

Sweet Pea to be Honored as “Dog of the Year” at ASPCA’s 2019 Humane Awards in New York City

by Kathy McGuire, president and founder, NJ Aid for Animals

I’m so happy to share the news that Sweet Pea’s life has come full circle. We rescued her from a Camden City garbage dump in 2015 and now the former dogfighting victim is getting ready to strut her stuff on the red carpet in New York City!

Our very own [Sweet Pea](#), the Official Face of Dogfighting Awareness for the State of New Jersey, will be honored as the [ASPCA’s](#) (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) “Dog of the Year” at its Annual Humane Awards Luncheon on Thursday, November 14 in New York City.

Every year, the ASPCA honors animal heroes who have gone above and beyond to help humans, as well as people who are making significant strides to improve animal welfare aligned with the ASPCA’s mission of providing effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Sweet Pea is the 2019 Dog of the Year for bringing attention to the persistent crime and brutality of dogfighting, busting breed stereotypes, and inspiring donations for animals in need.

Since we rescued Sweet Pea from a dogfighting operation in Camden, NJ Aid for Animals has been overseeing the Sweet Pea Fund, which raises funds for dogfighting victims and other abused and abandoned animals.

Sweet Pea has been a beacon of hope for many dogfighting victims and has shown the positivity that comes from such a tragic experience. She has inspired us all to be better advocates for animal welfare.

As a former “bait dog,” Sweet Pea was a helpless victim abused by a dogfighting operation to train fighting dogs to maim or kill their opponents – making her highly disposable in the dogfighting operation. When she became too badly injured to be useful, they abandoned her at a Camden City garbage dump. When our team rushed Sweet Pea to Mount Laurel Animal Hospital, she was in excruciating pain from her wounds. Sweet Pea was “one of the worst bait dog survivors” that Dr. Marcy Rose, her treating veterinarian, had ever seen. For days, Sweet Pea endured being swathed in bandages and covered with salve. With her flesh exposed like a burn victim, Sweet Pea was in unimaginable pain.”

Busting Breed Stereotypes

Despite her brutal past, Sweet Pea busted breed stereotypes by maintaining a friendly and playful disposition that has surprised local police, animal welfare professionals, the community and even local leaders. In 2018, Sweet Pea’s gentle personality and love for everyone garnered a resolution from the State of New Jersey, and she was named the “Official Face of Dogfighting Awareness for New Jersey.” In 2019, she began appearing in public billboard campaigns to bring attention to the persistent crime and brutality of dogfighting.

Dogfighting Still Prevails

Despite being a felony in all 50 states, dogfighting is an industry that requires animal cruelty to function. It continues to grow while other illegal activities sustain it. Dogfighting never operates in isolation and dogfighters are willing to risk penalties for animal cruelty. Wagering on the lives of these dogs is just a glimpse of what goes on. Sweet Pea's life was caught up in the multi-million dogfighting industry."

How You Can Help

To support Sweet Pea in her tireless efforts to raise funds for other animals like her with no advocate, or to follow her journey, go to <https://njafa.org/blog/sweet-pea/> or visit her on Facebook at [The Sweet Pea Fund](#).

For more information about NJ Aid for Animals, visit <http://www.njafa.org> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NJAFA>.