

All we are saying is give pits a chance

I hadn't meant to make Jill Morris cry. But when I went into her business, Jillian's Hair Salon, to talk about her annual fundraising and supplies drive to support dog rescues, I did just that when I showed her a picture I took of her last year with her beloved dog Rocky, who passed away earlier this year.



THINK PAWSITIVE
COASTAL STORIES WITH MORE WAG
BY GRETCHEN AMMERMAN



Jill's passion for dog rescue began 16 years ago, when her son gifted her a pit bull puppy.

"Moxie was my first pit," she said. "It's been eight years since I lost him and I still miss him so much. He taught me a lot about how misunderstood the breed is. He was a delightful dog."

At first, Jill was unsure about bringing a pit bull into her home so she took him to Patty Morgan, owner of the former pet store Paws on the Sand.

"I told her I needed to know if he's alpha," Jill said. "Patty put him on his back and he just laid there smiling. She said 'He's so not an alpha.'"

Finding Moxie to be a joyful dog, friendly toward humans and other dogs, Jill was surprised at the reactions she got when she took him for walks.

"I experienced so much negativity toward him," she said. "Even though I had been



Jill and Rocky

hesitant myself, some of the anger still took me by surprise."

But it did come in handy at least once, when a man leapt out at Jill from a public restroom.

"As soon as he saw Moxie he took off running," she said. "So, I guess the reputation isn't always a bad thing."

But reputation can only get you so far without action.

"We got burgled twice and both times Moxie was home," Jill said. "He probably just asked the burglars if they had treats."

A cancer diagnosis came as a terrible surprise.

"Moxie passed away when he was only eight and I was devastated," she said. "I knew I wanted another pit and a rescue and I found Rocky, who was different but just as wonderful."

After living with dogs from this misunderstood breed, Jill found she wanted to do something to help not just other pits, but all dog having a hard time getting out of the shelter system. She first used Facebook as a way to reach a large audience.

"I started by posting dogs that were in critical need," she said. "I was trying to get dogs pulled from shelters all over the country and into homes."

She soon found that some people didn't want to see images of dogs that would likely not find a happy ending.

"Friends and family were starting to unfollow my personal account," she said. "So I started a public Facebook group called 'Be their Voice' to post some of the tougher stories."

Jill's salon is also a gallery for art that benefits rescues.

"We sell beautiful wooden signs and 100 percent of the proceeds go to a rescue organization near Eugene called SevaDog," Jill said. "We have ceramic dog and cat masks from local artist Sam Jacobson, who donates \$10 from every sale, which we pass on to different rescues."

And every Christmas for the past six years, the tree at Jillian's is adorned with special decorations.

"Our clients donate treats, collars, leashes, toys, beds; anything that a shelter animal might need," Jill said. "One of my customers made about a dozen hand-sewn blankets. It grows every year. We've also had over \$600 dollars donated."

Recipients change annually; this year they are Ruff Life Rescue, Tillamook Animal Shelter and SevaDog.

"I left the Lincoln County Animal

Shelter off the list this year," Jill said. "When I was planning, they were closed because of a black mold outbreak and I wasn't sure when they'd be open again."

For Jill or anyone else wondering, the building has been demolished, staff are now working out of modular buildings and the public is welcome Tuesdays through Saturdays. But things are far from status quo.

"We're not able to operate at former capacity," said animal care specialist Lisa Morelli. "Before we could take in about 75 cats, now we're down to roughly 25. For dogs, we used to have 19 or 20 runs and now are down to eight. We're doing the best we can when we have. We're looking at possible new sites but are still not sure where we'll end up."

Donations are always welcome to help build a new facility that will do the best job of helping Lincoln County animals.

You can also drop off donations at Jillian's, 1315 SW Hwy. 101, in Lincoln City, until the end of the year, including this Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 23 and 24.

And if you have questions about rescue or pit bulls? Pull up a salon chair; Jill can talk about her favorite breed for hours. Just please, as a Christmas present to me, don't make her cry again.