

# Almost Home: rescuing misunderstood dogs

By Carla Ciccone

*Carla Ciccone is not only the recording secretary of Laborers' International Union of North America Local 808, as well as a field rep and steward to the local, and Director of Purchasing for the Rhode Island Supreme Court. She also founded and directs Almost Home Rescue, a non-profit which specializes in placing dogs from difficult breeds in volunteer foster homes until they can be placed with a permanent family.*

*I sent Carla an email asking for a chat so I could fill in some background information on the program, and she responded with a 800 word written narrative that I couldn't improve upon. — TEH*

As a child, I grew up with Doberman, German Shepherds and eventually Rottweilers. I started volunteering at the age of 18 at various animal control agencies and rescues. To be honest, I wasn't happy with what I was witnessing as far as overall care of the animals and also seeing the various dogs being euthanized were mostly the maligned

breeds- Rottweilers, Shepherds and what we now call pit bulls.

Many of these breeds of dogs do not present well in shelters and unless a person has an understanding of these breeds, then they can easily be labeled aggressive or dangerous. I set out to be a breed specific rescue intending to cater to the Rottweiler breed.

I started Almost Home Rescue in 2007 and received non-profit status from the Federal Government in 2008. I quickly saw a decline in Rottweilers in RI shelters and an increase in bully breeds, so it was inevitable that I would rescue the underdog; the dogs who were overlooked because of their appearance and with little chance of surviving the shelter.

A story comes to mind to help explain exactly what I am talking about. I received a call from another rescuer and volunteer at the Scituate Animal Shelter, Michelle Cantini, about a Rottweiler that was

there, named Pete. Pete was found a stray and was adopted out and returned back to the shelter because the people said he would go to the far corner of a room and just bark at them. I promised that I would take a ride to the shelter and take a look at him. When I met him, I saw a senior Rottweiler probably suffering from some arthritis and hip dysplasia, but really didn't see anything concerning so I agreed to take him.

When I picked him up, I remember being told by another animal control officer that Pete "was going to bite someone." Pete was a great dog and lived two years with me until we had to put him to sleep because of debilitating arthritis. What no one had taken the time to find out was Pete had limited vision and was also hearing impaired. So when he was barking at night, it was because he was uncomfortable and couldn't see.

Same just happened recently with a dog Ty -- formerly Rocky -- who was picked up by Woonsocket Animal Control. He was found tied in a



Carla with (as she describes them):  
Left -Teddy a 18 month old Rottweiler who was used as a guard dog. I've been working with him in his socialization skills with both people and dogs. Should he never become adoption ready, he will stay with me as a resident foster dog.  
Right- Lola, a 6 year old Rottweiler, was left behind in Providence when her owner moved to Florida. She was recently spayed, vaccinated and is ready for adoption.

hallway of a Woonsocket tenement house. Word was circulating that he was used as a guard dog. Another rescue had called us and asked if we would go to animal control to check him out. I did just that and what I found was a young, male rottie who was barking and acting crazy in his

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Ty and Darlene



Tara at fundraiser



Ty's freedom ride

kennel. When I took him out of his kennel, it was just as I suspected: a dog who was deprived of any basic training but craved human attention. We had him neutered and vaccinated and placed him in foster care where he learned what was expected of him and how to live in a house again. Ty was just recently adopted to a woman, Darlene from Warren, RI who adores him and it's obvious from updates and photos that it's mutual.

I've learned through the years that I cannot save everything but I sure do

try to save dogs of adoptable behavior, meaning no human aggression, regardless of their breed.

My biggest obstacle being an all-volunteer rescue is not having enough foster homes. The rescue pays for all medical expenses, training classes if needed and even food but we still see a lack of people who will open their homes to dogs in need.

We have helped 256 dogs to date and some of those dogs have lived out their lives with because of their age. People tend to overlook senior

dogs. The good thing is the dogs we take in are not given a time limit to find a home; we don't place dogs with the first applicant. We match dogs to the appropriate home based on the applicant's environment and lifestyle. We set the dog up for success, and we really get to know the dogs in our care. The negative is we can't help as many because there isn't a quick turnover.

We are a RI rescue and assist our community in a variety of ways: we help people who have financial issues and cannot afford medical

for their pets, we run a neuter/spay campaign every year and pay for privately owned pit and pit mixes to be neutered to try to reduce the number of unwanted dogs ending up in our shelters, and we have taken countless surrendered dogs from people who no longer can keep their dog.

*People interested in adopting a dog, providing foster care, or those needing to surrender a dog, can find more information at <http://almosthomersq.org/> or by calling (401)-236-4710.*

#### My Retirement Planning Checklist

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