

On the Positive Side: Documentary Brings Dog Community Together

By JL Jones

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On April 7, 2012, the Rio Grande Theater in downtown Las Cruces was gracious enough to host a fundraiser for Action Program for Animals (APA). The reception started at 5pm and for two hours while bidding on auction items, the guests enjoyed drinks from Amaro Winery and appetizers from Santa Fe Grill. The guest of honor at the reception was Lola, a blue fawn American Pit Bull Terrier (APBT). Lola greeted all the attendants, and enjoyed belly rubs and kisses from the guests (for a \$1.00 charge). Lola was previously a rescue dog out of the South Central Los Angeles shelter, and despite having no formal training had passed two dog therapy tests; one in California, and now being registered by TheraPaws here in Las Cruces.

At 7:00 pm, the film *Beyond the Myth* was screened. The documentary deals with Breed Specific Legislation (BSL), which pertains to regulations regarding certain breeds. The laws implemented with BSL can be breed bans, mandatory sterilization of certain breeds or requiring owners of certain breeds to have a set amount of insurance. BSL does not look at the individual owner responsibility or a dog's temperament, and mainly focuses on "pit bull" type dogs. The documentary takes the audience to four U.S. cities where BSL has had the most impact; Denver, Miami, Cincinnati and San Francisco.

The film addresses key points:

- Myths regarding the breed
- Media sensationalizing
- Incorrect identification of dogs
- Monetary funds that could be put elsewhere
- The hardship BSL puts on families/owners
- Lack of news coverage of dog attacks from other breeds
- Center for Disease Control opposes BSL
- Owners of pit bull service dogs

The documentary was very well done and should be seen by all dog lovers/owners, as BSL starts with a certain breed and then it spreads like an infection. For example, BSL is now being implemented in Elephant Butte, NM (ordinance #131) which includes Pit Bulls, Rottweilers and German Shepherds. Owners of these dogs are now required to have special containment, special registration and liability insurance. Dogs like Lola and this film will hopefully re-educate the public and make people think twice before voting in BSL laws. Some municipalities around the country have BSL ordinances requiring liability insurance coverage for certain breeds. The following companies can be contacted for such insurance coverage: State Farm; Farmers; United Service Automobile Association; Chubb Group; Amica; and Auto Owners Insurance.

For more information on the film and BSL please visit the following sites:

<http://www.beyondthemythmovie.com/>

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