



PITBULL T★E★A★M



SoCal Pitbull TEAM-Everyday Advocacy

Biased media reports, anti-pit bull groups trolling the internet for stories to sensationalize, and years of destructive rhetoric has responsible pit bull guardians scrambling to come to their loved one's defense. We work to end use of breed-discriminatory legislation over promoting responsible dog ownership, and change the focus onto circumstance and environment, rather than body type and head size. Sometimes even with our best intentioned efforts to be warriors for our dogs, our emotions can get the best of us. SoCal Pitbull TEAM co-founder Barb Telesmanic wasn't immune, and tells her story below:

*"Adopting my first pit bull, Bella, taught me a lot about myself, my awareness and my inner gumption during our journeys together. Early on I learned how overwhelming breed bias can be and how it affects our own behavior and reactions. One sunny afternoon I was hiking with Bella and we stumbled across a woman and her dog walking towards their car, when the woman literally fell to her knees in fearful tears. At first I didn't realize the behavior was directed towards me or Bella. She shouted, "My dog isn't friendly and you have **that** dog!" It was the first tangible encounter with discrimination I was ever on the receiving end of. As my ears began to ring, my hands started to sweat, and my stomach churned, I tried to stay calm and answered with the old adage, "My dog is friendly." She continued yelling and as I turned to walk away, I told her where to go and pretty much how to get there. I had nightmares for weeks afterwards thinking about the incident; how could I have responded better? Why did she think that way? How can I make a significant impact for positive change? Right then and there, I made it my purpose to learn, grow, and become as effective of an advocate as I could be."*



The great news about promoting and campaigning for our dogs is that we have nationally accredited organizations, evidence-based facts, and tons of overwhelmingly supportive resources on our side to

help us get our point across. It has taken me quite a few years, and lots of reading to determine what information I wanted to promote to be a champion for my dogs and all dogs. We at So Cal Pitbull TEAM want to provide you the best tools and resources you will need to become the ultimate dog guardian and a successful, **effective** advocate.

When trying to change perceptions, its best to encourage the concept of canine equality and not denote differentiation in regard to breeds. The intent being that all dogs are individuals, just like people, and no particular breed has any definite behavior specific to its lineage; they each possess their own identity. Dogs that have come from the gravest of scenarios rise up to become therapy or family dogs just like a dog you have raised yourself from puppyhood. Let behavior speak rather than history or appearance; this is fundamental in helping great dogs get into (and stay in) loving homes. Let's look to another personal example from co-founder Corinne D'Ambrosio for what can happen when you keep your cool, take a deep breath, and react from this place of intent:

"As part of being a responsible pit bull owner I exercise and socialize my dogs every chance. Living close to a well-known coffee shop I love to bring my elder-bull to get my morning (or afternoon, or evening) java fix. He loves the walk there, and inevitably we make some new friends outside since he is a giant friendly goober. By giant, I mean 90 lbs. of lovin' with a head the size of a regulation sized basketball. I know he looks intimidating, so I try to show off how friendly he is every chance I get. This time, I didn't get much of a chance before one woman



at a full table nearby stopped me in my tracks. She blatantly said, loud enough for everyone in the vicinity to hear, "Why would anybody bring that kind of dog to a public place?" I was upset. I asked her what she meant, and told her my pit bull was a gentle giant, and not to judge a book by its cover. This didn't thwart the onslaught. "There are children and other dogs here! Why would anyone WANT a dog like that?" Man... this was testing my patience. I realized actions speak louder than words... and I had a pocket full of treats. My elder-bull is seriously treat motivated, and no attitude on this planet would deter him from getting those treats on cue. "Sit." I said. Then, "down" followed by "stay." I walked a few paces. "Come." He came running. "Wait." And for the finale, "High Five!" He performed like a well-tuned circus clown and had the whole area laughing at his sheer delight over earning that Milk Bone. I didn't have to say a word. A friend of my nemesis took up the cause and said, "You know, I have a friend with a pit bull and they are really nice dogs. You just have to give them a chance." Point for Pit Bulls!"

Let's arm ourselves with the tools we need to be successful at changing minds and perceptions. Familiarize yourself with qualified organizations that work tirelessly to get well-documented and factual

information out there, because changing a culture requires getting your voice heard. Read up on your local and state laws regarding breed specific laws and write to your representatives (see link to our article "Being and Effective Advocate in ANY State"), this is pivotal in transforming views and legislation. We as Americans are having our rights compromised due to misinformation, ignorance, and fear and we have the ability to change that. We speak for our dogs, let's make that conversation matter.

This compilation of links serves as a quick primer of excellent resources to help you become the best advocate for your dog. Explore and Enjoy!

<http://www.animalfarmfoundation.org/pages/Breed-Specific-Legislation>

<http://www.animalfarmfoundation.org/pages/Labels-Language>

<http://www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/publications/ncrc-publications/>

http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/publications/230603563_Pit%20Bull%20Placebo.pdf

<http://www.pbrc.net/breedinfo.html>

<http://www.gamedogguardian.com/education-and-resources>