

Jacqueline Pinol:

The Canine Condition, come, sit, stay. Welcome to The Canine Condition Podcast. My name is Jacqueline Pinol. I am an actor, documentary filmmaker and animal rescue advocate. The Canine Condition Podcast is a platform to bring awareness to dog adoption, and to provide all dog lovers and pet owners with information and resources on how to raise a healthy and well balanced dog. If you are thinking about getting your first dog, or just want to know where and how you can help a dog in need, this is also a place for you.

Are you the type of person that likes to prevent a problem, or you'd rather do something once there is a problem to solve? I have to tell you, I prefer to prevent. But what if the problem has gone on for so long that it's almost a norm now? We become numb to it in order to keep going and get through our days. Sometimes a problem seems so far removed from us that we don't consider how its consequences actually affect us.

And since this podcast is about The Canine Condition, I'm talking about the problem of overpopulation of homeless dogs and how that affects every single one of us in this country, even those who don't have dogs or even like dogs. If we care about safe neighborhoods, our children's education, how our tax dollars are used, or we simply want ethical treatment for our canine companions, then this is a problem we can no longer ignore.

My guests on the podcast today are two very proactive and innovative go-getter women. I am happy to have Julia Pennington and Allison Lange on this episode. They are the founders of A Dog's Life Rescue, a not-for-profit, all-volunteer organization dedicated to saving and bettering the lives of homeless dogs and other animals by providing them with shelter care and rehabilitation, both medically and emotionally.

For more than 17 years, they have worked to promote the importance of spay and neuter. So they know firsthand how difficult it is to be in the trenches with animal rescue while continuously raising the funds needed to keep the organization and its programs running. Six years ago, they started brainstorming ways to create a sustainable income for their rescue organizations programs.

Julia and Allison have come up with a fun and creative way to do just that. But I am not going to spoil it just yet. I'll give you two hints. The martini shot, usually the last shot or podcast episode before celebrating the end of a season with a post wrap drink. And hint number two, Julia and Allison's new motto, social life doing social good. In this episode, we are going to find out what that's all about. Hi, Julia and Allison, welcome to The Canine Condition Podcast.

Allison Lange:

Thank you for having us.

Julia Pennington:

Thank you so much. We're really excited to be here.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes, so am I. We have a lot to chat about, some really good stuff and surprises for our listeners on this episode. This is the last episode of season one. I'm very excited. Let's start at the very beginning. Julia, you and Allison have been rescue partners for 17 years. You know that's longer than some marriages, right?

Julia Pennington:

Oh, we do.

Allison Lange:

We do know.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That is commitment. Julia, let's start with you. How did your desire, or how did your journey lead you into dog rescue?

Julia Pennington:

I think it's appropriate that you say desire, because it feels like it was just in me when I was a child, that reaction to help when I saw an animal in need. And so since I was a kid, which I think is typical with a lot of rescuers, I brought animals home. When I'd find a stray, I'd bring them home. As a teenager, I started volunteering at the animal shelter. And when I got out to Los Angeles and started the same thing, where I'd find one animal, one dog, one cat, really, it just snowballed, then it was three cats, then it was five cats, then it was 10 cats and then it was 12 dogs. And it snowballed and eventually I was like, "I better start a non-profit." And Allison actually came to volunteer with us and I sucked her in, is what we say.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Ooh. I didn't know that part.

Allison Lange:

Yeah.

Julia Pennington:

Right, Allie?

Allison Lange:

Yeah, but I said, "Yeah, I wanted to volunteer," and then I was like, "Okay." Julia just brought me in, and I have not gotten away from her since, but I'm happy to be with her.

Julia Pennington:

Yeah. So Allie came to volunteer for us and I sucked her in. I saw right away, I was like, "She's got to stay with us." And she did.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And where was home for you, Julia? You said you came to Los Angeles, so where were you coming from when you were first volunteering at a shelter?

Julia Pennington:

In Nashville, Tennessee. I was raised in Nashville. So Southern, raised in the South.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, I love that. I didn't know that about you. That's awesome. To all the Nashville, Tennessee people, yay, go rescue.

Julia Pennington:

Hi, ya'll.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That's awesome. And for our listeners, I would like to let you know that Allison and I also go way back. In fact, she was the first person to open my eyes to the need for rescue. And it was because of Allie that I learned that thousands of dogs and cats were homeless in our own city of Los Angeles, and that we needed to take action and spread the word. Allison, why don't you tell us how the journey started for you and how it has changed you to where it's at today?

Allison Lange:

That's so sweet. And I love hearing that just because you do so much now that I love that I was able to even introduce you to this world. Even though it can be a tough world, but it's amazing all the stuff that you're doing in it. I grew up in La Porte, Indiana. It's a very small town in Northern Indiana, and I grew up around lots of animals. And I ended up moving out to Los Angeles when I was about 20 years old, and just missed, honestly, being around animals.

And then probably cut to around three years later, I decided that I wanted to be around more animals and volunteer my time. And somehow I, through a friend of a friend, got connected with these rescuers. And I talked to somebody on the phone, they were like, "Oh, show up and come and volunteer for us for an adoption day." And it sounded like something that I would enjoy doing, like just being around some dogs and cats. And I show up to adoption and I see all these animals needing homes.

And I mean, honestly my eyes were open to, I mean, in a very short period of time after that of like how much of a need there is for volunteers, and how many animals there are that need homes in not just Los Angeles, but across the country. And that was me also volunteering for Julia for the first time. And honestly, with Julia, we just ... Pretty quickly after I started volunteering, I feel like I was out with her and another volunteer, we were in the street a lot rescuing.

Julia and I kind of just made a good team in regards sort of with catching animals and figuring out how to safely catch dogs that were fearful. So we just did that a lot, and that was kind of our focus for a lot of years there. And seeing that we could make a difference and that we were, as sad as it is, good at catching dogs that are fearful. We did that for years, but realized that there is a bigger problem than ... Because every animal that we would take off the street, there's a hundred more right behind it.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Would you ladies just see these strays in the areas that you would frequent, or you knew where they were and you kind of went out to these areas because you knew there were strays and you needed to save them?

Allison Lange:

First, I want to say, before, because there's a lot of answers to that, but for some reason, Julia sees. I would actually tell her she can't go out certain days, because she sees ... I don't know if they find her. I mean, I do think a lot of times animals do find the people that are going to help them, but Julia just has like a radar for spotting them. I don't know what it is. I've gotten so many calls over the years, it's really like, "Okay, so I'm driving down the freeway," or "So I was dropping off these tests to their foster home." So that's definitely one way we've gotten animals, but we do get a lot of phone calls and people would email us. And I think even other rescues got to know that we were on the street a lot and that we were good.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That you guys were the boots on the ground, sort of taking on the mission of getting the animals that were not safe.

Julia Pennington:

I just wanted to add to that, I know jest about I sucked Allie and I. I mean, the point is, is that once you see the difference that you can make even once, you realize you can make it again. The difference is when you're driving on the freeway and you see a dog running along the freeway, the first thought is, "I can't do anything. I'm in the middle of the freeway." But as soon as you do make that stop with other people helping and their success, you can't ever drive on the freeway and see another dog and not do it. It's just this, and I want to say it's a slippery slope because it's very difficult, because you realize what you can do, but it's also incredibly joyous, obviously, because you also go, "Okay, a difference can be made." And I think that's why, I mean, it's a broader topic, but why Allie and I always say, "If everyone does a little, the problem can be solved." Because it feels like a slippery slope when you feel like you're the only one, but as we spread the word and education, the more people take action, the less heavy it feels and the more difference that can be made, if that makes sense.

Jacqueline Pinol:

It does make sense. When I see that today or when I feel it is on the days where you share a post, and then you see 10, 20, 30 people share post, 100 people. And by the next day, that dog has a safe foster and a rescue committed to it and is being pulled from the shelter vaccinated, and the whole journey has started in the animal's safe, and you think to yourself, "Wow, that happened in 24 hours, which is amazing, because hundreds of people motivated on a device. So imagine if we did that in life, taking action in our day, how much that would increase the possibilities for these homeless dogs."

Julia Pennington:

Right. The toxic thing against that is to say, "There's nothing I can do." That's the thing that we have to get past, because there is always something we can do. Maybe we can only do it with help of someone else, but we can do it.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And I love hearing that, because I think a lot of people, friends of mine, acquaintances, coworkers, sometimes have the best intentions and really good hearts and a lot of compassion, but they do feel helpless. They actually don't know what they can do or have never been in a situation where they felt empowered enough to take action. With this podcast, with the messages that you ladies leave us with today, I think it's just another avenue for people to realize like, "Oh, I can do something so small and it makes a big difference." It's just planting that seed.

Let me ask you, because for me, from where I stand, the Canine Condition is a very broad topic. There's the wonderful side of the Canine Condition, where there's thousands upon thousands of wonderful families who give dogs wonderful homes, and they have clothing and treats, and you name it. The whole nine yards, right? And then there's the part that dedicates itself to rescue because we have so many homeless dogs. And it seems to have three prongs, for lack of a better term, and thinking of prong collars. We have the overpopulation of homeless and shelter dogs. We have a lot of neglect, which is sometimes possibly due to lack of resources or education for many of the pet owners, or remote areas that don't have access where home owners have pets. And then there's the abuse of dogs at the hands of humans who have no business having animals.

I have seen A Dog's Life Rescue tackle all three of these, sometimes two at once. You know what I mean? So give me some examples of some of the programs that you have found success with and that you wish could either grow or spread across the country because you think it would help curb this problem.

Allison Lange:

Julia and I, we do believe in education, and every chapter in the communities is a big part of curbing the overpopulation problem, and just helping teach compassionate and understanding of responsible pet ownership. Before we started our program with the Boys & Girls Club, we had gone to a couple of classrooms over the years to talk with students. And we also had kid volunteers. We would have, after a certain age, I think it was like 13 was our cutoff, we would have kids come to our adoption events and volunteer.

We could really see their thirst for wanting to learn about animals and wanting to help and be around. And we just felt like, I mean, this was an avenue that could really help to teach the next generation of why there is a problem that there is with the shelter systems, why there is so many animals that are out that don't have homes, and what they can do, and we as a society can do to help stop that. And that's kind of what led to our program with the Boys & Girls club.

And it was to work with these kids that are there already after school and teach them about, having them around animals, and I think because that's a big thing. Some kids might be fearful of dogs because their only experience with dogs is from behind a fence, or maybe they had a bad experience with a dog or cat, or because they might see cats that are ... It might hiss at them in the street and they just don't understand why they are doing that. So it was about educating them about animal behavior, why they behave the way they do, why they might react the way they do, and how you should approach them, how you should be around them.

And also the responsibility when you take on an animal into your family, it's part of your family. And it's not something that ... It's not like a shirt that's like, "Oh, if it doesn't fit after a while, you just discard it." And the ways to work with those animals in your household to make them a part of the family, instead of just something that's in your yard that you bring out food to, then that dog or cat is not going to also be able to properly be integrated into the family to where there's bonding. It was like we worked through so many different steps with the Boys & Girls Club, including the importance of spay and neuter, which Julia should talk about, because that to us is really the answer to the overpopulation problem.

Jacqueline Pinol:

The basis of everything.

Julia Pennington:

I love the idea about the three-prong issue, because I hadn't thought about that. But in talking about the Boys & Girls Club, what Allie is talking about with the children, I feel like Allie, we were really successful in all three areas of this because, one, we sat down some guidelines. First of all, we made sure that we weren't talking at the kids. We would say we can't speak more than two minutes because we needed to get them active.

And so for us, we wanted to, because kids are so hungry for it, we wanted them to find the answers on their own. Everything that we taught through these programs were games that then they would discover the answers. Like, if certain foods are poisonous, we would develop a game where we would say, "To the right is not poisonous, to the left is poisonous." And we're all in the center and we say, "Chocolate," and they have to run to which side they think it is. So they have a physical experience.

And so the ones who run to the poisonous side, we say, "You're right." And then the ones who ran to the non-poisonous have to run over to the poisonous side or toxic side. We try to make it really physical so that they would come to these answers themselves as well. And what Allie was about to broach as well is these programs would be several weeks long, but they all finished in a graduation in a spay day.

So the entire program, every day, we would talk about spay and neuter. And they had flyers to go to their neighbors, to go to their family so that they could all get free spay and neuter at the end of the program. The end of the program, every time ended in graduation day where they brought their pets, or their neighbors or friends brought their pets to be spayed and neutered microchip for free, and the kids were helping run the program.

We had a tag machine there and collars and beds, so they got to experience it. If they were comfortable, they got to walk into the surgery room and to see. And some of the kids did want to see that. They actually had the experience and they experienced animals going home, and understanding when they're picking them up, what that means. And they were excited to see their owners again, and we give them carriers and beds. And so I feel like that three-prong, like that, when I talk about the collars and the carriers, that's to try and help, because some of these situations weren't good.

And Allie and I were just talking about this today, because with spay and neuter programs, a lot of times people bring animals that you know are living on a chain, are not having a good life, but we have to just stay focused on those days and say, "Okay, this dog is going home. We know she's going to live on a chain. We know she is going to have a crappy life, but we have to keep her from having more babies because that brings more suffering to her, and then it's going to bring more animals that will be on a chain." So when you bring up the topic of the three-prong, I think that really resonates with us, wouldn't you say, Allie? Because they're all in there. There's no way if you're in rescue to not experience all three of those.

Jacqueline Pinol:

They all lead into one another. What I've noticed with some of your programs too, is that it was more in the prevention so that you get all of them handled at the start.

Allison Lange:

Yeah. I mean, as they say, rescue is like taking a spoon and trying to bail out the water when there's a broken main, and you just have to stop the source, and that's education and spay or ...

Jacqueline Pinol:

And were a lot of these families willing to accept the help and were they willing to take it a step further? After spay and neuter, did you ever meet people and families who are willing to maybe accept help with microchips? And sometimes they don't even have proper collars, would they accept collars? Because I know some people don't accept the help.

They did. Everyone, I think, Allie. I think everyone who came to us at that point, because they're taking that step. Some of them had been resistant about spay and neuter, but were happy to be there. They made the decision this is the right thing to do.

Allison Lange:

And some people came to these because spay and neuter is so expensive. And a lot of the resources that we had at one point in the city or that was at least being built on to help people afford spay and neuter isn't in place right now. For them to have the opportunity or the option to get this done, they wanted to. Some of them wanted to get it done, they just couldn't afford it.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I hear that. I mean, look, spay and neuters are, today in 2021, are going from anywhere from 400, 450 to about \$750 at an average veterinary office if you're lucky to get an appointment within the next two months. When families can't put food on the table and they're living paycheck to paycheck, but they want to love and care for a pet, it's really hard for them to prioritize spay and neuter.

Julia Pennington:

And it makes no sense. I mean, I feel like our government should be paying for that, because the expense that it's causing these litters going into the shelters and the expense is so much more on our system. That if spay and neuter was covered for everyone, it would save money in the end.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Absolutely, it would. I mean, think of all the money you write that goes into these city shelters, municipal shelters and that sometimes either if it doesn't get used on euthanasia, it gets taken away. So they have to euthanize to use the funds that were set out for euthanasia instead of, "Hey, how about using those funds for free spay and neuter days at the shelter?" It's a big discussion. And do you think that could be presented in legislation? Is that a big fight, if we looked at that? And it would have to be city per city, right?

Julia Pennington:

I don't know why it doesn't happen. It does get presented.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yeah, not enough people, I guess, prioritizing it. I don't think people see the importance of it and how it affects their communities, their cities, to the point where it will even affect your neighborhood where real estate prices will go down when you're living in a city that's not safe, if it has a lot of strays or possible dog chaining or leading to other activity that is punishable by law in this city.

Julia Pennington:

Exactly. It's interesting because we have a spay and neuter law ordinance in Los Angeles.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes, talk to us about that in LA. What does it mean to have that?

Julia Pennington:

The ordinance states that all dogs and cats by the age of four months old should be spayed and neutered. There are many exceptions that people can take advantage of if they're a permitted breeder. So if someone has a permit to breed, they do not have to fix their animal. If someone has a show dog that they don't want to fix, if someone has a service animal, they can even get an exemption. There are all these exemptions.

But it was interesting, the opposition ... Judie Mancuso, led all the work and energy behind this legislation. She's just amazing, amazing human. And when she was leading this, a lot of the opposition would say, "It's too expensive. There's not enough money for spay and neuter. The government would have to put too much money in to enforce it." But when it came down to it, I have to say, when we would stand in line, especially when we were trying to do it statewide with the assembly, the other line

basically were breeders, and they would be hundreds of them. And they talked to us and they admitted that if this law is passed and they have to get a permit, they will have to pay taxes.

Jacqueline Pinol:

So they don't pay taxes?

Julia Pennington:

No. If they're not permitted, breeders don't pay taxes because they do it under the radar. So think about it, two, three litters a year, making all that money, and for them, they're like, "But it's a hobby. We shouldn't have to pay taxes."

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh my goodness, I can't believe I'm hearing this.

Julia Pennington:

That was a big thing, and we're like, "Well, wait a minute. Look at all this tax money we're missing."

Allison Lange:

And tax money we're spending.

Jacqueline Pinol:

No wonder. And where's their moral compass?

Julia Pennington:

We're spending the tax money, and then we're missing the opportunity to bring in all of this tax money. If they're going to insist on breeding, they should be paying the taxes.

Jacqueline Pinol:

It is almost like a snowball effect in the opposite direction, in the negative direction, you know?

Julia Pennington:

Yeah. They didn't want to be on the radar. So that was the big fight against that, because they didn't want to be there.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And they won?

Julia Pennington:

They won. Statewide, they won. City-wide, they did not win, but I have to say our ordinance statewide, it can work. Allie and I have covered the spay and neuter for animals where people only got them spayed and neutered because of the ordinance. So we have firsthand experience that it can work.

Jacqueline Pinol:

It can work if people think they're going to be fined. And I've had other rescue organizations on our podcast this season who have spay and neuter events in this city, in other states, and they say, "If people think they're going to get fined or be in trouble with the law, they'd rather get the dog or cat spayed and neutered."

Julia Pennington:

Right. And once they do that, the fine goes away. And there are services. There are services, and there's more and more growing all the time. But in our city, in Los Angeles, the general manager who recently retired from LA Animal Services was a former breeder and an AKC judge. And when she was brought in, she made it very clear that she was opposed to this ordinance. And I personally noticed that the very first week when she was put into her job, I don't know if you remember, Jackie, but on the back of the animal control trucks that used to be all about spay and neuter, and we used to have posters all over the city, first week taken down. The point is there's no enforcement. Because if the person running animal control is against an ordinance, they're never going to enforce it.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And who is in charge of giving that person their position or-

Julia Pennington:

The mayor.

Jacqueline Pinol:

... Which mayor was it? Hey, and we're calling it out here on these podcasts. We are not holding back.

Julia Pennington:

Garcetti. And there are-

Allison Lange:

He's the mayor.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Wow.

Julia Pennington:

... Yeah. And there are large organizations that I won't name right now, but they're very large, and they are very influential in Los Angeles, and they helped put her into that position because they also oppose. And this one organization actually fought the statewide spay and neuter bill and opposed it.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Unbelievable. Sometimes you want to throw your hands up and be like, "You know what? Fine, I surrender," but we can't.

Julia Pennington:

We can't.

Jacqueline Pinol:

But we can't.

Allison Lange:

We can't.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Because I honestly believe there are more people, more of us on this side of the conversation, even my listeners, who backup spay and neuter and rescue and no breeding. It's just that on this side, there's more people that don't have the tools or maybe are a little bit hesitant and afraid of not knowing how to make a difference. Whereas on the other side, and I like to call them the bad guys, if you don't mind, they're ready. They're up in arms and they are ready to be louder, but there aren't more of them.

Julia Pennington:

That's the thing, it's so complicated. And we really want to support spay and neuter, and there are forces that are against it. And some of those forces just want to keep making money off of breeding and other things. And Allie and I, in rescue did notice a couple of years ago that when we switched our focus to spay and neuter, it was more difficult to raise funds, way more difficult than raising funds when the dog is hit by a car or a dog needs sutures or an eye taken out or wheelchair, because it didn't feel as adrenaline rush to say, "Oh, we need-

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right. People react to the sudden emergency, and they don't feel like the spay and neuter is an emergency. They don't see how it is an emergency.

Allison Lange:

And they can see they're like, "Oh, if I give \$500 to this dog, got it surgery, I can see it before and after. I can see how I helped right away, right in front of me."

Julia Pennington:

And I understand that. It makes sense. We all do it in different areas. What affects us immediately viscerally and that empathy, then spay and neuter is this preventative side that you kind of have to think ahead about it. And so Allie and I did, we started brainstorming, we were like, "We have to figure out," because it made sense to us. It didn't make us angry, it didn't ... It just made sense. So we were like, "How do we get around this? And how do we raise funds for spay and neuter in a different way?"

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right? Because A Dog's Life Rescue stopped becoming about you girls going out on the field and saving one dog at a time, or fostering and adopting out one dog at a time, you were trying to take on, like you said, the problem at the start, which is the spay and neuter, but it was this bigger animal, right?

Julia Pennington:

Yes.

Jacqueline Pinol:

So this is when the rescue later, years later is into just kind of coming up with ways to fund that, is that where you're at?

Julia Pennington:

Exactly.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Okay.

Julia Pennington:

And so then we started and we brainstormed, and you know what we, if you want to.

Jacqueline Pinol:

You did tell our listeners the big yummy surprise that came about from this mission and how wonderful it's going.

Julia Pennington:

Well, let's just say the word. Vodka

Jacqueline Pinol:

That's right.

Julia Pennington:

Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And you guys came up with Hera The Dog Vodka, and I want to hear all about it. How did A Dog's Life Rescue transition into making this wonderful product? The proceeds of the sale of each bottle, part of those proceeds go toward helping spay and neuter animals in the city where the bottle was purchased. Is that correct?

Julia Pennington:

Exactly. It's very important to us that the proceeds that we donate from each bottle sold go back to the local community. The proceeds donated from bottles sold in Los Angeles come back to Los Angeles, San Diego, San Diego. We're about to enter Nevada. It'll be Vegas goes back to Vegas, et cetera. But Allie, do you want to take it to how Hera was born?

Allison Lange:

We had been trying to come up with different scenarios and ideas to raise funds and nothing fit. There was some kind of some crazy ideas, but nothing.

Jacqueline Pinol:

What about even with social media? You ladies found out it was still really hard to advocate just having fundraisers to raise money for mobile spay and neuter days and things like that.

Allison Lange:

Yeah. I mean, it was because ... I mean, because we weren't bringing in the animals we were. I mean, in social media, when we were on the street rescuing, it wasn't a thing really. I think Facebook was around somewhat, but it wasn't this monster that it is now, like right now, that this piece that people can like really see, and you can be in front of thousands and thousands of people and they can know of your rescue. That just wasn't a thing.

When we didn't have different animals everyday that we were rescuing, I mean, we did have phases that we were spaying and neutering, but it just didn't have the same effect of bringing in funds. Yeah, we were thinking of all these ideas, and then one day I came over to Julia's house and she was nervous to tell me this idea, which made me nervous, of course. She's like, "Okay, I have this idea."

Julia Pennington:

Because it has to work. She has to say yes, so I was so nervous.

Allison Lange:

Because she's like, "This is such a good idea." She's like, "I was talking to my brother, John, he's in Nashville," and she was telling him about how we were trying to come up with an idea to do this, like what we were doing. And it turns out, and I had known about this, but I didn't think about it either, her family has a distillery in Nashville, so John was just like, "Well, why don't you try vodka?" And it makes so much sense. So when she told me that, I also was like, "Oh yeah, that makes total sense." But neither one of us thought about it.

Julia Pennington:

I don't think it was, "Oh, it makes total sense," I think we were like, "Holy."

Allison Lange:

Holy beep. Holy beep, beep.

Julia Pennington:

Holy beep, beep, beep, beep.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Holy beep.

Allison Lange:

Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

So Hera The Dog Vodka was born in Nashville.

Allison Lange:

She's made in Nashville.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, nice.

Allison Lange:

In her family's distillery in Nashville, Pennington Distilling Company.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I love that, Julia. Did you know already? Were you involved in any part of that business just on the side, as a hobby, or it really was an idea born that fed into this mission of, "This is how we can help fund spay and neuter and dog rescue."?

Julia Pennington:

Yes. We knew nothing about the alcoholic industry. Nothing. And I'm really stressing that, because anyone listening, I feel like we're in a good place with it, and I feel proud of what we're doing in an industry where we knew nothing other than having cocktails. That was like the extent of our experience. But we took our time.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right After a long day of dog rescue you're like, "Where can we go drink?" You know?

Julia Pennington:

Yes. Yes, exactly. But we took our time, and that was important. We set a timeline knowing we'd take a year and a half, two years for research and development and education. Allie and I went to the Small Business Association, took classes. We just dug in to learn as much as possible without putting the pressure of having to do it fast, which I think was really important.

Allison Lange:

And also we had delays. We had delays of things that ... I mean, normally, we gotten nervous about that because we had those delays. And just like figuring out the processes of stuff, in those delays, things were worked out that bettered our company in the long run. So they just told us like, "Okay, we really need to take our time with all of this, and what's supposed to happen is going to happen." And it did. We have a non-profit branch to our company because we were in a meeting with a restaurant owner and he's like, "Well, I want to ... If you guys are giving money and you're in my restaurant and bar, I also want to contribute, but I would like a write off for that." So we were like, "Oh, yeah, sure. We can make that happen."

So because we had enough time, we were just like, "Yes, yes, of course, of course, you can have a write off." We then founded the non-profit branch to our company, because it all made sense when he said that. We were like, "Oh yes, of course." Everyone is going to want to join and get involved with helping, we just needed to give them another option and way to do it.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Okay. So besides the sale of bottle, say, just people like myself, I can buy a bottle and give it as a gift. If I go to a restaurant and that restaurant has Hera The Dog Vodka available in one of my cocktails, so there's benefit there too for dogs when people order at restaurants?

Julia Pennington:

Some restaurants jump on board and do an extra donation. Like Sage Vegan Bistro, they have a wonderful cocktail called the Ginger Lemon Drop, and Hera The Dog Vodka is in it. And every time someone orders it, they donate a dollar to go to wildlife rehab. What they do is, at the end of every month, they look in their computer and they say, "Oh, we sold this many Ginger Lemon Drops." They send a check to our foundation. And then we add the \$3 a bottle, which is what we're doing right now, is 16% of our sales. We add that and then we put that towards wildlife rehabilitation.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh my goodness, that's really cool. Okay.

Julia Pennington:

It's fun.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And do people know when they're ordering? Because I would opt to ... I'd be like, "I'll order this one over that one, if it's going to help animals." Do you know what I mean?

Julia Pennington:

Absolutely.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Is that something that those restaurants put on their menu and let people know about?

Julia Pennington:

They do. They do. The Pikey was another one who did that. And then there's different ways. Like Jones Hollywood asked us ... They don't have that specifically on their menu, but they do have Hera on their menu, so their volume is great for us. And they asked us to hold, so the \$3 a bottle, we hold that until there's enough money where we can do a spay day with all their employees.

So each restaurant or bar can sort of tailor it to how they want to use it. Or if there's a rescue, they really love. We're going to be in Salazar, for example, and he had adopted from Luxe Paws. So the money from there, we will donate to Luxe Paws Animal Rescue. So these bars or the craftsmen in Santa Monica, they are actually ... Actually, it's probably going to start in the next few weeks, have Hera on their menu. But they're also donating 80% of the proceeds from a special cocktail on their menu, because in honor of their dog Cache that they adopted from Karma Rescue. So they are having us donate to Karma Rescue in honor of their dog.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, that is really great, you guys. I mean, this is lovely, and it's just about collaborating and bringing in the voices of all these other rescues that can now also advocate for Hera The Dog Vodka, because she's the dog vodka that gives back. I mean, that's awesome.

Julia Pennington:

That's the thing. If there's rescuers listening, we do put them through a process to approve them. We want to make sure they're really thorough with their medical programs and placements. But if there is a rescue in California that's interested, and they have a bar or a restaurant that they already work with, what we do is say, "Just let us know," and then we'll go to that bar or restaurant. And if they end up picking Hera, we can earmark it for that rescue.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yeah, that sounds lovely. I love the idea because it's really expanded from the time that I first heard that you girls were coming out with this lovely bottle of Hera. So where can our listeners find and follow Hera The Dog Vodka and also A Dog's Life Rescue?

Allison Lange:

You can find Hera, we're actually on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @HeraTheDogVodka. And for A Dog's Life Rescue, we're on those three as well @adogsliferescue. We are very active. Julia and I do work really hard on our social media to just keep it fun, but also show so people can really see the rescues that we're supporting and working with. And the rescues have been ... And wonderful influencers and people have really gotten on board and taking some really fun pictures.

And Julia and I, we joke that we're not mixologists, we're not bartenders, we come from the rescue world. We've been so thankful and fortunate to have these people that really know what they're doing and making some delicious cocktails come on board and help us out with, even with the cocktail kits that we're doing now, and just like cocktails, fun cocktails for our page.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I've seen some of those pictures. So you guys, besides just having the bottles available for sale, and I know I've bought a couple at a liquor store in my neighborhood, which is wonderful that I could just walk in there and get it because I'd given away as gifts. And people love, by the way, I will tell you, the friends that I've given it to, they love to know that they're getting a bottle of vodka that went to help dogs in need. And I always make sure they know, and it's a big deal. It's a wonderful conversation piece. It's like a feel good. You almost enjoy the drink more because it's for a good cause. You know what I mean?

Julia Pennington:

Because it's filled with love. Yes.

Allison Lange:

It's filled with love.

Julia Pennington:

And it's organic, and it's a really good vodka.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I love it. I love it. And I will have those live links in the show notes for our listeners to scroll down and access with a quick click so you can see Hera The Dog Vodka's page and also A Dog's Life Rescue and everything that the ladies have going on with the rescue. Tell us some of the things that you are planning for A Dog's Life Rescue as you marry the two.

Allison Lange:

Actually, A Dog's Life is still our separate entity from Hera. Our company for Hera is Animal Spirits, and the foundation attached that gives the grants is Animal Spirits Foundation.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, that's so cute. I didn't know that. Animal Spirits, that's perfect.

Allison Lange:

Yeah, we love the little play on words. The foundation, actually, everything raised for Hera via the restaurants and also our company goes to the Animal Spirit Foundation. And from the foundation, we give the grants out from there. So nothing is actually through A Dog's Life, we keep that separate.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And you still remain active with A Dog's Life Rescue? Is that a foundation, an organization that people can still support and follow on social media?

Allison Lange:

Yes. A Dog's Life, we still have lots of feral cat colonies, and we still do, we still sponsor medical care for people in the community in spay and neuter days. Still, Julia and I run both, but the grants for the other rescues, all of that goes through the Animal Spirits Foundation.

Julia Pennington:

I guess you could say we run a non-profit rescue, a foundation and a vodka company.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I don't know how you do it-

Julia Pennington:

It's so much fun.

Jacqueline Pinol:

... but I love it.

Julia Pennington:

Check in again in six months and then another six months, but right now it's like-

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right. A day at a time.

Allison Lange:

But we're excited that things that are getting picked up again and that we could start seeing people. And some of the amazing people that have helped us even launch and get through this our first year, and then we can start going back and supporting them now. That means a lot to us. We're excited to start seeing some of the people in the locations and-

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes, it's so nice to finally be reopening after the year we had and 2020. So right now people can have Hera The Dog Vodka if they purchase it in California and soon Nevada. Do you think that you will keep going so that we can have it in other states?

Julia Pennington:

You can have it shipped. If you go on our website, Herathedogvodka.com, there's a list where to buy. And you can see there are some that you can buy online and have it shipped, not to every state, but that's because a few states have their own laws and they won't let you bring it in. But we absolutely tend to grow. At the bottom of our bottle on the label it says, "To help animals around the world," because we plan to just keep going. She is the protector and she has to protect until we don't need to protect anymore.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That is very beautiful. Thank you for sharing that message. And our listeners should know that I am not getting paid to advocate for any one person or organization on this podcast. I choose to interview guests from organizations that I know are doing the good work for dogs and for people across America. A Dog's Life Rescue and Hera The Dog Vodka have the Canine Condition seal of approval from me. Ladies, this is the last episode of the first season of The Canine Condition Podcast, and I'm so happy that it was the two of you who get to be here with me. I can't thank you enough for taking the time to have this conversation with me. Especially Allie, I know you have a young daughter, and as a mom, I can relate. It's just crazy, crazy, crazy on top of you ladies running basically three foundations.

Julia Pennington:

We're so honored. And congratulations on your season.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Thank you. It's been so eye-opening, heartwarming, moving, lots of tears, lots of joy and excitement, but I will tell you and all of my listeners that all the 25 episodes, there have been people on here who are on the same page and we are multiplying daily. So when we talk about all those people on the other side over at the assembly and against the laws that need to be passed, it's just that more of us need to speak up. I truly believe that the more we all advocate and share information and take action, the more we can help the Canine Condition in the United States and perhaps even abroad.

Julia Pennington:

Cheers to that.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes. I'm ready for martini, are you?

Allison Lange:

Yes. I mean, it is happy hour, right ladies?

Jacqueline Pinol:

It is. So-

Allison Lange:

[crosstalk 00:43:32] over here. I'm so sorry-

Jacqueline Pinol:

... in the-

Allison Lange:

... I was like ...

Jacqueline Pinol:

... In the spirit of spirits, can you ladies give us a mouthwatering recipe that we can all think about, dream about and hopefully get with Hera The Dog Vodka?

Julia Pennington:

Yes. Actually, Allie, can I jump in?

Allison Lange:

Yes, absolutely.

Julia Pennington:

Because I just thought about a Vegan White Russian.

Allison Lange:

Oh, that's the oat milk one.

Julia Pennington:

Exactly. Super easy. Super easy. Equal parts. Hera The Dog Vodka, oat milk, Kahlúa, or if you don't want to do a Kahlúa, you can just do some cold press coffee.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, that sounds so good.

Julia Pennington:

And shake it up.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Usually Kahlúa and cream is one of my favorite drinks, but now I can do this. And what is it called?

Julia Pennington:

It's a Vegan White Russian.

Jacqueline Pinol:

There you have it. To my listeners, don't miss out. Get yourself a bottle of Hera The Dog Vodka and enjoy a Vegan White Russian for a good cause. Thank you so much, ladies. Thank you, Allison. And thank you, Julia, for joining me and sharing your message on this episode of The Canine Condition Podcast.

Allison Lange:

Thank you for having us, Jackie. It's always good seeing you and catching up. And for everything that you do for the animals, we love what you do. And of course we want everyone to go and cheers with the Hera The Dog cocktail after this.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Thank you so much. Bye everyone. Thank you.

Julia Pennington:

Bye.

Jacqueline Pinol:

As you can see, there are so many ways to save human's best friend, our canine companions. As Julia and Allison like to say, "Social life doing social good," and I couldn't agree more. I hope we have inspired you to find ways that help you give back to your community, because only when each of us takes action in any way we can, will we see true and lasting change happen. Thank you for joining me for this episode. This is the end of season one of The Canine Condition Podcast, where we have touched upon themes like Thinking Outside The Box, Not Judging A Book By Its Cover, Being The Change You Want To See.

I know there is at least one organization or individual on my podcast this season who will inspire you in ways you might not expect. I leave you with this quote by Maya Angelou. "Because of the routines we follow, we often forget that life is an ongoing adventure." So to the go-getter and adventure in you, here's a toast for a good cause with Hera The Dog Vodka. Cheers. Until next season, hang on to those leashes. The Canine Condition, come, sit, stay.