One Metro student’s mission for pit bull equality

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Many of Metropolitan State University’s students pursue a career in service. Whether that service is in advocacy, education or journalism, the list goes on. If there is one broad cultural identity that we share, it’s a sense of cautious optimism in the face of deep adversity.

Take Shannon Glenn for instance; she’s been affiliated with a large number of nonprofit groups around the metro area: collaborating with The League of Women Voters, being the president of Anoka-Ramsey Community College’s student senate, becoming the vice president of the Minnesota State College Student Association. These are only a handful of examples from her extensive resume.

“I was tabling at Anoka-Ramsey when one of my senators came up to me and introduced me to this nonprofit group,” Glenn said. That group was Save-a-Bull, a local pit bull adoption and foster shelter. “I was sold after that,” Glenn said. She ended up fostering seven pit bulls before she met and adopted her dog, Wilbur. Afterwards, she joined the local advocacy group My Pit Bull is Family in 2014 and became the executive director shortly afterwards.

There is a real difference between fostering and adopting pit bulls. The former does not involve paying fees, but it allows the foster owners to improve a dog’s living condition while the organization looks for a “forever home” for the dog. Adoption, on the other hand, is a long-term commitment and is more expensive. Sometimes, people start as foster owners and then decide to adopt the dogs they are housing. Whether someone chooses to foster or adopt, they are bettering living conditions for dogs.

Even though increased public education and advocacy has diminished the stigma of pit bull breeds, only 1 in 600 pit bulls in shelters get adopted. The rest are euthanized. It makes one wonder how, despite an increased awareness, such a lopsided statistic can exist.

Groups like My Pit Bull is Family and Save a Bull are fighting stereotypes by promoting acclaimed films such as “Beyond the Myth” and nonprofit projects like the annual “Pinups and Pit Bulls” calendar. These efforts are becoming widespread and consistently successful — My Pit Bull is Family’s Facebook page recently crossed the 70,000 likes threshold and is still growing.

“It takes someone with a pit bull to give positive social interactions to change minds,” Glenn said. She noted a story from when she was walking Wilbur with a group of other dog owners and their pit bulls around Minneapolis — a regular occurrence — when another group walked up asking what breed of dogs were being walked. They fell in love with the dogs on sight.

It has taken a lot of work, but all the effort through advocacy group and personal interaction will benefit dog owners as a whole. Between conversations on breed discrimination and further advocacy work, tolerance, even enthusiasm, towards pit bulls is growing. It’s through the dedicated work of Shannon Glenn, My Pit Bull is Family, Save a Bull and numerous other organizations where the movement has made headway. It’s through normalization and inclusivity, that the message of breed acceptance truly succeeds. “Ultimately,” said Glenn, “it takes responsible ownership to know how dogs act … Responsible interaction is key.”

Want to learn more about pit bull advocacy? Like “My Pit Bull is Family,” “Save a Bull,” “Pinups and Pit Bulls,” or “Tattooed and Bullied” on Facebook.

Want to watch the acclaimed film “Beyond the Myth”? It’s available for streaming and purchase on Youtube and Amazon.

Photo file: mypitbull.jpg

Credit: Courtesy of Shannon Glenn

Caption: The logo for My Pitbull is Family