that dog is a Pit bull.