

# Hope Animal Rescues seeks justice for pit bull

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer  
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**GODFREY** - A local animal rescue facility is seeking justice for a pit bull that came into its care a couple of months ago.

One day during the month of April, a woman sped down the driveway of Hope Animal Rescues, with a severely ill pit bull in tow.

"This woman said that she just found this dog in a ditch and that it can't move," Jackie Spiker, co-founder of Hope Animal Rescues, said. "Kim could tell that something was seriously wrong."

Lee, the other founder of Hope, could tell by the odors the dog was emitting that it was suffering from a severe infection. The dog was also visibly pregnant.



"Steve Bosaw from Alton Animal Control, who was talking to Kim when the woman and dog arrived, immediately released the dog into our custody and we took him to the Daniel-Randall Veterinary Clinic," Spiker recalled.

Two veterinarians and four technicians cancelled all their surgeries and appointments to care for the pit bull, named April, to perform an emergency Cesarean section. The professionals came to the conclusion that the dog had been trying to give birth to her litter for days, and due to the rupture of the amniotic sacs, the entire litter perished.

"Their decomposing bodies had caused the mama dog to get sepsis," Spiker said. "It took over two hours for the vets to clean April out the best they could."



"It was so touch-and-go, we didn't know if she would live."

Thankfully, April made it over her first hurdle. After the her emergency C-section, April was transferred to Veterinary Specialty Services (VSS), an intensive care unit in Manchester, Mo., for round-the-clock care. After two days, and over \$3,800 in medical bills, she was taken back to Hope Animal Rescues to continue her healing process. However, a couple of days later, she was rushed back to VSS because she had started hemorrhaging.

"Since she was so infected, there were lesions that were left behind from the surgery. The doctors at Daniel-Randall did everything they could and lesions are unfortunately common.





"The second time around, the veterinarians didn't give us much hope," she said.

Nearly \$4,000 was also tacked on to the ongoing list of medical bills for April's treatment.

Despite all the odds, April's prognosis became brighter and brighter with each day. Due to the stress put on her body, the dog had developed a grade 4 heart murmur. as she healed, the murmur was decreased to a grade 2 murmur.

"The veterinary techs at the hospital would rush in, even on their days off, to make sure April was okay," she said. "One vet tech fell totally in love with this dog. She cuddled her, hand-fed her, and made sure she did everything in her power to help April live."



The vet tech that tended to April ultimately adopted the lovable dog, and the 35-pound spends her time gallivanting around in a pink tutu with her two furry siblings. Thanks to the generous donations and gifts to Hope Animal Rescues, who shared April's story on their Facebook page, as they do with many of their rescue animals, the pit bull's medical bills have been paid off.

Although April received her happy ending, Hope Animal Rescues is now seeking justice for the suffering the dog endured.

As most things, the initial situation that brought April into the care of Hope, was not as it seemed. After posts about the rescued dog gained traction on the rescue's Facebook site, another animal rescue facility got in contact with Jackie and shared some new details regarding the pet's owner.

"Right after we posted that we had the dog, another local rescue said they believed they knew who the owner was," she said. "They told us that her friend had contacted them asking for an c-section for a pregnant dog. The rescue agreed to do the C-section, but the agreement that all rescues go by is that the dog must be spayed in order for their veterinary bills to be covered by the group."



The owner, identified now as Stephanie Watson, of Alton, refused the agreement. In the state of Illinois, denying a dog necessary veterinary care is a misdemeanor offense.

"That's where the owner broke the law," Spiker said. "She refused when the group offered to pay the vet bills, and she let the dog try to have puppies at home for days, and we don't know exactly how long. She couldn't pass the puppies.

Watson's alleged intent was to sell the puppies in April's litter for a profit, as she is a desirable pit bull-terrier hybrid known for their reduced size and temperament.

"The only way she could have changed this outcome was to accept the agreement and have the dog spayed. If she would have gone through with it, she would have been able to sell five puppies. Instead, she allowed her dog to suffer just because she wanted to breed her more."





Even though April is happy and relatively healthy with her new family, Hope Animal Rescues is looking for the public's help in bringing her original owner to justice.

Stephanie Watson is wanted by the Alton Police Department on the charge of "failure to perform owner's duties." Even though a misdemeanor conviction could possibly result in probation, it is important to note that upon a second conviction of this type of crime in the Illinois, the perpetrator could be charged with a felony and receive a jail sentence.

Anyone with information regarding her whereabouts is encouraged to contact the Alton Police Department at (618) 463-3505. Anonymous tips can be sent by phone to (618) 465-5948.