

Grant Follow-Up Report

Table of Contents

Recipient Organization	Page 2
Project Summary	Page 3
Program Details	Page 6
Program Impact	Page 11
Key Points for Organizations Wishing to Replicate	Page 27
Grant Stewardship	Page 28
Publicity, Promotion & Advertising	Page 30
Community Acknowledgement	Page 31
Appendix	Page 32
• Educational Materials	Section 1
• Promotional Materials	Section 2
• Publicity	Section 3
• Community Educational Activities & Events	Section 4
• Class Details	Section 5
• Graduation	Section 6
• Representative Examples of Graduate Feedback	Section 7
• Community Acknowledgement	Section 8
• Invoices with Value Greater than \$100	Section 9

Recipient Organization

Date: July 18, 2010

Grant Funding Received: February 12, 2009

Recipient Organization Name:

Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services, Veterinary Public Health

Name of Executive Director: Dawn D. Blackmar, D.V.M.

Organization Address: 612 Canino Road

City, State, ZIP: Houston Texas 77076

Website Address: www.hcpbes.org

Grant Contact Person:

Name: Fiona Cunningham

Phone: 281-999-4714

E-mail: fcunningham@hcpbes.org

Title: Resource Development

Fax: 281-847-1911

Cell: 281-687-7955



Harris County
HCPHES
Public Health & Environmental Services
Veterinary Public Health

Harris County
HCPHES
Public Health & Environmental Services
Veterinary Public Health

Program Summary

Program Name:

“TRICKS FOR PITS”

Program Completion Date:

03/08/10

Program Duration:

March 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010

Program Vision:

Transform a targeted area into a community of responsible pet owners, with special emphasis placed upon the pit bull type dog and youth owner.

Program Purpose:

The program purpose was to identify and understand the beliefs, behavior and culture concerning pit bull type dogs in unincorporated Harris County.

Hugo teaching “Gotti” to shake



Program Goal:

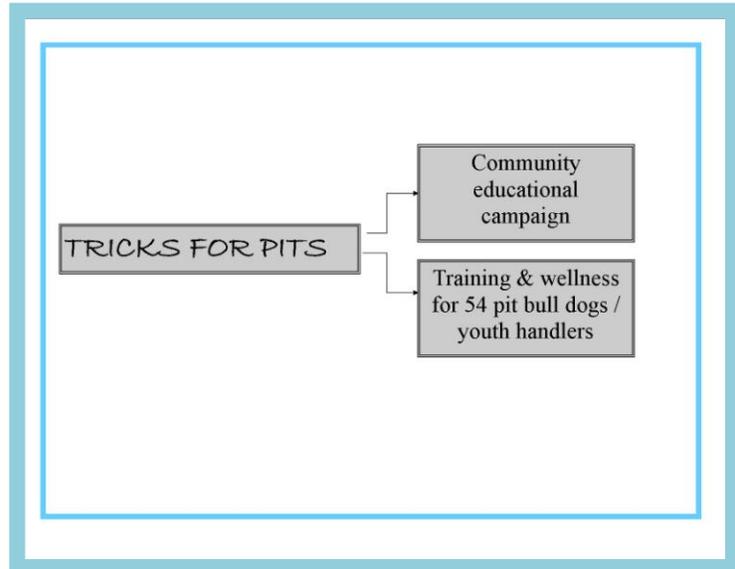
The program goal was to develop a community of youth ambassadors, who believe a responsible pit bull owner is “cool”; and a well trained, socialized, and healthy pit bull is even “cooler”.

Two pronged approach

Program Approach:

The requested funds were used to implement a two pronged approach, specifically targeting pit bull dogs and youth owners within a community at risk for pit bull bites, free roaming pit bull dogs, owner surrender, and vicious patrol requests.

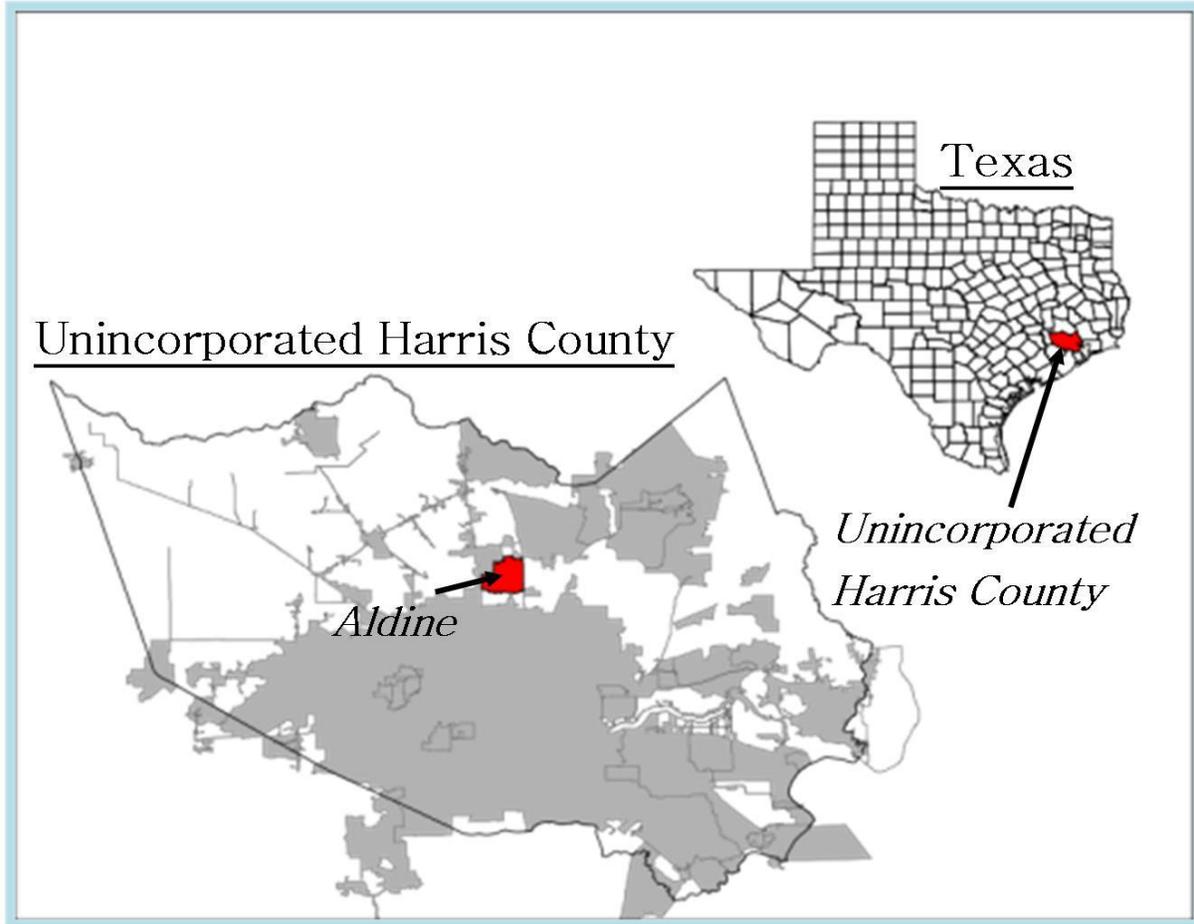
- i) Community wide “responsible pit bull owner” educational campaign, and
- ii) Dog health, wellness & obedience training program for 54 pit bull dogs and their at-risk youth owners who use dogs as status symbols, a means to make money, and/or gang and street creditability.



Program Location:

The community selected was ZIP codes 77093 & 77039, an area of Houston known as Aldine.

Aldine, Harris County, Texas



Location description:

Aldine is located within unincorporated central Harris County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2000 national population estimates, the population in the targeted area is 73,626. Twenty-three percent of families live below the U.S. Census Bureau’s poverty level. In comparison, the US average of families living below the poverty level is 9 percent. Also, 61 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino by origin, as compared to the U.S. national estimate of 12.5 percent. Forty-seven percent speak Spanish in the home, as compared to a national estimate of 12 percent. Fifteen percent speak only Spanish as compared to the national estimate of 1 %.

U.S. Census Bureau 2000

	Targeted Area	USA
Population	73,626	281,421,906
Families Below Poverty Level	23 %	9 %
Population Hispanic/Latino Origin	61 %	12.5 %
Speak Spanish in the Home	47 %	12 %
Speak only Spanish	15 %	1 %

Focus groups and surveys were conducted in this area (in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control and a local youth center, Aldine Y.O.U.T.H.), clearly identified that public safety was the primary concern for their community. Specific to public safety, the community was apprehensive over the number of free roaming and stray dogs that caused them to fear walking in their neighborhoods or allow children to play outside.

Focus group held at Aldine Y.O.U.T.H.



Program Details

TRICKS FOR PITS is a two pronged approach, specifically targeting pit bull dogs and youth owners within a community at risk for pit bull bites, free roaming pit bull dogs, owner surrender, and vicious patrol requests.

Community Wide Educational Campaign Approach:

A community wide educational campaign on responsible pit bull ownership was conducted from March, 2009 until November 2009, which included:

- 885 brochures in Spanish and English distributed to community centers, libraries, and civic associations within the targeted area
- Distribution of 500 school book covers and posters depicting the pit bull message and design of “Off the Chain – On the Leash / Train – Don’t Chain”
- Distribution of 500 dog leashes depicting the pit bull message and design
- Distribution of 2000 **TRICKS FOR PITS** flyers
- Attendance at community and civic meetings, festivals, holiday celebrations, and health fairs
Daniel & Apache
- Door-to-door canvassing of 2000 homes
- On-going canvassing at local parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities
- Multiple meetings with Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, East Aldine Management District, and Aldine Independent School District to assess appropriate methodologies to disseminate the responsible pit bull message
- Distribution of 3000 door hangers
- Distribution of 1000 free pit bull spay or neuter flyers specific to targeted area ZIP codes



Copies of educational materials are included in the Appendix, Section I.

Pit Bull/At-Risk Youth Training Classes Approach:

The TRICKS FOR PITS program included a comprehensive responsible pit bull health, maintenance and obedience training course for at-risk youth¹ who reside in the targeted area. Based upon interaction and discussion with the youth, it became clear that they are routinely exposed to violence, crime and gang activity. The decision was made to only demonstrate positive reinforcement training techniques and never use, or give the appearance of using violence. Choke or pinch collars were never used in class and discouraged; only nylon collars and leashes were utilized.

Program participants received at no cost:

- Dog wellness exam and vaccinations at local veterinary clinic
- Optional spay-neuter surgery²
- Beginner and intermediate pit bull obedience, health, and maintenance training classes held over an 8 – 9 week period
- Class supplies
- T-Shirts/bandanas
- Weekly training photos
- Graduation celebration
- Graduation rosette & certificate
- Scrapbook photo page
- Congressional certificate of special recognition



"Off the Chain-On the leash"

The program required the youth to take their dogs to local veterinarians for a free health examination and receive free vaccinations. Once various health issues were resolved, an 8 - 10 week program of weekly dog training and health classes was scheduled. The average drop-out rate from enrollment to graduation for all six groups of classes was 47 percent. Participants dropped out either because their pit bull dogs were missing or injured (mainly from traffic, however, one dog received a gunshot wound from a drive by shooting), or the youth were required to work, had conflicts with after school activities, or were unable to receive transportation to their classes .

¹ "At-risk" is the characterization of person subject to unique jeopardy or threat, as in the case of youth "at-risk" for increased likelihood of delinquency due to home and environmental factors or when they experience a significant mismatch between their circumstances and needs, and the capacity or willingness of the community to accept, accommodate, and respond to them in a manner that supports and enables their maximum social, emotional and intellectual growth and development. Webster's New World Law Dictionary

² During the recruitment phase, youth and families were opposed to spay-neuter of their dogs. Had HCPHES VPH made spay-neuter mandatory, many of the youth would have refused to join the program. The decision was made to leave spay-neuter surgery as an option, while continually emphasizing to the the participants and their families, the benefits of a spayed or neutered pit bull dog.

Measurement Goals:

Residents consistently reported during community meetings and outreach activities in the targeted area, that they were reluctant to report free roaming dogs or dog bite incidents due to fear of retaliation. They viewed free roaming and dangerous dogs as a way of life for their community, particularly pit bull type dogs. Residents, although aware of the dangers of free roaming dogs, appeared tolerant and/or unwilling to demand assistance from HCPHES VPH.

Soon after the concept of TRICKS FOR PITS was developed, a grant request was submitted to PetSmart Charities, HCPHES VPH initiated a responsible pet ownership intervention project. This intervention project, called the P.E.T. Project, (initialism for “Protect, Educate and Train”) was launched in Aldine ZIP codes (77093 and 77039) and also the TRICKS FOR PITS targeted area. Consequently, although TRICKS FOR PITS was developed and launched as a stand-alone program, the measurement criteria between TRICKS FOR PITS and the P.E.T. Project occurred simultaneously. HCPHES VPH decided that it would be more accurate to place the TRICKS FOR PITS program under the P.E.T. Project, and include TRICKS FOR PITS program impact measurements as part of the overall P.E.T. Project. Actual pit bull related impact in relation to the TRICKS FOR PITS are easily measured, however, any overflow impact to all other companion pets, was rolled up into the P.E.T. Project and not associated with the TRICKS FOR PITS program.

Although HCPHES VPH initially approached many youth, juvenile probation, and civic organizations with the concept of TRICKS FOR PITS, youth were reluctant to enroll in the program. Upon further investigation, the youth conveyed to HCPHES VPH outreach personnel that they believed their dogs would “not be mean” after the classes or that dog trainers would not be able to teach or handle their dogs. The assumption from the youth was that a trained dog was subservient and would lose its look of power. A secondary assumption by the youth was that dog trainers only knew how to train pets and were unable to train or control “real dogs” such as the youth’s pit bull dogs.



Local Civic Association Meeting

2 shelter animal technicians holding a chain taken off a puppy pit bull dog and a “Train – Don’t Chain” T-shirt.



HCPHES VPH developed the following short-term and long term measurement goals as a portion of the P.E.T. Project:

Short-Term Goals:

- a) Increase in requests for animal control services pertaining to pit bull type dogs and all dogs;
- b) Increase in impound of free roaming pit bull type dogs and all dogs; and
- c) Enroll at least 50 at-risk youth who own a pit bull terrier type dog to the **TRICKS FOR PITS** program.

“Marley” with Travis

Long-Term Goals:

- a) Decline of pit bull terrier type dogs and all dogs impounded (either by owner surrender, abandoned or free roaming) by HCPHES VPH;
- b) Decline in citizen requests for animal control services;
- c) Decline in bite cases attributed to pit bull type dogs and all dogs;
- d) Increase in licensed and rabies vaccinated dogs; and
- e) A community in support of the responsible pit bull ownership message.



Long-Term Benefit to the Community:

The long-term benefit to the Aldine community is that residents have a successful program model to replicate, which positively impacts their

concerns of public safety; in particular, fear of free roaming, unvaccinated and aggressive dogs. The community now has 34 successful graduates of the **TRICKS FOR PITS** program who have the ability to become youth ambassadors for responsible pit bull ownership in their neighborhoods.



Jessica, Angel & “Spike”





Oscar & “Rocky”

Recently, the East Aldine District approached HCPHES VPH with an offer of grant funding to pay for a community dog training program that utilizes the **TRICKS FOR PITS** graduates.

HCPHES VPH is in the process of developing a plan for the Aldine area to ensure that the positive results from both the **TRICKS FOR PITS** program and the P.E.T. Project are sustained.

The goal for the sustainability plan will be for HCPHES VPH to provide support and guidance for the Aldine area to assume ownership of future responsible pet and pit bull type dog programs.



Youth at local park learning about pit bull dogs

Program Impact

John & "Cream"

Number of Animals Assisted by this Grant Project:

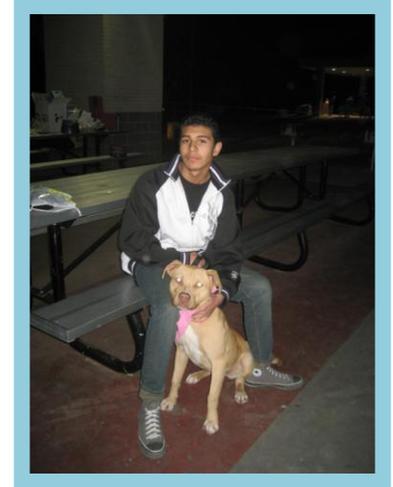
- 54 pit bull type dogs owned by at-risk youth

Number of Animals Impacted by this Grant Project:

- 88 additional pit bull terrier type dogs were impounded above the normal pit bull impound level from ZIP codes 77093 and 77039³
- 85 pit bull dogs received free spay or neuter surgery and rabies vaccinations
- 2,000 pet owning families were directly contacted through the community education portion of the program on responsible pit bull ownership.

Dog Training Portion:

Fifty-four pit bull terrier type dogs and youth owners/handlers enrolled into the **TRICKS FOR PITS** program.



Program Participant Statistics:

The program involved 54 at-risk youth and pit bulls dogs. The participants were aged between 13 – 19 years of age, with an average equaling 15 years of age. Fifty-nine percent were boys and 41 percent were girls.

A prerequisite to the program was that:

- the participant and dog live in the targeted area ZIP codes;
- the dog be a pit bull type dog;
- the dog be over the age of 12 weeks;
- the dog pass a free veterinary wellness exam; and
- the dog be vaccinated against rabies, distemper, hepatitis (CAV-2), leptospirosis, parainfluenza, and parvovirus.

Graduation required:

- Youth have garnered a basic understanding of pet health and nutrition; and
- Youth/dog have mastered basic and intermediate levels of dog obedience training.

At the close of the program, all dogs were deemed healthy and vaccinated and 63 percent (34) were spayed or neutered. Sixty-three percent (34) of participants graduated and 38 percent (21) achieved perfect attendance.

³ Graph shown on page 16

2009 & 2010 Classes

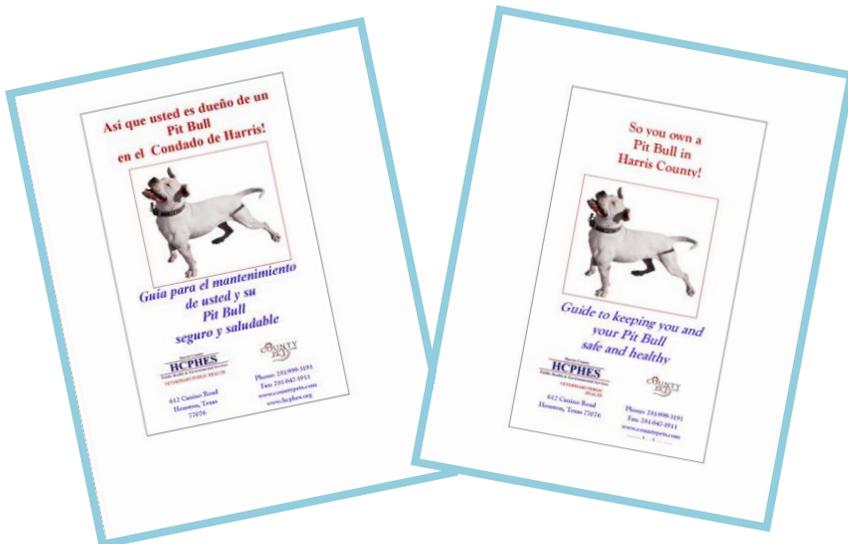
At-risk teens/Pit Bull Terrier Type Dogs Enrolled	54	100 %
At-risk teens/Pit Bull Terrier Type Dogs Graduated	34	63 %
Pre Program Dogs Vaccinated and Healthy	8	15 %
Post Program Dogs Vaccinated and Healthy	54	100 %
Pre Program Dogs Spayed or Neutered	4	7 %
Post Program Dogs Spayed or Neutered	32	60 %

Community Educational Campaign:

As reviewed in program goals on page 9, the community education campaign consisted of integrating HCPHES VPH outreach personnel into the local community and garnering their trust and respect. A month-by-month list of the integration activities implemented is included in Appendix, Section 4.

The bi-lingual brochure of how to be a responsible pit bull type dog owner was used to assist with the conversations and is included in sleeve at back of this folder.

Bi-Lingual English and Spanish Community Educational Brochure



Brochures included in Appendix, Section 1.



Pit bull dogs - free pit bull spay neuter day

The goal of the educational campaign was to integrate the outreach activities of HCPHES VPH to create a feeling of trust and familiarity. Over time it was hoped that with visibility and educational campaigns, the responsible pet ownership message, and in particular, a responsible pit bull type dog ownership message would be part of this community's behavior and culture.

The Aldine community, which is predominantly (61 percent) of Hispanic and Latino origin, received community education in Spanish and English.

HCPHES VPH used the **Appreciative Inquiry**⁴ and **PRECEDE**⁵ Community Health Education Models to execute the educational campaign. The rationale was to focus on the positive aspects of the elements requiring behavior change. HCPHES VPH used colorful brochures/flyers, verbal interaction, and tangible reinforcements, such as leashes, pencils, book covers, and posters.

The educational campaign identified the positive attributes of the pit bull dog, which require additional care, commitment, time, and training.

The brochure highlighted:

- Pit bull dogs have a negative reputation as “mean, vicious, and a public nuisance”. Each pit bull type dog owner has a chance to change that reputation;
- Pit bull dogs are incredible escape artists who will use their strength, agility and terrier instinct to escape from their home confinement. Enclosed fences must be adequately strong and high to keep the pit bull dog from free roaming. Also, pit bull dogs should be kept in crates when left alone inside the home;
- Make sure the pit bull type dog always has identification, license, and rabies vaccination tags on its collar at all times;
- Even if a pit bull dog generally gets along with children and animals, they are known for aggression and should never be left alone with children or other animals;
- Pit bull dogs have a high prey drive which means their urge to chase is inherent in their breed. When taking a pit bull dog away from their home, they must always be on a leash as it is hard to predict when a pit bull will chase after a child, bicycle, squirrel, or cat;
- Spay or neuter pit bull dogs. They live longer, healthier and happier lives. They are easier to raise and train when not triggered by sexual hormones;
- Pit bull dogs are naturally susceptible to parvo, hip, joint, skin disorders, and cataracts. Annual health examinations and vaccinations are very important⁶;

⁴ Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a health education process or philosophy that engages individuals within a community to view renewal, change and focused performance. AI is based on the assumption that communities change in the way they inquire and the claim that a community which inquires into problems or difficult situations will keep finding more of the same, but a community which tries to appreciate what is best in itself will find/discover more and more of what is good.

⁵ PRECEDE (*P*redisposing, *R*einforcing, and *E*nabling Constructs in *E*ducational *D*iagnosis and *E*valuation) outlines a diagnostic planning process to assist in the development of targeted and focused public health programs.

⁶ According to research from the World Small Animal Veterinary Association, Dobermans, American Pit Bull Terriers, Rottweilers and English Springer Spaniels appear to be the most at risk to the canine parvo virus. The association believes this is due weakened immune systems.

- Pit bull dogs are natural athletes and just like human athletes they require a balanced diet, fresh water, and regular exercise; and
- Learn how to read a pit bull signals. Pit bulls often have subtle signals of aggression. If the dog appears to be aggressive, seek immediate help from a professional dog trainer

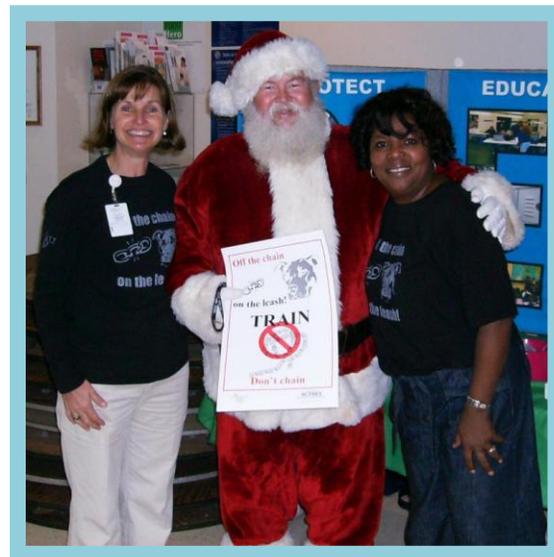
Michael & “Diamond”



The community educational campaign was conducted throughout the year at the following Aldine events and locations:

- Civic association meetings
- Health Fairs
- East Aldine District meetings
- Law enforcement activities and festivals
- Door-to-door - apartment complexes and local housing
- Harris County Juvenile Probation Department
- Car club meetings
- Spay-neuter events
- Rabies vaccination clinics
- Opening of community soccer field
- Christmas and holiday community events
- Aldine Independent School District
- Local parks and recreational facilities
- Community centers
- Grand Parents Raising Grandchildren events

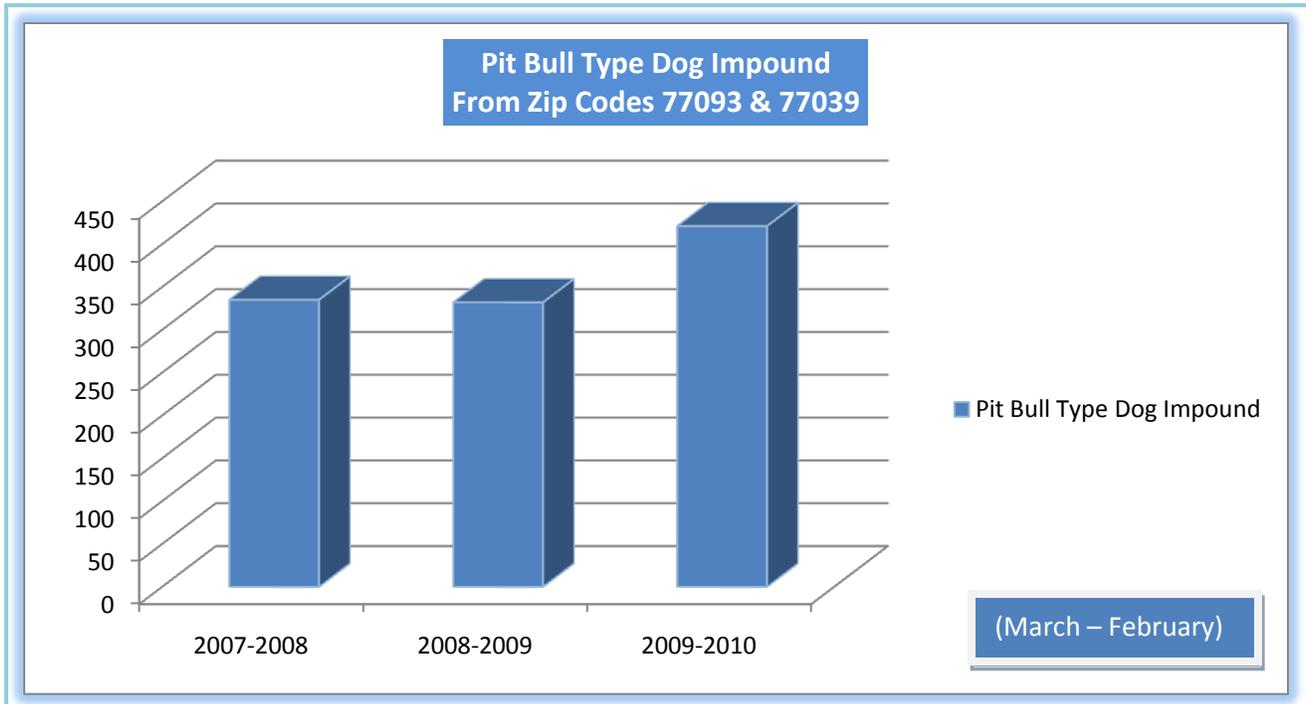
Aldine Community Health Center



Pit bull dog recovering from free spay surgery

Impounds of Pit Bull Type Dogs:

Pit bull type dogs impounded from ZIP codes 77039 and 77093 increased from March 2009 – March 2010 by 20 percent⁷ in comparison to the same time period during the previous 2 years⁸. In comparison, the overall impound of pit bull type dogs in Harris County decreased over the same period by 4 percent. The assumption derived from this statistic was that the targeted area had become 20 percent more likely to report and/or surrender unwanted or free roaming pit bull type dogs to the HCPHES VPH.



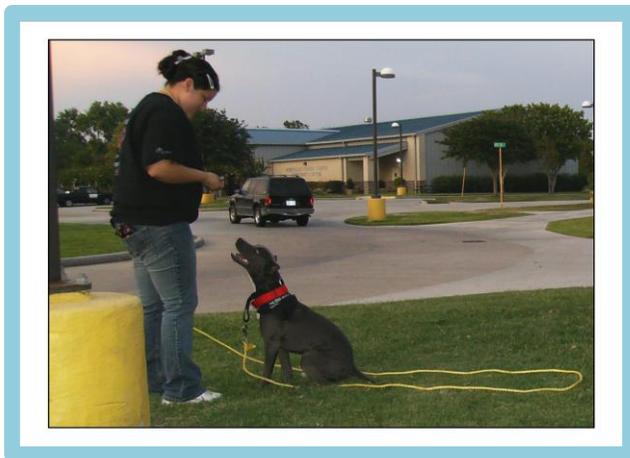
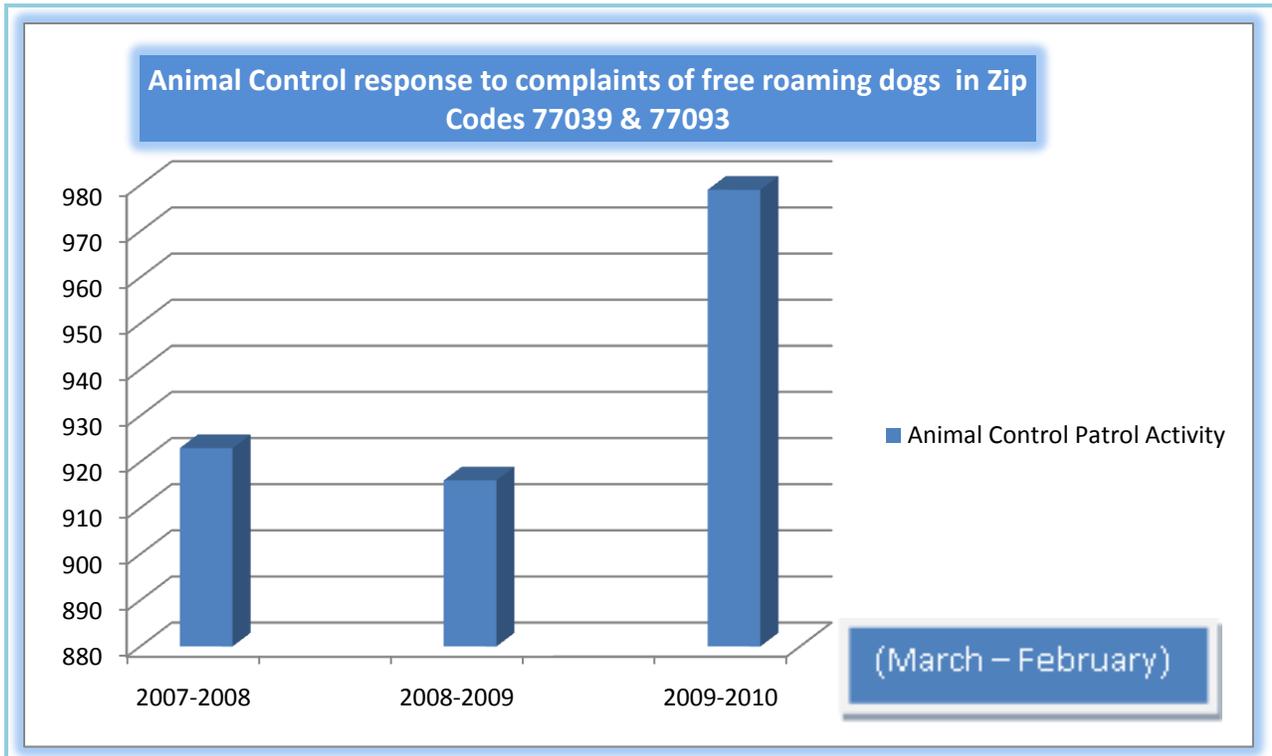
Adriana & “Earthquake” learning to ignore distractions

⁷ Pit bull type dogs impounded from ZIP codes 77039 & 77093 - 2007-2008 = 335; 2008 – 2009 = 332; 2009 – 2010 = 421

⁸ Pit Bull type dogs impounded from Unincorporated Harris County - 2007-2008 = 2,216; 2008 – 2009 = 2,323; 2009 – 2010 = 2137

Citizen Requests for Animal Control Response to Free Roaming Dogs:

Citizen complaints of free roaming dogs and requests for animal control response in ZIP codes 77039 and 77093 increased from March 2009 – March 2010 by 6 percent⁹ in comparison to the same time period during the previous 2 years. The assumption derived from this statistic was that the residents of the targeted area were now 6 percent more likely to report free roaming dogs and utilize HCPHES VPH animal control services.



Myra teaching "Roxy" to come on command

⁹ Animal control response to complaints in ZIP Codes 77039 & 77093 - 2007-2008 = 928; 2008 – 2009 = 916; 2009 – 2010 = 979

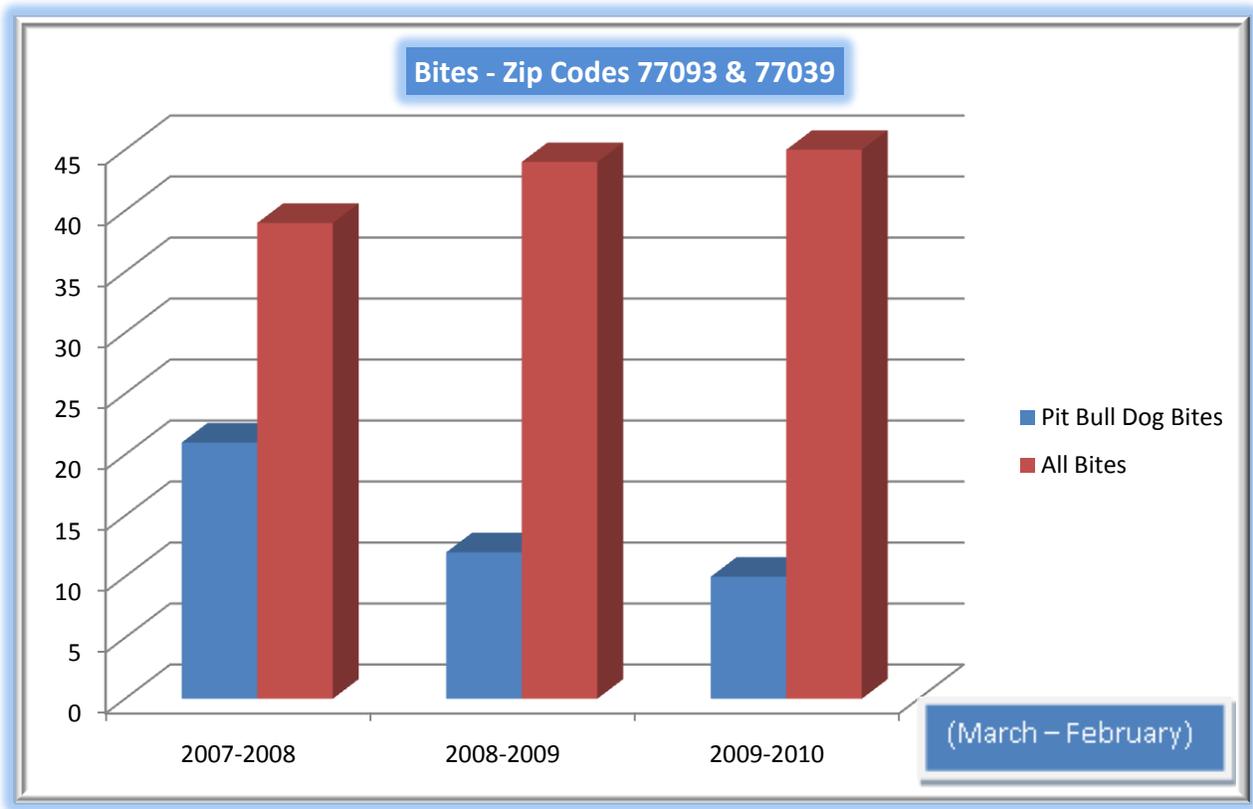
Bite Case Reports:

In reviewing bite case activity reports in ZIP codes 77093 & 77039 between all bites and bites attributed to pit bull type dogs, an interesting statistic presents. Reported bites attributed to pit bull type dogs decreased by 40 percent¹⁰ from March 2009 through February 2010. In comparison, all reported bites increased by 7 percent¹¹ over the same period. The statistics demonstrate an increase in impounded pit bull type dogs and complaints of free roaming dogs, and a sharp decrease of reported bite cases attributed to pit bull type dogs.

An assumption that could be drawn from these results is that the Aldine community is becoming more responsible toward reporting free roaming pit bull type dogs and preventing dog bites attributed to pit bull type dogs.



Marleya & “Princess” learning how to walk to heel



¹⁰ Reported bites attributed to pit bull dogs in ZIP Codes 77039 & 77093 -- 2007-2008 = 21; 2008 – 2009 = 12; 2009 – 2010 = 10

¹¹ Reported all bites in ZIP Codes 77039 & 77093 -- 2007-2008 = 39; 2008 – 2009 = 44; 2009 – 2010 = 45

Program Comparison between the 2009 classes and 2010 classes:

HCPHES VPH ran four sets of classes from August – November in 2009 and another two sets of classes from January – March in 2010. Some similarities and differences were noted between the 2009 and the 2010 classes.

Similarities:

- The youth loved and were very proud of their pit bull dogs;
- The youth developed a respect for the trainer and the program;
- The youth practiced and worked diligently during and in between classes;
- The youth appeared proud to participate in the program and willingly donned their program T-shirts and dog bandanas;
- The majority of youth reported that their dogs lived outdoors on a chain at the commencement of the program. Once the dogs became healthy, socialized and well-mannered, the youth reported that the dogs were accepted into their homes;
- The youth expressed pride and bonding toward their animals;
- None of the youth handlers or their families had been exposed to dog obedience classes and were extremely grateful for the opportunity;
- All were amazed that their dogs could learn to follow simple commands;
- Both sets of classes were held in an outdoor pavilion in James Driver Park, a local Harris County Precinct 2 park;
- None of the dogs were accustomed to dog treats and were not motivated by the more expensive dog treats, such as “Bil-Jac” treats donated to the program. Instead, small pieces of turkey hot dogs and cheese were provided for the participants to use as dog training treats;
- Fifty percent of dogs were originally brought to class in heavy spike ridden harnesses and/or heavy chains;
- The youth voluntarily changed over nylon collars and leashes within 3-4 weeks of classes;
- All of the youth handlers wanted to be responsible dog owners. Prior to participation in the program, they explained they did not understand that their dogs needed vaccinations, veterinary health checks, nourishment, care, socialization, and attention;
- Participants and their families and friends were exposed/taught responsible pet ownership through a professional trainer and positive reinforcement;
- Members of community had the opportunity to observe, since the program was held in a local public park.

The goal of TRICKS FOR PITS program was to have at-risk youth in the Aldine area, view a well trained, socialized, and healthy pit bull as “cool”. This quickly became a reality for participants in the 2009 and 2010 programs.

Differences:

The TRICKS FOR PITS program resulted in some marked differences between the first set of classes in 2009 and the second set in 2010. The chart below summarizes the differences.

Class Comparison Chart:

TRICKS FOR PITS CLASS COMPARISON - 2009 -2010

	Program Commencement 2009	Program Commencement 2010
Dogs Unvaccinated	40 or 99 %	6 or 47 %
Dogs Intact	40 or 99 %	10 or 77 %
Youth Recruitment	> 6 months (Significant Recruitment Activity)	< 2 months (No Recruitment Activity)
	Program Conclusion 2009	Program Conclusion 2010
Dogs Vaccinated	41 or 100 %	13 or 100 %
Dogs Spayed or Neutered During Program	25 or 61 %	3 or 23 %
Graduated	28 or 68 %	6 or 46 %

Health of Participating Pit Bull Type Dogs:

Ninety-nine percent of participating youth (2009) reported their dogs (1) had never received veterinary health exams or vaccinations. The program provided free veterinary health exams and vaccinations for 40 TRICKS FOR PITS dogs. Only vaccinated and healthy dogs over the age of 3 months were allowed to participate. Based upon preliminary screening during the recruitment phase, a significant number of the dogs appeared to the program coordinator and the dog trainer to be undernourished, thin, or had sores on the ears from overaggressive ear cropping.

A thin “Money” at the start of the program



A robust “Money” during graduation



As a result of the robust educational campaign, peer advice from the 2009 graduates, the 2010, candidates realized that dogs needed to be healthy and vaccinated to participate in the program. Consequently, 53 percent (7) of the 2010 recruits took their dogs to the local veterinarian for a health check and vaccinations prior to applying to for the 2010 classes in the hope that this would help ensure acceptance to the program. In 2010, only 15 percent (2) of the dogs appeared undernourished at the preliminary screening during the recruitment phase.

HCPHES VPH endeavored, at every opportunity, to encourage the **TRICKS FOR PITS** participants and candidates to utilize their local veterinarian. Performing the rabies and DHLPP vaccinations and wellness examinations at the HCPHES VPH animal shelter would have eliminated a learning opportunity and potential for familiarity with the local veterinarian. HCPHES VPH partnered with two local veterinary clinics to provide veterinary services. These veterinary clinics kindly provided the health wellness examinations and vaccinations at 50 percent of the market price and were willing to service the youth and pit bull type dog in their clinics.

The youth candidates were provided vouchers entitling them to the free veterinary services. If the presenting dog had additional health concerns, the youth was responsible for the cost to treat and resolve this health issue prior to commencing class. No dog was accepted into the **TRICKS FOR PITS** class without health approval from the local veterinarian and proof of vaccinations. The youth were proud to have vaccinations and “proof of health” papers on their dogs and would often visit HCPHES VPH to present their dog’s new health papers and veterinarian comments. Please see Appendix, Section 2, for copy of the voucher.

Spay-Neuter:

In 2009, 99 percent of dogs (40) entering in the program were sexually intact. By the end of the 2009 program, 63 percent of these dogs (26) were spayed or neutered by choice of their youth owner. In 2010, 77 percent of dogs (10) entering in the program were sexually intact. The reduction of intact dogs was due to on-going education and word of mouth amongst the youth regarding the benefits of spay-neutering their pit bull dogs. By the end of the 2010 program, 46 percent of these dogs (6) were spayed or neutered by choice.

Youth Recruitment:

In 2009, the youth were at first suspicious of HCPHES VPH’s pit bull program offer and unwilling to apply. Over a 6 month period, HCPHES VPH personnel attended community events, meetings and festivals to garner support from local stakeholders and business leaders. The intent was to become a familiar face in the community and to personally meet and talk to as many community residents as possible concerning responsible pit bull ownership. After the 6 months of effort, 41 youth candidates from the targeted area were recruited and accepted into the program..

In comparison, in 2010, the **TRICKS FOR PITS** program had become a familiar event within the community and the responsible pit bull owner message was beginning to show a positive impact.

The community stakeholders, leaders, youth and community at large began to thank HCPHES VPH for their willingness to help Aldine’s youth and community learn how to become responsible pit bull owners. In 2010, recruitment required less than 2 months to the **TRICKS FOR PITS** program. No additional recruitment campaigns or community outreach was conducted to reach the participants in the 2010 program.

Graduation:

In 2009, 68 percent (28) of 41 youth, reached graduation and 22 percent (9) achieved a perfect attendance award. In 2010, only 46 percent (6) reached graduation and 8 percent (1) achieved a perfect attendance award. The explanation for the decrease in attendance in the 2010 program was thought to be for the following reasons:

- The 2009 classes were held from August through October when the weather, although hot, is predictable and the daylight hours were longer. The classes were held on Monday and Wednesday evenings, allowing participants the ability to catch up on missed classes on the alternate evening of classes.
- In 2010, classes were held from January – March when the weather is cold, full of torrential rains and early nightfall. Many of the youth did not own warm coats (often came to class in tee-shirts). Their families had problems transporting them to class during torrential downpours and in the dark. The classes were held only on Monday nights, thus if the students missed a class due to other commitments or transportation problems, they had no alternate make-up evening.
- Many youth were excited by the help and encouragement given. During the 2009 classes, youth were given daily access to HCPHES VPH personnel via text messaging, e-mail, or telephone for dog/class related questions. Also, HCPHES VPH sent weekly homework and class reminders to the youth via text messaging and telephone calls. In the 2010 classes, HCPHES VPH personnel deliberately sent limited reminders of class and homework assignments. The reason was to determine how much on-going contact and encouragement was actually required to achieve a satisfactory graduation rate. The 2009 classes achieved a 68 percent graduation rate versus only 46 percent in 2010. Other factors such as weather, in addition to limited encouragement and reminders, were present, that may possibly have impacted attendance to the 2010 classes. [“Apache” at graduation](#)

Hugo, friends and “Gotti”

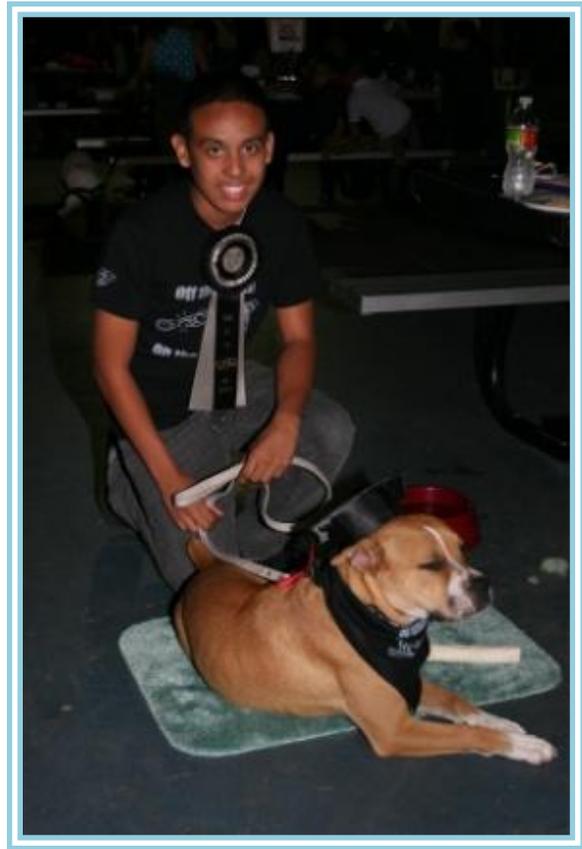


- Out of the 34 graduating youth/dogs; 35 percent (12) received perfect attendance awards and the other 22 graduates only missed one or two classes each! Also prevalent was a marked change in the participating youth. The positive reinforcement model so carefully executed with the youth was contagious. The youth demonstrated a marked change in their attitude to one of kindness and respect toward their dogs and each other. The program plan originally incorporated 8 dog obedience classes. It was soon evident that these dogs required more socialization opportunities than originally planned and so the classes were extended by an additional one to two weeks and the youth were encouraged to attend other groups' classes for additional socialization opportunities in a safe and monitored environment. The program was instituted upon the premise of "positive reinforcement", and did not include the use of pinch collars or choke chains during any portion of the dog training. Even the perception of violence or brutality toward the dogs may undo the bond and connection between the youth and their dogs. All of the 34 graduating students/dogs have accomplished up to intermediate level in dog obedience using only a martingale nylon collar and nylon dog leash.

Monica & "Beans"



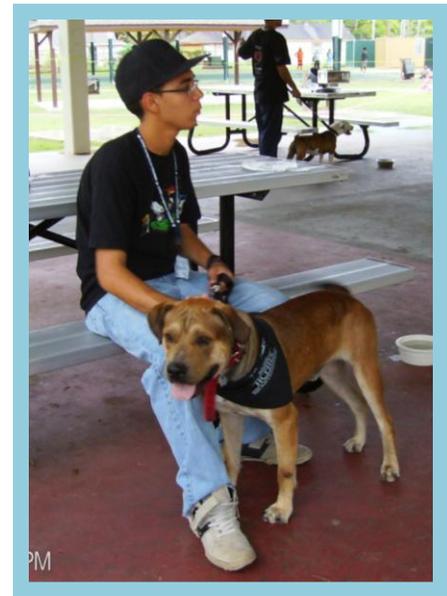
Santos & "Mimi"



Soft Impact:

Prior to the TRICKS FOR PITS program, many pit bull type dog owners only came into contact with Veterinary Public Health under negative circumstances, such as dog bite investigations, rabies quarantine, free roaming dogs/cats and leash law enforcement.

Rodolfo & “Kilo”



“Lino” and family



One family, whose pit bull called “Lino” had been on its chain since he was six weeks old, told us that they had never loved a dog before, and that they had grown to love their dog as if he were a member of the family.

Adriana & Earthquake receiving their A+

The program recruited a number of youth who reported to be high school drop-outs. As the youth experienced achievement and success with their dogs, their confidence appeared to grow. One participant informed HCPHES VPH that she took her test results into school to show her teachers and tell them that they were wrong about her and that she was capable of getting an A+.

One youth is now volunteering at the HCPHES VPH animal shelter and reported to us that she is obtaining her GED with the long-term goal of becoming a veterinary technician. Based upon conversations with the graduating youth, 11 percent (4) indicated to HCPHES VPH that based upon their success with the TRICKS FOR PITS and the encouragement they received during the program, they gained



the desire to return to school to obtain their G.E.D. certificates. They explained that the program gave them the confidence and desire to succeed beyond **TRICKS FOR PITS**. Esteban & "Paws"

Thanks to additional donations to the **TRICKS FOR PITS** endeavor, successful graduates were offered the chance to take the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen (AKC CGC) test, at no cost. HCPHES VPH provided AKC CGC practice sessions and testing after the **TRICKS FOR PITS** graduation. It was discovered that the **TRICKS FOR PITS** name and test held more weight and credibility with the youth than the AKC CGC test. HCPHES VPH will re-evaluate the process by which the youth are offered the AKC CGC test and class education of the rationale for AKC CGC certification.



The PETCO Foundation provided funding for free spay or neuter surgeries for each participant's dog. Fifty-two percent (28) made their dogs available for spay or neuter surgery, and reported that they would have previously bred their dogs for additional income or believed that an intact dog was a happier dog.

Often, community members would stop to watch the **TRICKS FOR PITS** classes.

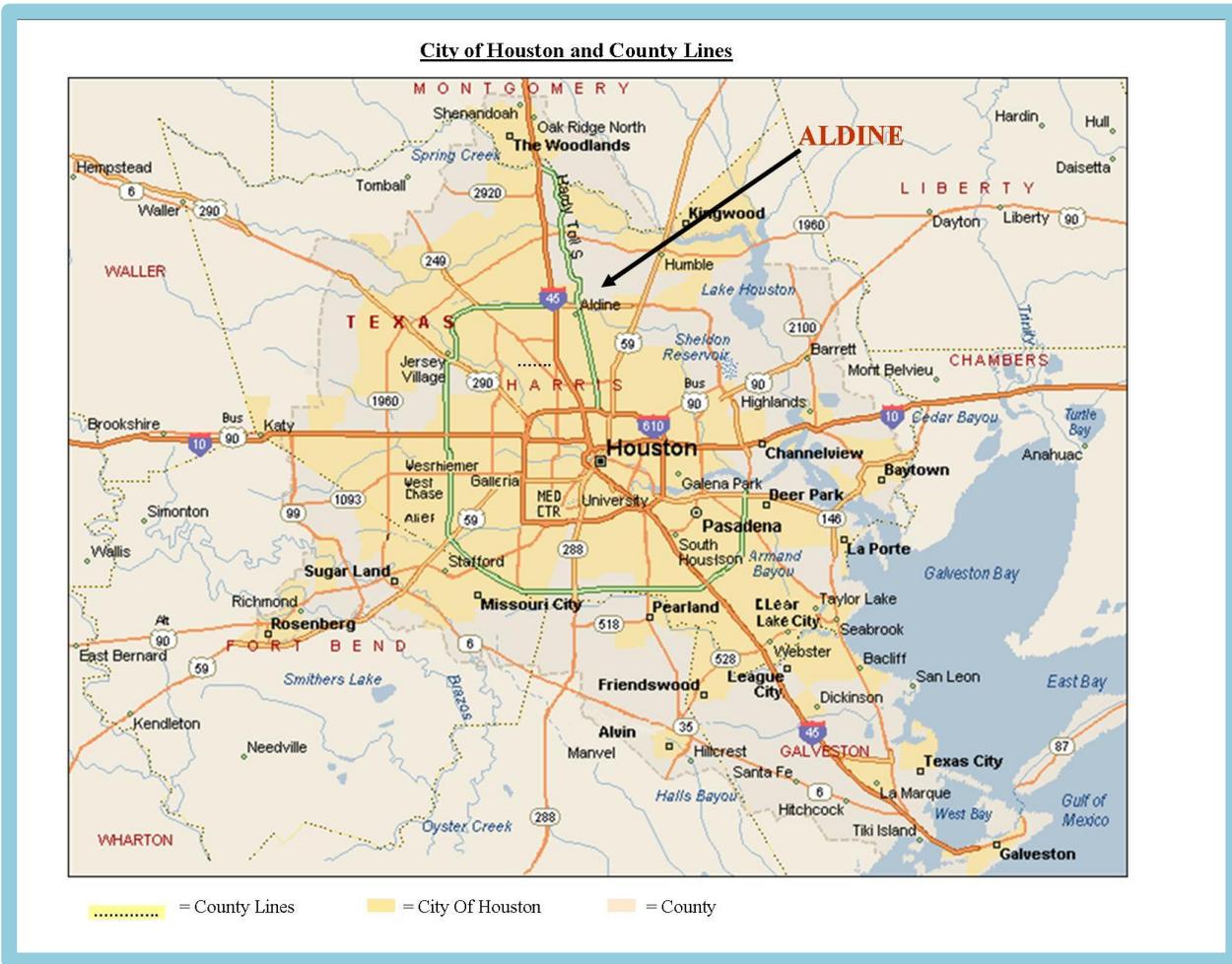
Local youth watching the **TRICKS FOR PITS** class



Representative examples of graduate feedback and comments are included in Appendix, Section 7.

Spread of Pit Bull Type Dog Training Classes:

An additional soft impact to the TRICKS FOR PITS program was the creation of the “Bully Breed Training & Manners Classes” offered by the City of Houston’s Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (B.A.R.C.). Based upon the success of the TRICKS FOR PITS program and B.A.R.C.’s concerns over irresponsible pit bull ownership within the City of Houston limits, B.A.R.C. decided to implement basic to intermediate level obedience pit bull type dog training classes. The instigation of the B.A.R.C.’s pit bull type dog training classes reinforces the TRICKS FOR PITS goal.



Collaboration:

The **TRICKS FOR PITS** program provided an opportunity for many organizations and individuals to collaborate to change the behavior of youth who own pit bull type dogs in ZIP codes 77039 & 77093.

[Collage from graduation night](#)

Generous donations and support were provided by the:

- Houston Kennel Club,
- Harris County Sherriff's Office,
- American Kennel Club,
- a private local pit bull dog trainer,
- Harris County Precinct 2 Parks,
- Lowes Inc.,
- Aldine YOUTH,
- Harris County Juvenile Probation Department,
- East Aldine Management District,
- Fiesta Mart Inc.,
- Merial Inc.,
- Citizens for Animal Protection,
- Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, and
- PETCO Foundation.

Without support and cooperation from these organizations, the program would not have had the depth of commitment or community enthusiasm. Also, many unforeseen needs arose. For example, the dogs were not accustomed to dog training treats and would not eat them. All participating youth were provided ample cheese and turkey hot dogs to aid in their dog training by Fiesta Mart and the Houston Kennel Club. The American Kennel Club and Merial Inc. provided health and maintenance literature. The Houston Kennel Club designed and donated the beautiful **TRICKS FOR PITS** rosettes presented upon graduation. Due to the complexity of bringing a group of intact pit bull type dogs and their youth handlers together, the classes were very labor intensive. The Houston Kennel Club and Harris County Precinct 2 Parks volunteered their time to assist in the program execution.



Key points for organizations wishing to replicate the TRICKS FOR PITS program

HCPHES VPH advice to any organization wishing to replicate the program is as follows:

1. Hire a bi-lingual program manager who sincerely cares about the youth, their families, and the dogs;
2. Utilize communication tools such as text messaging for constant communication, reminders etc. with the youth and their families. Listen to the youths' concerns and comments;
3. Ensure all dogs enrolled in the program are vaccinated, licensed, healthy and over three months of age;
4. Hold classes on week nights after school and work hours;
5. Provide all veterinary services and training supplies, at no charge, until graduation is completed;
6. Ensure adequate safety and security, such as the scheduling local law enforcement and animal control services to be available during the classes;
7. Utilize positive reinforcement in every aspect of the program for the youth and their dogs;
8. Ensure dog trainer is highly experienced with pit bull type dogs and well versed in positive reinforcement methodologies. The training and security personnel should not be intimidated by the pit bull type dogs and have sufficient experience to accurately read the dogs' signals with ease;
9. Ensure the program is executed for the betterment of the youth and their dogs. Do not single out the youth and utilize the program for publicity or alternate motives;
10. Encourage the youth owners to be the dog's handler at all times and do not allow other family or friends to step in and train the dog; and
11. Make sure the community identifies pit bull type dog issues as a concern.

Hugo and "Gotti" waiting by the animal control truck for his class to commence



Robert & "Smokey" letting community members pet his dog



Grant Stewardship

HCPHES VPH received \$10,000 from the PetSmart Charities' grant which equaled 24 percent of total project value.

Details of how PetSmart Charities grant funds were expended:

Date	Vendor	PO # or Invoice#	Amount	Rec'd	Paid
2/12/2009	Petsmart Charities	681507185	<u>\$ 10,000.00</u>	3/3/2009	<u>\$3,845.57</u>
		BALANCE	<u>\$ 5,422.33</u>		\$6,154.43
Expenditures					
<i>Tricks for Pits</i>					
5/20/2009	Premier Pets	P159481	\$ 568.91	X	\$ 568.91
5/20/2009	Little York Vet Clinic	P158839	\$ 555.00	X	\$ 555.00
5/20/2009	Courtney Pet Supplies	P158840	\$ 512.80	X	\$ 512.80
6/8/2009	Northeast News	P159481	\$ 100.00	X	\$ 100.00
9/3/2009	A to Z Specialties (vouchers)	R304949	\$ 97.20	X	\$ 100.00
9/8/2009	Sprint Cell Phone	P163391	\$ 100.96	X	\$ 100.96
10/27/2009	A to Z Specialties (T-shirts)	R308778	\$ 765.25	X	\$ 765.25
8/11/2009	Reddy Pet Clinic	P163872	\$ 900.00	X	\$ 165.00
11/3/2009	A to Z Specialties (brochures)	R309280	\$ 885.00	X	\$ 885.00
3/11/2010	Sprint Cell Phone		\$92.65		\$92.65
			<u>\$ 4,577.77</u>	4/14/2010	<u>\$3,845.57</u>

HCPHES VPH utilized seven suppliers whose invoices were greater than \$100 in value.

Invoices greater than \$100 in value:

Supplier / Invoices > \$100	Product
Premier Pets	Dog leashes and collars
Little York Vet Clinic	Pit bull health exam and vaccinations
Courtney Pet Supplies	Dog collars
Northeast News	Newspaper advertisement
A to Z Specialties	Printing - "Responsible Pit Bull Owner" brochure, T-shirts, veterinary vouchers
Sprint Cell Phone	Texting capability
Reddy Pet Clinic	Pit bull health exam and vaccinations

(Please see Appendix, Section 9, for copies of all invoices over \$100.00 in value)

PetSmart Charities Funds not Expended:

HCPHES VPH received \$10,000 from PetSmart Charities toward implementation of the TRICKS FOR PITS program. As a result of the success and unexpected community acceptance of the program, donations were received from community partners (Houston Kennel Club, American Kennel Club, Harris County Precinct 2 Parks, Lowes, Fiesta Mart, Citizens for Animal Protection, Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, PETCO Foundation, and most generous of all, a private local pit bull dog trainer who provided 43 hours of group pit bull dog obedience classes, completely free of charge. Consequently, funding and in-kind donations resulted in a TRICKS FOR PITS utilization of 38 percent of the grant donation. (A program balance of \$6,154.43 remains, as outlined in the grant stewardship chart, on previous page # 28).

The targeted community appears to see the value of a safe and healthy environment, no longer inhibited by free roaming, unvaccinated and anti-social pit bull terrier type dogs. The community is planning to continue community dog training events utilizing the TRICKS FOR PITS graduates and the model of creating youth ambassadors for responsible pet ownership.

HCPHES VPH plans to duplicate its responsible pet ownership intervention model in the Cloverleaf/Channelview area (ZIP codes 77015 & 77530) of East Houston. The program location was chosen based on the high numbers of dog and pit bull related bites, strays, free roaming, abandonment and vicious patrol calls and similar demographic profiles to that of Aldine.

Due to the overwhelming interest and acceptance of the TRICKS FOR PITS program, HCPHES VPH is in the process of developing a strategic plan for targeted dog training with a long-range goal of empowering individual communities to value, develop, and provide for themselves comprehensive training services in their neighborhoods.



With this plan in mind, HCPHES VPH respectfully requests permission to utilize the amount of **6,154.43** toward expansion of any program related to responsible pet ownership in the Cloverleaf/Channelview area (ZIP codes 77015 & 77530) until all funds are exhausted.

Animal Control Officer picking up a dog in Cloverleaf/Channelview area

The proposed targeted areas, Cloverleaf and Channelview are located in east central Harris County and are known as oil refinery suburbs of metropolitan Houston.

Publicity, Promotion and Advertising

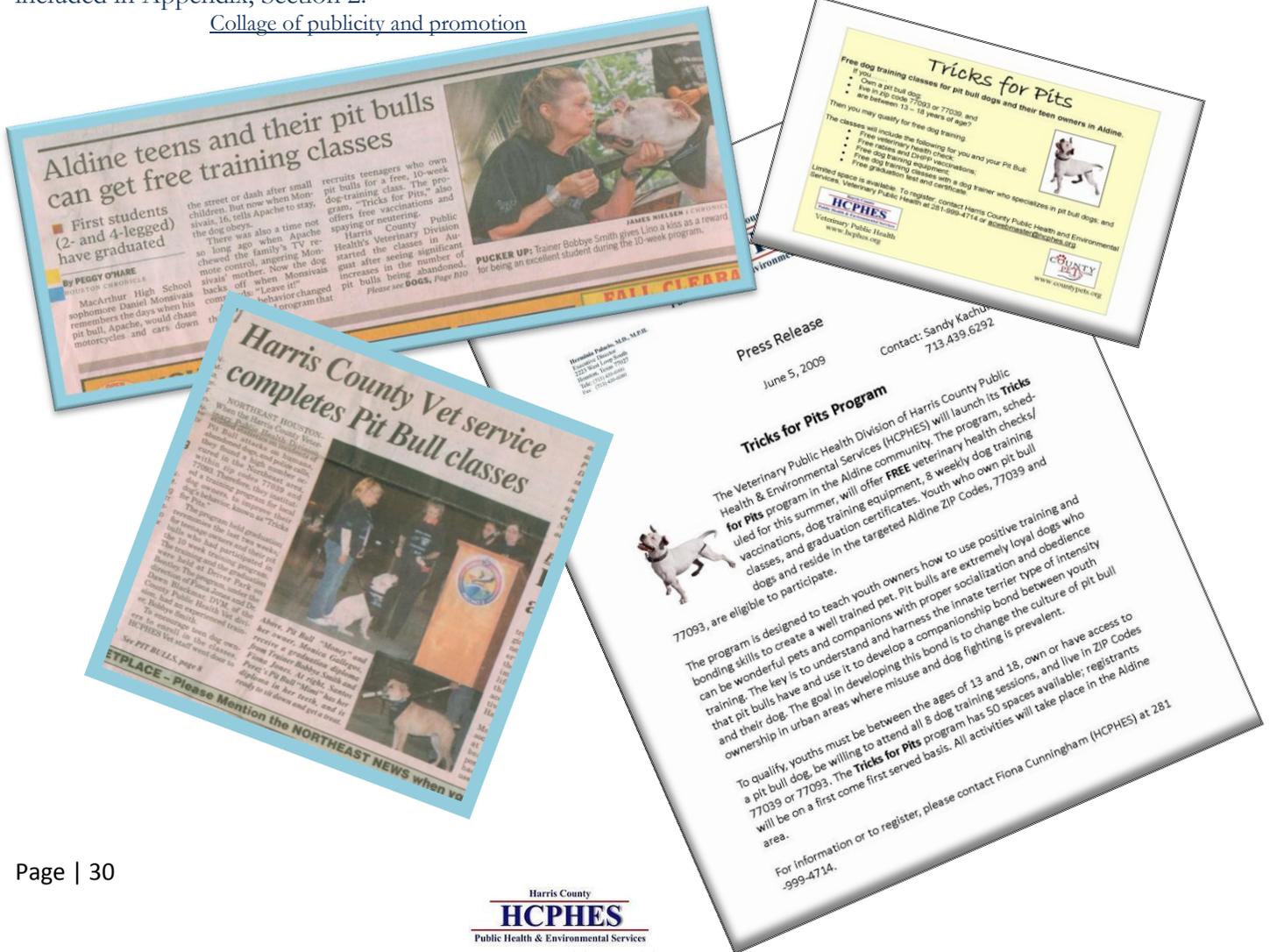
The **TRICKS FOR PITS** program resulted in articles published in the Houston Chronicle (October 8th, 2009) and Northeast News (October 27th, 2009). Copies included in Appendix, Section 3.

Two advertisements were placed in the Northeast news in April 2009 and in June and qualified form letters were mailed out to 425 pit bull owners in the targeted area. Copies included in Appendix, Section 2.

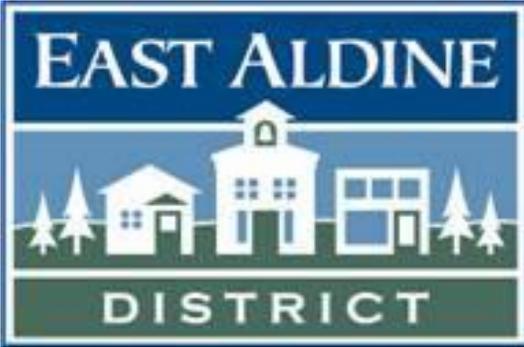
Door-to-door canvassing of local residents was conducted at apartment complexes, residential areas, recreation facilities, parks, community centers, and community holiday events. During these times, **TRICKS FOR PITS** flyers, door hangers and the responsible pit bull brochure were evenly distributed throughout the community. Motivators, such as T-shirts, dog bandanas, dog leashes, book covers, and posters that communicate the pit bull message, were also distributed throughout the community.

A calendar of events is included in Appendix, Section 4, and copies of promotional materials are included in Appendix, Section 2.

Collage of publicity and promotion



Community Acknowledgement



HCPHES VPH received letters of recognition from many community leaders and stakeholders. In addition, The East Aldine District presented HCPHES VPH with a strategic partner award and acknowledgement for its contributions for the Responsible Pet Ownership Intervention Project and the TRICKS FOR PITS program.

“The Strategic Partner Awards

Given to individuals and organizations who provide outstanding service in support of district programs and initiatives. Categories:

- *Governmental*
- *Education*
- *Public Safety*
- *Public Health*
- *Community and Youth Services*
- *Business*

HCPHES, you, and your team won for your outstanding service through educational services and for training to our youth with their pets. The Tricks for Pits Program was outstanding. Your commitment to teaching responsibility and proper ownership and treatment of pets can only lead to our youths understanding so many other necessary social skills that will make them better community members and perhaps one day even community leaders. The East Aldine District Board recognized this initiative as a part of the comprehensive quality of life issue that we cannot address alone and for which community partners such as HCPHES are invaluable in support of our mission.

*Thank you again for everything you do.
See you soon. Best Regards,
Gretchen Larson,
Economic Development Director, East Aldine District.”*

Copies of community letters and acknowledgements are included in Appendix, Section 8.