



Flyin' High Now

Katy Dog Becomes a Frisbee Champion after Surviving Hurricane Katrina and Life in a Shelter

Written by Contributing Writer Denise Einkauf Photos by Mike Misiara

“Jessie” a scrawny, black heeler mix breed, was one of many four-legged refugees sent to Houston after Hurricane Katrina in September 2005. She was in a New Orleans shelter when the storm hit and ended up at the Citizens for Animal Protection (CAP) in West Houston, but CAP was so overwhelmed with hurricane pets that it could not house them all. Many local animal facilities answered their call for help and fostered these pets until owners could be located or new homes found. Jessie was one of 12 refugee animals to be fostered at Waggin’ Tails Pet Ranch in Fulshear, where she stayed for over five months, waiting for a home.

Finding the Perfect Family

Jessie was an extremely energetic dog who loved to play fetch, swim, and run with the staff. She was very sweet but her high

strung personality was proving to be a challenge in placing her with a family. The Burriss family occasionally boarded their pets at Waggin’ Tails Pet Ranch, and had a 12 year old son, Brandon, who wanted a dog of his own. When Brandon met Jessie, they had an instant connection. Jessie loved Brandon and they played fetch for hours. The Burriss family decided to take her home on a trial basis for a weekend, and she never returned. Jessie fit right in and became a member of the Burriss family. Brandon renamed her “Sergeant” and was delighted to finally have a dog of his own.

Fetch as a Job

Brandon and his mother, Bonnie, noticed almost immediately that Sergeant had a knack for Frisbee. “She would become a totally different dog when she was focused on the job of fetching Frisbees,”

says Bonnie. Brandon started out taking Sergeant to obedience classes, and once basic obedience was mastered, they began Disc Doggin' with the Houston Canine Frisbee Disc Club. *Team Sergeant* was formed, and the rest, as they say, is history still in the making.

The Frisbee Champ

Brandon and Sergeant are now in their third year with the Houston Canine Frisbee Disc Club. They have won many awards and medals, and they currently travel all over Texas for competitions and demonstrations. They have even competed in Denver and Atlanta. Brandon and Sergeant are training nightly and are completing successful throws/catches nearly the length of a football field. Brandon says, "Team Sergeant loves to do demonstrations even more than competitions." They take every opportunity to volunteer their time to give back to the community.

Working Pets

Every year, thousands of working dog breeds like Sergeant are surrendered to shelters because owners don't understand their high energy temperaments. Many of these dogs cause destruction of property or develop bad habits due to boredom and a lack of purpose. Once they are obedience trained and have a purpose or 'job' in life, they often become the most wonderful pets imaginable. Sergeant was lucky that she had a family willing to help find her purpose in life. The Burriss family, however, feels like they are the lucky ones. "Considering all the pure joy and fun Sergeant brings to our family, I get teary-eyed thinking of what our life would be like without her! I can't imagine!" says Bonnie.

Recently, Brandon and Sergeant performed five demos at the Reliant World Series of Dog Shows at Reliant Center. The Reliant show is the largest AKC dog show in the U.S., and they performed in front of thousands of people. Not bad for a scrawny, homeless, high-energy mutt from a New Orleans hurricane is it? KM

DENISE EINKAUF owns and operates Waggin' Tails Pet Ranch in Fulshear. She is happily married for 15 years to husband, Derek, and has two boys: Daylan, 12 and Donovan, 9.



Most recently, Team Sergeant performed at the Reliant World Series of Dog Shows at Reliant Center



Brandon began working with Sergeant by taking her to obedience classes



Brandon and Sergeant are now in their third year with the Houston Canine Frisbee Disc Club

Team Sergeant competes, participates in demonstrations, and volunteers throughout the community



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Because she's a working breed, Brandon knew he needed to find something for Sergeant to focus her energy on



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