

**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 the dog in need, this is also a place for you.

This is an episode about a very special breed to many, many people, and also a breed that is mistreated and wrongfully judged by many, many people. Because I believe that these canine beings are born inherently good, and that the human species is responsible for the journey each one of these souls has on this earth. I hope you will welcome the information and stories shared by my guest on the podcast today. She has over a decade of experience spending time with this breed while witnessing the human transformations that occur when people are paired with and bonded to their loyal and loving bulldog breed dogs. It is my pleasure to welcome Becky Holly from Fresno Bully Rescue. Becky is a board member and the events and public relations coordinator for this non-profit dog rescue organization based in California. Fresno Bully Rescue makes it their mission to safely adopt out dogs and offer support to their community and adopters by keeping lines of communication open and offering support with family pets, wherever it's needed.

Hi, Becky, welcome to the Canine Condition Podcast.

**Becky Holly:**

Oh. Thank you so much for having me.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

I am so happy that I am going to get to talk to you about the bully breed rescue today. So as a bully breed specific rescue, break it down for us in terms of what dogs fall under the specific breed type and why people should not take that word bully at face value?

**Becky Holly:**

Bully Breeds are basically just anything that comes from a bulldog background. So we have American Pit bull Terriers, which have some bulldog in them. We have American Bulldogs, English Bulldogs. We'll take in some Boxer mixes, some Mastiff mixes, basically those large power breeds with the square jaw and the strong body. That's what we'll take in. It's kind of funny when I wear my t-shirt or we go to things a lot of people think that we're talking about bullies as far as children. And I'm like, I'm all for that too. I'm all for that too. But this is bully breeds.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

So don't bully my breed. I've seen that.

**Becky Holly:**

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. Yeah.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Okay. And do you have a pit bull type or a bully breed dog of your own? And if so, what drew you to this wonderful breed?

**Becky Holly:**

Oh yes. I have two at home now I have Cooper who is 11 years old and I have Jack who's three. And they get along quite well. They're both awesome dogs. What drew me to the breed was I had friends that had some and I really didn't pay attention. And then I kind of was a little fearful of them even though I grew up with large breeds, a little bit fearful just because of what I heard in the media and on TV. And it was always the worst. And then one of my friends called me and a dog was injured outside of the dentist office that she works at. And she asked me to come because no one would come pick up the dog and take him to go get medical treatment because he was a pit bull. And I thought that is terrible. He needs help.

So I went over there, I got him, I made a makeshift muzzle, because I was still a little concerned, a makeshift muzzle, out of gloves. I put him in my truck and he immediately laid his head on my lap and took the muzzle off and rode all the way to the vet like that.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh my gosh.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. I ended up keeping him naming him Doc, cause I got him at the doctor's office. And my veterinarian when I got there, there was some serious damage about an inch and a half groove in his neck, either from a collar that had been embedded or the vet thought maybe more so he had been on a chain or something and either trying to get away from something or pulling and barking at something or being agitated to where that chain just dug in constantly.

We didn't do stitches because of infection, but it was debridements every day. It was me scrubbing this open, huge wound on this poor dog every day and he never cared. And my vet said, you know what? I asked him, do you need to muzzle him for what we're doing? And he said, no. I don't muzzle these types of dogs because they're wonderful. They're resilient. They're so human friendly that I don't worry about it. And they rarely bite me or react. So that got me really interested. At the time I had five other dogs. I put him with my five other dogs and he got along famously.

And the only thing I would say about his personality that was maybe detrimental but not really was my friends kids would come over and swim. He could care less if adults were in the pool and were swimming, but when children were there, he was so protective. He wanted them out of the pool. So he would grab them by the ponytail, by the suit. He needed them out of that pool. He was so worried about them.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

He actually meant well.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. Exactly. So, and I've come to learn that about the breed that when it comes to children they're amazing.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

They are amazing. I have, well, as you know, I don't know if you've seen my posts, but I have five-

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. Yes.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Mixes and you're talking to a girl who grew up here afraid dogs. I wouldn't get near one well till after college because I just I was bit by a German shepherd as a kid. So and this is part of my journey in this documentary that you will know we have been working on for a few years is that I really believe in change and transformation and kind of being enlightened by something. And that's why I advocate for this breed so much now because they really turned my world around. It's amazing.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. That's amazing. You wouldn't believe the amount of people that come out to our rescue that are either just super curious, but fearful and they come out to kind of face their fears. So I tell anybody if you have a fear or the unknowns about this breed, the best thing you can do is go to somewhere with responsible handlers and good dogs and go get around some, and you'll realize that all of the negative hype is just... It's not the truth. So you really get to learn and the dogs are the best way for people to learn about their true nature. They show it every day.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

It's the terrible cases, the accidents that make the news, but there are accidents with every breed. It's just that every breed doesn't make the news.

**Becky Holly:**

That's right. News is sensational by nature. They need viewers and it's tragic, no matter what breed they're supposed to be just start loving companions and part of our families. And for the most part they are. But sometimes circumstances happen. We've had some, it was a few years back, a friend of mine had called the police department because two huskies had gotten loose and attacked her and her dog pretty badly. Same day a pit bull got loose in the same neighborhood and didn't do anything and they had him on the news because he was loose in the neighborhood and people were frightened. It was incredible. I'm like here we have an actual attack, which brings no concern and then we have just a dog running loose. And that was the story for the day. It was really incredible to put. I had never had those two things happen at the very same time or the very same day before, and really watch how that developed.

But they're interesting. Just like any, let's say, "dangerous animals," interesting people are fascinated by sharks, but they're also fearful of them. So if you can mix that fascination with some real experience, then you kind of change minds. People really do have to experience it. There's no other way. So I think that's why we are so big on adopting animals out into the community that we feel responsible for. So we want good socialized temperament. We want good temperament dogs to go out into the community. Number one, we are responsible for what we put out in the community. You had to keep people safe. But number two, we want all of the dogs that we adopt out to be advocates so that when people do see them at the park or walking or in the neighborhood, they show the best of what this breed is and which is friendly-

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And loyal, and dedicated and social.

**Becky Holly:**

I've never had a more loyal dog. I've owned so many breeds in my lifetime, and I have never had a more loyal dog that just wants to be around you constantly. And unfortunately for this breed, a lot of people who aren't responsible in a lot of areas of their life are drawn to them. So you have some irresponsible ownership all the way around. So I try really hard to advocate for responsible and I mean over the top responsible ownership of this breed because should something happen that may happen with the regular dogs and regular breed, it's heightened 10 times when it comes to this breed.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Yeah, I agree. And I've seen it. And I came across my dog 10 years ago. She's almost 11 and she was a full grown gray dane pittie mix. But you could really see she's a pittie, gray and white. I had never been around a dog like her, but there was something in her eyes and her demeanor. I wasn't afraid for one second, Becky.

**Becky Holly:**

That was amazing.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And I've never gotten that close to that dog, but she was on the streets. She walked into a party and she was no one's dog. And there I was knocking on doors in the neighborhood trying to find her owner. We never did. We posted signs. We took her to the shelter. We had scanned at a local vet clinic for microchip, nothing and long story short, after many, many tries at trying to find her owner, even though she was skinny, she was not spayed. So we could tell, hey, this isn't... She was probably a backyard dog. This isn't a well-taken care of animal inside a family home. We ended up fostering for a rescue. And of course, foster failing.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. Yes.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And it is the best foster fail in my entire life.

**Becky Holly:**

Fostered is so important. And you know what? I don't think people really understand that there's so many ways that you can give back that aren't monetary. You can foster and that's one of the best ways to decide whether a dog fits with your home and your lifestyle. If they don't then you can wish them well when they're adopted by another family that does. And if they do fit, you can be a foster fail like you did.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Exactly. And you can be a temporary foster when we offered to foster for the rescue, even though they were helping us get her out of the shelter because we were really advocating for her. We said, can we do it for two weeks? We'd never done it before with a large breed dog, we had our two pugs at home and they said, sure, let's try it for two weeks and see how it goes. Well, two weeks turned into four and then she was ours. So there you have it.

**Becky Holly:**

Yup. Familiar story that I love to hear.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And since the rescue is located in Fresno, can you tell us what the layout of the land is like there? More rural or metropolitan or a mix. This for people who may not be familiar with that part of California.

**Becky Holly:**

Sure Fresno County. We're actually in Fresno County and it's a huge county in the central part of California inland. So it's basically agriculture. Tons of small farming towns. Fresno is a very large city itself though with about 550,000 people it rivals Sacramento. If people know where that is. So Fresno is a pretty large city, but it's still kind of spread out. Fresno County is huge. There is about a million people that live in Fresno County alone. And Fresno County is about 6,000 square miles. And it's everywhere from the mountains, the Sequoia and the Sierra National Forest, all the way to the foothills going to the Central coast of California. It's a huge county. But it's basically, it's a huge mix.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Okay. So you have a little bit of both worlds and where do all these wonderful dogs that the rescue posts for adoption come from?

**Becky Holly:**

The majority of our dogs come from municipal shelters in our area. We actually pull dogs from shelters all over California. But we really do try to concentrate where we are. We've made some great relationships with different municipal shelters. Our local Fresno County shelter is one of our best partners, but we'll take dogs from up and down the state. We do take some owner surrenders depending on the circumstance. Our primary focus is on dogs that will be euthanized for space or for no other reason. And they're not adopted yet. And there's nowhere for them to go or they've got a medical condition that makes them unadoptable a municipal shelter.

So we really want to take from those high kill shelters first, but owners need help too. So we will take in owner surrenders and we will take in even animals from the community as long as the person that finds the animal has done their due diligence and try to find the owner and put in reports at our local animal control and other shelters have really done their homework to make sure that this dog is not owned because we're in the business of taking care of animals that are either not owned or have nowhere to go. And if they have a family, we definitely our first thing is to get them back there.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Are the shelters in your area, always full? Is it something where they reach out to you because they're saying Fresno Bully Rescue help us we're full. We don't want to euthanize, can you come take a look at the dogs?

**Becky Holly:**

Oh yes. There are times when we get hundreds of requests per day.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh my gosh. Really?

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. We have, I think one or two-day period, we had 350 requests and these are good dogs. We're not talking serious behavioral issue. We're just talking there's too many. And in our area, it's unlike Northern California which it has a little bit better track record at spay and neuter and little less concentrated in their shelters, but ours, unfortunately just, I think due to the area due to lack of holding facilities and shelters and education in our area, we're kind of behind the rest of California. I'm trying to help with that, but yes, every single one of our shelters is absolutely jam-packed. Even though we'll send animals North.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

What kind of support do you think is needed?

**Becky Holly:**

Education and assistance. Education is huge. We're dealing with definitely long-term lack of education. Long-term. There's cultural barriers, there's language barriers. And we do have large populations of agricultural workers. So we do have a lot of migrant workers and we do have more so than the more metropolitan areas like Los Angeles or San Francisco. We have our lower income base and that's nothing to say that they're irresponsible, but when you're trying to feed your children and clothe yourself and get gas to even go to work that day, spaying and neutering your animal is really at the bottom of the list as it should be.

So I think what we're really needing in this area is education mixed with assistance. And just basically take all those excuses away. We really need spay and neuter to be either free or very low costs, which we're working on and education to go with it because education alone doesn't help if someone can't afford it and then free doesn't help if someone doesn't know how to do it, or they can't get transportation there. We really need all those just basic assistance for people to where, like I said, we take away every excuse. And I've seen it work. We have our local Fresno County animal control agency is now run a group of people that came together out of the rescue community to say, you know what? We're sick of complaining about it. We're sick of just trying to lobby our local politicians and government and seeing nothing done. So they brave people just went out and said, look at, we'll do it ourselves.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Awesome.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. They have gone down Fresno County, Fresno cities. You still got around 60% euthanasia rate, which is insane.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Gosh, that's a lot.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah, it's insane. But the county before it's called Fresno Humane and before Fresno Humane Animal Services took over, we had 65 to 70% kill rate in the county. Absolutely insane to think about that in these days and times, but they have actually made it to be no kill status.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Wow. And that was simply because of space, just lack of space or lack of resources to maintain that many dogs?

**Becky Holly:**

Yep. Lack of resources, lack of actual will to get them to other rescues, to get them actually out of this area or to make it a community effort. So Fresno Humane, which we love working with them at Fresno Bully Rescue, they make it a community effort. If you have no community buy-in, then you're just going to get the same thing over and over again, it doesn't matter what you say, preaching doesn't work. There's always going to be those people that you can't or they won't listen and you can't reach. But the community as a whole, we have a lot of animal lovers here. They're waiting for someone to take that laboring or, and tell them what to do, ask them for the help and let them know how they can do it. I mean, it's a community problem. Dogs Aren't just living stray down by the river and strolling into town once in a while. Those dogs were owned by someone in the community and someone in your own neighborhood.

So if you want to be part of the solution, we need some community buy-in, we need community people to maybe you found a dog instead of the shelter, like we've always done our city pound, I would say, is more of a pound still lack of education. Still just drop off the dog and we'll euthanize it.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh my goodness.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. So what we're trying to do in the county is just make it a lot more progressive to where if you find a dog, we're going to ask you the questions. We're going to ask you can you keep it for a week until we maybe find the owner. If you have a litter of kittens, can we spay a to them for you? Can we give them shots for you? Can we give them parasite control for you? How can we help you keep these animals in your community, but keep everyone safe and keep the animals from overpopulating because we have a huge crisis here. The overpopulation problem is insane between the city and the county. It's less now because of the county but euthanized on average 30,000 animals a year.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh my. And just in that county?

**Becky Holly:**

Yep. And just basically city animals right now.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

For no reason, other than like you said, just too many and not enough homes can be responsible with them.

**Becky Holly:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. And you have to look at it this way too. And when we speak with government officials, we don't... I would say in California, we're doing pretty well, but in a lot of places, and especially here, we don't have a big lobby. So in order to get government resources or just community resources, it's a fight. It's a struggle. And that's understandable when you're talking to government officials and their focus is on voters, they're focused, those are humans. Right? So we need a larger lobby. We need people who really care about animals to get a little more involved. It's hard a lot of people in rescue, that's their passion and it's hard and it's heartbreaking, but we could use a lot more people just behind us.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Right. It's hard to accept that those of us who advocate always feel like we need and we need more and we need more people. And yet there are so many people behind this great cause. And we're still not enough.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. Exactly. Exactly. I don't know if we just need to be more vocal or if we just need to start... I mean, that's one thing that I do when I speak with local politicians or local leaders, it's spaying and neutering, lowering the population. It's not just to help all the animals. It's a health and human services issue.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Absolutely. It is.

**Becky Holly:**

We're all agreeing, stray dogs running around can bite. They can chase children, nothing good comes from that. And they can spread diseases. We don't have a huge rabies problem here, but we have others. So it's not just an animal problem. It's not just, oh, I love fuzzy, beautiful animals. I love animals. It's if you want your streets safe, you want your kids to be able to walk home from school and be safe. Then you can't have a population of stray animals running loose.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And Fresno Bully Rescue has a facility in addition to foster homes. So you're at least able to take larger numbers of dogs. I know, and for our listeners who don't know I was able to visit Becky at the previous facility for Fresno Bully Rescue. And you gave me a tour of the place. I met some wonderful dogs, but I haven't been to the new facility. So give us a little breakdown on how it works in 2021 for the dogs at the new facility and those in foster homes.

**Becky Holly:**

Oh, it's been amazing. We worked hard scrimped and saved and really just worked super hard. And we now have a brand new facility when you visited us. We had pretty much five by 10 kennels in a back parking lot of a home. We had one play yard. So now we have a three acre beautiful facility. That's park-like.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Almost three acres.



**Becky Holly:**

Yes. So we now have five play yards. And we house pretty much around the same number of dogs. We house around 40 dogs at any given time. And people ask, well, why didn't you put in more kennels? Why didn't you do more? Well, we want to be more of an adoption facility where it's short stays. We don't want dogs to live with us forever. We want them to get homes. So being able to spend more time with them either socializing, taking care of medical cases that really need care. If we take into many, I can't properly commit to the ones I've already promised. So we made a decision to still keep it small because no matter how many wonderful volunteers we have, and we have a lot, it takes a lot to make sure that 40 dogs are properly exercised every single day .

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And fed. And kept up with medical.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes, every day. So it takes a lot just to do those 40. So we'd rather focus on getting their needs met truly assessing them temperament wise and finding the perfect home for them more quickly. And being able to have more turnover rather than just housing dogs for a longer length of time. And it's been working so well and we have to make some tough decisions sometimes on temperaments of certain dogs, to where we can't fully commit to one that's going to take a year's worth of training and socialization just to maybe even be safe.

So the one that's sitting there that has a perfect temperament and is lovable is no less deserving. So really have to put our focus on ones that can go into a home rather quickly because that's our goal. That's difficult. Your heart and your head have to combine. And we've received some really good compliments from enforcement in our area saying we'll never have to do anything with you guys because you police yourselves. And we have a lot of rescues that don't. So it is important that you do that, the compassion part with a mix of, okay, some business sense and what are we going to do to get these animals into a safe place?

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And I respect that. I know that our heart wants to save every single one of them, but I do respect the fact that you're not going to take more dogs because then it just becomes a shelter. Then you're just becoming a shelter having a bunch of dogs lived there for a really long time in kennels or in a scenario where it's volunteers helping them out. So that's not what you are. And so I could see that you have to draw the line somewhere.

**Becky Holly:**

You do, you do. Sometimes we still take in dogs with issues. We still take in dogs that need severe medical care. In fact, we're one of the places where people call if they have one that needs some, we're talking thousands and thousands of dollars of surgery, we will commit to that more often than maybe some other. So we are extremely lucky and so grateful for a really big base of people who support us. So we're able to do those things.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

That's wonderful.

**Becky Holly:**

So that's one of those things that we've always strive to do is not overextend ourselves to where that wouldn't be possible or that animals in our care aren't receiving what they need.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Right. Especially because you've chosen to be that breed specific. And we're talking about these bulldog type dogs that need so much advocacy and protection. And like you said earlier to go out into the community and be in homes and stay safe because they have to be advocates for the breed. So you turn them over as model citizens.

**Becky Holly:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I just wouldn't feel right if I didn't provide the best veterinary care, the best nutrition, the best socialization and training that I could for each dog, because I've overextended myself. It's kind of I've committed to these dogs and they deserve my best and I want them to go into homes quickly, but I've made that commitment. And if I take into many, then my commitment to them or my ability to give them my best lessons. And I can't do that. So we've done that. And it's actually been so successful. We are seeing so many more families come. Families with children, families, with other animals. They're seeing now that it's possible to have these dogs in a family environment with other animals, with small children to take them on vacations, to take them on trips and really-

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Absolutely.

**Becky Holly:**

Really see them as individuals. And that's the big thing is everyone says, oh, pit bulls are this way or pit bulls are that way, or what is it like owning one? I'm like, it's a dog. And each of them is an individual. We cannot look at them as a breed and say, just like people, I may look a certain way. I'm a certain gender. I'm a female. A lot of the things that I think of the way I live or whatever might surprise you. So I think it's the same thing with dogs. You cannot pigeonhole them. Each of them as an individual with their own unique experiences, their own unique background, their own personality. And you really have to look at it that way.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Absolutely. And just my little pack, I can tell you, the personalities are very different and they're all amazing. But I have the wild child, I have the stubborn one. I have the one who can't get enough hugs and kisses, and it just is always in your face. So they're all just so unique. And it's wonderful to know that if people are willing to take a chance and come and meet them at Fresno Bully Rescue that you're into advocacy and education.

**Becky Holly:**

Absolutely.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And when we take our dogs places at events, either locally here in the community or we've gone to various pet expos all over California, from San Jose down to Costa Mesa and Southern California and people are just so drawn to these dogs. And it's just so amazing to see everybody come and our booth be one of the most popular.

**Becky Holly:**

Oh, I love it. Yeah, exactly, exactly. And I think they've become a popular breed and now they used to be a popular breed just for, let's say, a section of society. Like I said, that maybe has a little less than responsible and they were drawn to them because they were strong or they looked fierce or that sort of thing.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And they're loyal.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

People took advantage of the fact that this breed is very loyal-

**Becky Holly:**

Absolutely.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And very obedient if you teach it to obey certain things.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. They'll do almost anything you ask them. And that's the thing, without question, including dog fighting.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Are there are laws in your county to protect dogs from that scenario from being left outside as well or living on chains, which then leads to other scenarios that are not favorable.

**Becky Holly:**

Actually, California has some really good laws on the books. I mean, they, of course for me, don't go far enough. But we have some laws under the penal code dogs or any companion animal needs to have water, sufficient water, food, shelter, tethering in California. It can only be for a short time to a stationary object. Let's say I'm working in my yard. And I tie my dog to the tree while I'm pulling weeds. That's okay in California. Tying them to a stationary object as a means to contain them is not. It's a specific amount of time, which is I think an hour or two that they can be tethered that way. They can be on a line but chaining dogs is illegal in California definitely withholding water, food, those kinds of things is neglect. Not usually is like a misdemeanor, but if it rises to the level of no vet care and that sort of thing, then it can be felony.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Or exposed to the elements.

**Becky Holly:**

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Absolutely, absolutely. That can be a felony. In Fresno County we have... Again, Fresno Humane Animal Services has been lobbying and working so closely with the county administrators to really put some teeth in the laws and maybe make some laws that make sense. Not overly invasive or privacy concerns for people and that sort of thing they did manage to get it on the books in ordinance to where if your dog goes into the shelter because it's running loose. If it goes into the shelter, if it's not licensed, do you have the option to either license the dog or have it altered.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Before getting the dog back?

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. Before getting the dog back. Now, it's not mandatory yet to where oh, it has to be if they catch it running at large that it's altered immediately.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

I wish that was the law.

**Becky Holly:**

Me too. Me too. I think that could save a lot of problems. But that's also a lot of money for a city or county to do too.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

I know. It's not impossible.

**Becky Holly:**

No, it's not impossible. And a lot of areas in California have done it. So it's possible but we're maybe just not there yet as far as where we are, but that option. And then I think it's after three times, I think I could be wrong about that. Don't quote me, but after three times, let's say your dog is running at large even if you have it licensed county animal control shelter can alter it before returning it to you. And a lot of people don't like that idea or they don't like the idea of mandatory spay and neuter because people would just say, oh, I don't want it anymore. And leave it at the shelter. But that's kind of a price you have to pay for changing some minds.

I would rather see more like public service announcements. More the county invest in some more signage. I had one say, code enforcement sign saying, you have to spay and neuter your dog or you have to contain your dog. I'm like, those things are punitive. When we look at only punitive measures, it doesn't change any minds. It makes people set their jaw and dig in. So I'd rather just have it subliminally. If someone passes a cute sign every day with a little dog behind a fence saying, contain your animals, keep your community safe. You pass by that every day it's in your head, but it's not so aggressive. So punitive. So the government is telling you to keep your dog inside. I think it's just much better to just kind of have it out in the community, floating and have it as something that eventually people are going to consider as normal. And I'd like to see more of that.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

I wish people could see it not like the government's telling me what to do, but it's like, hey, my community wants this for all of us. So let's all do this together.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. And community events here are extremely number one, popular. And number two, you'd be amazed. So I grew up in a very small farming community in this area, town called Firebaugh and through Fresno Humane and with some help of another rescue called West Side Rescue, we set up a vaccination clinic in Firebaugh, which is heavily migrant workers and people like that. So I thought I didn't have much faith and I should've known better because I grew up in a wonderful community, but I thought, no one's going to show up. I don't think going to, we got there. And there were so many people lined up that, oh my gosh, we gave away so many tags. And I made flyers telling people where to find their dog, if it gets loose and they can't find it because a lot of people don't even know, they think they can go to the police department.

Well, they have a holding facility there. They have a shelter, but nobody knows it. So we kind of just gave out some educational materials like that. In both English and Spanish and then did the vaccinations. And while we're doing that, you really get to talk to people about their animals. It's a very low cost. We ran out of vaccinations. We had so many people.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

That's awesome.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. But at the same time, it gives you... you can't just sit back and say, I wish the community would do that. Go talk to them. We talked to so many people and we offered spay and neuter assistance with transportation. I think over 35 people signed up that day. So we spayed and neutered 35 animals from that tiny community just by talking to people, just by explaining to them what the procedure is and making it affordable, making it easy. We did the transportation, we took your dog, you got it back the very next morning spayed. And it was so good for me to see that. But you have to realize, like I said, if you want community buy-in, you have to provide a service. So the vaccination was the kind of the carrot.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And invitation. Yes.

**Becky Holly:**

Exactly. It was the assistance that people needed. And then you just open up a larger conversation. So I really love community events like that. And I think they're so important.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And I love that you also said you provided material in Spanish. I know that for the Spanish speaking community and myself being a Latina, having grown up with parents who came from Colombia and Guatemala and grandparents who did not learn English and lived in those countries, it's really important to show them how we do things here. My grandparents from Guatemala never came to the United States, but my dad having come from that background dogs were raised differently and treated differently or they belong to the streets or they belonged in the backyard or on the terrace. So here it's different. And I just love that providing the literature and the education in Spanish, people want that. My

community I've seen my Latino community be interested in learning new ways to do things, but not if they feel threatened or if they feel belittled or embarrassed. It's nice how you're saying that it's inviting them.

**Becky Holly:**

There's no reason for talking down to people. Like I said, I grew up in an area that was pretty much 95% Hispanic. But I consider myself fortunate. And my parents really strived to have us get that culture ingrained in us as we were growing up. And it was something that was amazing for me, but it also helps when I go out to things.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Because it's a beautiful culture and it's fun. And it has just so much richness. And I love that. Hopefully the American culture can teach the Latino culture how things are here in the United States for dogs. I've taught my parents a lot. My parents did not grow up being animal lovers or dog owners, but they both have dogs now and they love their dogs. I mean, the first thing they have to put in places if I leave or if I'm going to go do something what's going to happen with... Hani, is my dad dog, my dad's dog, and also is my mom's dog. And it's really neat to see that change.

**Becky Holly:**

It is. And people think that we haven't come that far. Let's say in rescue, we were constantly feel like we're beating our head against the wall. And then I have to go back to my own history. I'll date myself. I grew up in the 1970s and my parents, one thing we always did, which may have been different from some people was my mother would put you in the car and we'd go into actually the city of Fresno and go to the SPCA there and adopt animals.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh, wow.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. So we had a lot of animals. As children, we were allowed to have whatever we wanted as long as we cared for them. So my sister and I, we had everything you can think of. I mean, we had hermit crabs to rabbits, horses, whatever.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Awesome.

**Becky Holly:**

But we adopted dogs twice that ended up pregnant. I mean, they were pregnant when we adopted them.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh, okay. And you didn't know.

**Becky Holly:**

Oh, yeah. So I mean, just in, I'll say short period of time, it's not that short, but we went from that to now it's illegal for any shelter or rescue to adopt out animals unaltered. And that's just a given for everybody. That's not even a, oh my gosh, I can't believe that. I mean, that is definitely something that's just now ingrained and it's accepted. And when you look at how far that's even come from, like I said, going from that, and with me growing up, it was mostly like, oh, there were ranch dogs. We still petted them. We still loved them. They slept with me, but they were outside most of the time. And now I see people with their dogs and strollers. They're putting clothes on them. They have their own Instagrams. They're like children. So to say things haven't changed is not correct because they've changed so much.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Right. Absolutely. And there is hope that they can continue as long as we advocate. And we just keep repeating the message. It keeps sharing stories. And even the wonderful missions like Fresno Bully Rescue doing right by this breed that is so vilified in the media sometimes. And in the news. Let's show people what they're really like.

**Becky Holly:**

Right. Yes. Absolutely. And I can always equate it to humans as well. Which I mean, in this political environment is insane right now. But when you have a breed that's so vilified and when someone says, oh, pit bulls are all like this, we were talking earlier about them being individuals. It's hard for people to see past that negative stereotype, that negative stigma that they have. And it's a lot to overcome, but it's not impossible. Like I said, we've seen so many more families coming to adopt now with children, with other animals and our adoptions are actually up so much. So used to be just-

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh, God.

**Becky Holly:**

Oh yeah. I mean, when you came and visited us, we had good adoptions per year for this breed. Like all breed rescues can adopt out thousands per year. We were adopting out a hundred and that was exciting and they just weren't seen as a dog that people wanted for their families. So now we're up to around 250 adoptions per year. Our poor adoption coordinator who works a regular full-time job. She's got her work cut out for her now. But it's incredible just to see the numbers increase every single year. And to have people say good things about the breed and be advocates for them. It's so much different from when I started just... I started in 2010 doing this. So just in the 11 years, I've seen a huge difference. And I'd like to think that we're part of making that difference at least in our area.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Absolutely. There's no question. And that you're a leader. You're at the forefront of making these changes and working with people who are being proactive and changing laws and instilling those ordinances that you're talking about. I think all of it makes me so happy because we need it for this breed especially with your adoption process, since you're so thorough, making sure they do go to save homes. Talk to me about the puppies because everybody loves the puppies. Sometimes people don't even realize, oh, this puppy could be pit bull and they love it. And then it grows up and it's a big dog. And they're like, oh my God, it could be pit bull. I don't want it. How do you filter through all those applicants to make sure the puppies are going to those homes and are they spayed and neutered before they go to the home? Or how does that whole process work with FBR.

**Becky Holly:**

Puppies are different animal altogether? We actually have a very good follow-up process and a very good legal contract enforcement behind it.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And you work at a law firm so.

**Becky Holly:**

I do, I do. So-

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

It's a good contract. I'm sure.

**Becky Holly:**

I'm quite sure a lot of people out there don't want to sign all of my waivers and everything that I have out there and probably think the contract is too long, but I mean, I'm giving you a piece of me. I'm giving you a dog that I've put time into and that we all love. And I mean, all of us at the rescue loved them so much. So we want to make sure that they're going to the very best place and that someone's going to love them and care for them the way we do. So a way to do that is to make the process a little more stringent. I mean, you don't want to make it to where you don't have adopters, but unlike other rescues, which are not blaming them at all you need to get those dogs out into the community and to families.

But we feel just a little bit more responsibility because of the breed to have a little more of a rigorous process. So it's not too invasive but we do require a home check. So the first part is someone will fill out an application and then we will do a home check to make sure that fences are secure and we'll give people time, or we'll advise them on how to fix their fences or what kind of containment system can be used if they need to. So it's not an automatic disqualification, but we do, do a home check to make sure that the home that they're in is going to be secure for them. Not only that, but to make sure that they are allowed inside and outside. We get so many that have just been chained up outside throughout their whole entire life. And we refuse to have that be their future.

So they deserve so much more. So we require that they be inside and outside dogs. And then after that, if they have other animals in the home or children, we make sure that... Sorry, we have little pitter patter of feet coming down the hallway.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

That's okay. Pitter patter of doggies is allowed. It's the Canine Condition Podcast after all.

**Becky Holly:**

Right. Exactly. Yes. That's one of my babies. Yeah. We do the home check to make sure that the house is secure and make sure they're allowed inside and outside. And then if there's children in the home or other animals in the home, other pets, we do introductions and make sure that everybody gets along and everyone's doing well before they ever go home. So that could be just an hour long and you think the dogs are great or maybe we require two or three introductions to make sure that we feel like it's a good match for the dogs too. Because too many people will take a dog home expecting their other dog or to be fine with it. And you really do have some major problems. We want to make sure that when you take a dog home, it's not a stressful experience.



There's no negative experience that you want to take a dog home to love them and have out of a family member and have it be a good time. You don't want to be stressful about getting along with other pets. So we do that as part of our adoption program. We don't allow them to go home without that introduction. We do adopt out of the county, out of the state actually at times. Yeah. As long as that tone check is still done, we can either have a local veterinarian in someone's area or a local rescue or animal control agency that we can contact to go do that home check for us and tell them what we did.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh, that's so great.

**Becky Holly:**

And in turn we do home checks for other rescues here in our area too. So it's reciprocal. We'll do it for other people as well.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

And as far as other pets in the home for families that are adopting, do you check to make sure they've been spayed and neutered and are up to date on all vaccines or prevention, things like that.

**Becky Holly:**

It is. It is. And some people actually don't like that, but that is one of our prerequisites.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

That's why I ask. It's funny. I've heard that. I've met people who just... They just don't want you to check anything, but they want to adopt a dog from you. And I just think to myself, how do you expect people to trust you if they don't know you at all?

**Becky Holly:**

Exactly. And one of our big things is of course, we're advocating for spay and neuter because in our area, we don't want to see so many animals being killed. So when someone kind of balks at that requirement, that is one of our requirements that all other pets in the home be spayed and neutered, unless it's like livestock. I mean, if it's a horse or it's a...

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Right. [crosstalk 00:46:15]

**Becky Holly:**

I think it's [crosstalk 00:46:16] we're not going to do that. But it could be any animals like dogs and cats. No, no. Not everyone in our area.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Exactly. Just to clarify.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. Exactly.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

That's funny.

**Becky Holly:**

So we ask that they all be spayed and neutered. That's one of our requirements but we've also had a lot of people they want to adopt from us so much, or they fall in love with a dog that they're willing to spayed and neuter other pets in their home. And there you go, there's another spay and neuter. So there's another incentive for them to spay and neuter the pets that they already own. If they're really looking and really fall in love with one of ours. We tell them, we stress this not because we're trying to tell you what to do, but we stress this because this is the reason why I have so many dogs here that don't have homes. And why so many... You have no idea how many I have to say no to, and how many that I know are going to die.

**Becky Holly:**

So that's something that I've taken on from my own heart, but we say no so much more often than we can say yes. And that's one of those things that don't want to do. That's a great segue into explaining to people why they should is explaining to them where we got these animals from and why.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Right. Absolutely. And let me ask you, does the rescue continually need help with funding? And I mean, is this just an ongoing thing that I see most of the rescues, the answer's yes. How to donations help the mission of Fresno Bully Rescue?

**Becky Holly:**

We always need funding. We have some very gracious, generous donors. We have a lot of people that donate. We at an in fact have a program to where we're not like you have to do \$20 a month or anything else like some of the ones that are on TV, not to disparage them, but that's just not what we do. We have a program where people could donate 50 cents a month, but if a thousand people donated 50 cents a month, then-

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Hello. Yes.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. I mean, it all adds up. So you don't have to have tons of money to help. I mean, it could be, I mean, \$5 a year, if a thousand people did that, my word it, it all adds up. So we'd rather have more supporters and do that. And then just have more of a monthly type of revenue because we do have full-time caretakers taking care of the dogs.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Of course.

**Becky Holly:**

Obviously we have a shelter, we have 40 dogs and it's quite a large facility now. So we definitely need the PG&E. We had a local business donate solar to us which was incredible.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Oh, that's awesome.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes. I know.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Thanks for them. That's awesome.

**Becky Holly:**

I know. So we get a lot of community support but we could always use more. And I always say it and people say, well, you shouldn't say that because we need money. Well, we do need money, but just as much we want people's time. It's free. And the dogs love it so much. We'd rather have you volunteer your time rather than feel like because you cannot give monetarily feel like you're not part of it or that you don't have something to give. You have something to give. And that's your heart, that's your kisses. That's your cuddles. And the dogs love it so much. And it's so good for them to have a wide mix of people coming out and really loving on them. Maybe they haven't had that before. So it's important. And of course have your favorites, but it's important for them to know that all people that are interacting with them now are good and loving and care for them.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Every dog is going to be somebody's favorite. The more hands you have on there. And the more boots on the ground, somebody is going to fall in love with each and every dog. So there is somebody out there for that's wonderful. And do you have to deal with, in this county, do you have to face the problem of backyard breeders and or what people call reputable breeders of this breed as well? Is that a constant struggle?

**Becky Holly:**

That is a constant struggle. We have so many backyard breeders and I try to explain to them if I meet them out, let's say at something, they'll say, oh, your dog is beautiful. I'd love to have my female. I'm like, no, no, no. You're not understanding what I'm doing here.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

No, no, no.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. That's one thing that always gets said and I'm like, okay, but that's also an opportunity. Right? So can explain to them-

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Yeah. That's a good outlook that you have actually.

**Becky Holly:**

Yeah. I mean, and every opening that as an opportunity whether I want to just come out of my skin or not. I've had so many, and I'm like, when there's a hundred pit bull puppies on Craigslist or can you even get \$20 for it? Can you even get \$20 for a puppy? I'm like, I don't understand. Is it monetary? Is it just prestige of having these dogs? Or what is it? So I really try to get in their heads, but then we just have a lot of irresponsible people. We have a lot of people that just don't care. Oh well, my brother took a puppy and my brother's cousin wants a puppy. But none of those puppies are getting spayed and neutered and it just adds up so quickly.

So we do have a lot of backyard breeders of have several breeds. Pit bulls have always been overpopulated in our area, but now more popular breeds becoming more popular are huskies and German shepherds, those are super popular in our area right now. And you can always gauge what's popular by what's in the shelter. Our shelters are inundated with huskies with German shepherds and pit bulls and chihuahuas. We have a lot of chihuahuas. I always tell people everyone says, oh, you probably hate breeders. And I don't hate anyone. In fact, if you're in Fresno County and you want to breed Brussels, Griffon, go for it. Because number one, probably all your puffs are going to be taken before they're even born. And it's not a breed that I can throw a rock on the street and hit. You know what I mean? I could throw a rock on the street out here and hit a pit bull.

And there's just so many. So it's supply and demand. And one thing that I think we focus so much on the actual backyard breeders, the irresponsible breeders, the things like that. One thing where I'd like to see us put more focus and makes more sense to me is on the demand. If the demand wasn't there, the supply would dry up. There's such a small percentage still in the entire United States that adopt their pets. So when you look at, let's say someone posts something on social media, they've got seven cute puppies, I can just scroll through. And how much for that puppy? Oh, I love that puppy. I want that puppy for my daughter. There's probably a hundred people interested in those puppies. If that wasn't happening, the supply side would be a lot easier to deal with.

So I think we try to demonize breeders which I am, of course. I don't hate them, but I definitely have some real issues with it. When we have 30,000 animals just in our county killed every year just for space. But like I said, we really need to work on both equally. And I think even more so maybe the demand we need to put it out there, that shelter dogs are not broken. Shelter dogs are not. There's nothing wrong with them. You can find a good breeds at the shelter. You can find even pure breeds at the shelter. You really can. If you wait long enough or if you look hard enough and maybe let stop putting focus on those breeds and let's put a focus where it should be just like with humans, let's not focus on the outside. Let's focus on the companion side of what this animal should be for you.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

The bond and that special place in your heart that they will...

**Becky Holly:**

I mean, it's human nature. I love the way that government looks always beautiful. Of course, I want them because I want a beautiful dog. That can't fault people for that. But what I can do is explain that dog is no different than the shelter dog That is a complete mud in what they give you for your heart for your emotional side-

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Absolutely.

**Becky Holly:**

For your support, that sort of thing. I wish we would focus more on that rather than the aesthetics, but that's human nature. So we have to work with that. But like I said, I would love it more demand side to work.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

I love that you're saying if people could just focus on the inside maybe versus the outside per se, like we do with humans. We don't look at a human and you don't have to judge the person by their appearance but get to know who they really are as a person and with dogs. It's like, can't you just put on your golden doodle eyes or your lab retriever eyes.

**Becky Holly:**

Yes.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Because they are all such beautiful, unique individuals and they will touch your heart and move you in ways you just don't expect. If you just open up to that.

**Becky Holly:**

Absolutely. I have said it before, and I'll say it a million times. Just everyone says, oh, they're just a dog. Well, then you've never had that connection because there's no way that I believe that they are just a dog. They give so much. And like I said, people say emotional support animals. You don't have to have a piece of paper. These guys are that every day. And they just, yep. And they help in so many ways, service dogs, medical dogs, when you see what they do in hospitals, as far as therapy and stuff. It's incredible. And that can't be dismissed.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Absolutely. I want to thank you so much for the advocacy and for everything that you and the Fresno Bully Rescue family does to advocate for this breed and just to educate everybody. Every time I get to chat with you, I learned something which makes me so happy because I want to keep passing this message along. So tell us where can our listeners find and follow Fresno Bully Rescue on social media?

**Becky Holly:**

Sure. On social media, we're more predominantly on Facebook and Instagram. And those are just Fresno Bully Rescue. All three words pretty long, but both of those are just Fresno Bully Rescue. And then we're also on Twitter but to a lesser degree. Then we do have our website and that's [www.fresnobullyrescue.org](http://www.fresnobullyrescue.org). So a lot of people go to .com there isn't. So it's .org. And there you can click on our social media from there, it'll take you right it.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Perfect. And just to make it really easy, I will have those live links in the show notes for this episode so anyone can find and follow, Fresno Bully Rescue, and our listeners should know that I am not getting paid to advocate for any one 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. Fresno Bully Rescue has the Canine Condition seal of approval from me. Thank you so much, Becky, for this lovely conversation and again, for sharing all your knowledge with us.

**Becky Holly:**

Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. It's really a pleasure.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

All right. Take care.

**Becky Holly:**

You too.

**Jacqueline Pinol:**

Our humanity can always impact another being in the most positive way. So I invite you to reach out in whatever way you can to Fresno Bully Rescue because they will welcome you with open arms. As Becky, reminded us, you have something to give. That's your heart, your kisses, your cuddles, and the dogs love it so much.

Thank you for joining me on this episode, please press subscribe on our podcast. [Spanish 00:57:31] Fresno Bully Rescue. [Spanish 00:57:41] until next time, hang on to those leashes.

The Canine Condition. Come, sit, stay.