

DOGS DESERVE BETTER: PUTTING AN END TO DOG CHAINING

The dog's name was Worthless. Tammy Grimes first spotted Worthless, a scruffy black lab mix chained outside near her Altoona, PA neighborhood. On her way to work, she pulled over and noticed Worthless had a dull, sparse coat, hardly enough to brave the cold northeastern winters. Grimes asked the owners if she could have the skinny dog. They shrugged then slammed the door.

Grimes could not forget Worthless. While the owners were away, Grimes snuck food and water to the lonely dog. Caught feeding him one day, the owners became enraged. The next day Grimes found the doghouse hidden further from the road.

So moved by Worthless and his bleak existence, Grimes formed *Dogs Deserve Better*, a national advocacy group whose goal is to end dog chaining. That was four years ago and *Dogs Deserve Better* has grown considerably. In 2003, *Dogs Deserve Better* won the ASPCA's prestigious Pet Protector Award for its dedication to chained dogs. That award helped propel the group into the national spotlight as activists for chained dogs.

In addition to sending out information in the form of brochures, posters, videos, bumper stickers, and door hangers in both English and Spanish, *Dogs Deserve Better* tracks anti-chaining legislation. Approximately seventy-five communities throughout the US have enacted legislation that either ban chaining or restrict it to a certain number of hours per day. Most limit the length of chains or tethers. New Jersey, for instance, leads the movement with seven cities that have anti-chaining legislation followed by Kansas, California and Texas with six cities each.

"Once a city or county enacts anti-chaining legislation, others copy it," Grimes said. She also said legislation is pending before the state capitol in Pennsylvania to restrict dog chaining to no more than 15 hours a day. Although it still allows dogs to be chained, it requires 9 hours of freedom. "Because this is a statewide law this is a huge gain," Grimes said. "It's not perfect, but the legislation recognizes that chaining is not in a dog's best interest."

Mesa, AZ resident Dietrich Buczko called Grimes and asked her to send material to a neighbor who chained his dog. The dog had little access to shade. Temperatures during the long Arizona summers are in excess of 100 degrees for at least four months. "I called the local police who investigate animal cruelty and they talked to the family," Buczko said. "But there are no laws in Mesa against chaining or keeping a dog outside. I also spoke to the owners numerous times about the inhumanity of chaining dogs."

Nothing changed for months until one day Buczko noticed his efforts finally paid off. "I passed their yard and was surprised to see the dog off his chain. They still keep him outside but at least he's free. I have no doubt that the information *Dogs Deserve Better* sent helped free this dog." Grimes appreciates pro-active people like Buczko. Too often, people call and present situations that jerk at Grimes' heart. "They tell me they can rescue a chained dog but want me to assume responsibility," says Grimes. "I've done this several times, but I can't save them all."

Grimes supports the movement to end chaining but cannot do it alone. Others must open their hearts and homes to chained dogs. Grimes started a trend with *Dogs Deserve Better*. Chained dogs depend on the rest of us to free them from their chains.

Grimes eventually rescued Worthless, who she renamed Bo. Due to years of negligence, poor care and living outside in a harsh environment, Bo had numerous health problems. He died six months later.

For more information, visit *Dogs Deserve Better* at dogsdeservebetter.com or contact them at 1-877-636-1408, *Dogs Deserve Better*, Box 23, Tipton, PA 16684.

Debra J. White lives in Phoenix, AZ. In addition to volunteering with 2nd Chance 4 Pets, Debra volunteers at Maricopa County Animal Care and Control and is the author of Nobody's Pets (www.4-footedfriends.com). She is the proud owner of five rescued dogs.