

PITTIE PEOPLE

What kind of person would own a pit bull? BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN



TODD COOPER

SONDRA ARRACHE
massage therapist and dog rescuer

PIP AND GABRIEL (PICTURED)

Sondra Arrache rescued Gabriel from Lane County Animal Services (LCAS) back before the agency began its effort to go No Kill. Gabriel, she says, was slated to be euthanized the day she went and got him. “Nobody wanted him because he was a total spaz,” she says. Now Gabriel’s a trained bird hunter, though “no longer practicing,” and sleeps under the covers at night. She says, “Once I got him I realized I’d never have another type of dog.” In his youth, she says, he would leave the covers when he got hot, then wake her up to crawl back in when he got cold again. Now, at age 10, he likes to snuggle the night through.

Gabriel and Arrache’s year-old foster pup, Pip, are both brindle, which she says “is the most overlooked color of dog at a shelter.” Pip was rescued from a high kill shelter and came to Arrache bald due to mange, and emaciated. She nursed him back to health and he’s looking for his forever home. Arrache works with Save the Pets and rescues and fosters pit bulls. Pit bulls, she says, “Are loyal, loving, serious with an almost human quality to them, but very much a real, muscular, athletic beast.” She adds, “They have a childlike quality.”



TODD COOPER

ELIZABETH THOMPSON
owner, Sweet Potato Pie and Target employee

ZEETA AND MAX

When not working one of her two jobs — she owns Sweet Potato Pie in downtown Eugene and is a “low level manager” at Target — and raising her two kids, Elizabeth Thompson plays for the Andromedolls in the roller derby, coaches the Junior Gems and fosters dogs for Luv-a-Bull Pit Bull Rescue, LCAS, Save the Pets and “whomever else needs me.” She’s fostered at least 200 dogs over the years, most of them “mama pit bulls and their puppies.”

Thompson says, “We’re the house that is constantly full of kids, and the pit bulls love it when we have the Junior Roller Girls’ sleepovers. Last summer, it was about 40 girls — the dogs were in heaven! Me? Not so much!”

She got Max from a backyard breeder, “before I knew better.”

“Max was my entry into the world of discrimination,” she says. “As a middle-class white girl, I’d never experienced discrimination until I got Max. Suddenly friends didn’t want their kids coming to the house.”

Thompson says, “They are judged so harshly, and most of what people think about pits is false. I got involved in rescue to dispel myths, help educate people about them and do everything I could to encourage spaying and neutering of my favorite breed.”

Before getting her dogs, she says, “Like most people, I had never been around pit bulls and was terrified of them. Everything I’d ever seen or heard about them was negative, and I was fearful of what I didn’t know.” But she met a friend’s pit, who was “good and gentle with my kids, beyond anything I’d ever seen with any dog, and I’ve had dogs all my life.”

Zeeta came from Luv-a-Bull and had become a certified therapy dog through Delta Society — the most prestigious honor a therapy dog can have — while at Luv-a-Bull, Thompson says. “Zeeta is the epitome of what a pit bull can and should be. She loves all people, and is a true pit bull ambassador.”