

Facebook post leads to animal abuse rescue in Kennett

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Photo by Laura Ford, staff On Monday evening, Kennett Human Dept. Officer Kayla Gozell (left) and KPD Cpl. Alan Campbell put into the KHD truck one of nine pit bull terriers that were removed from a Harrison Street residence in Kennett.

When the photo of a man holding a pole next to a dog lying on the ground in a fenced in backyard hit Facebook, it went viral, from Omaha to Canada. The young boy who posted it might be considered a hero.

Nine dogs belonging to Crystal Wright and Maudrice Daniels of 203 W. Harrison St. were taken from the residence on Monday, at approximately 4:30 p.m. They were cited on nine counts of animal abuse and neglect.

According to a report from City Attorney Terry McVey, on Monday, Dec. 28, a post was listed on Facebook concerning the welfare of a dog at the address. The post made by a neighbor stated that he observed Daniels grab a dog several times, throwing it against the house, and then hitting the dog over the head with a metal pole, stunning the dog and causing it to go into convulsions. The neighbor also posted a picture along with his post showing the dog lying on its side with its legs outstretched and Daniels standing over the dog with the metal pole in his hand. On his post, the neighbor said that he was tired of seeing the neighbors beating and starving the dogs, and made comments that it had been going on long enough and he could no longer remain quiet about it.

Once it hit the Internet on social media, it was noticed by numerous people and the post was shared with the Kennett Humane Department and Animal Control Officer Tena Petix. On the evening of Dec. 28, Capt. Tony Smith and KHD Officer Kayla Gozell went to the residence, but after looking at the dogs the officers were allowed to see, they did not notice any visible marks on the dogs; however, several dogs were skinny and one in particular appeared to have a severe case of mange.

Daniels and Wright stated that the animals were being treated at Ken-Mo Vet Clinic in Kennett. At the time, the officers could not do anything. Other reports followed and several visits were made to the residence, but until Petix personally went to house, no one had seen all of the animals. Petix demanded Wright show her all of the dogs, at which time she took Petix to the bathroom where she found an adult black

and white pit bull terrier curled up, severely under weight, and seemed to be afraid to move. When Petix called to it, the animal stood up with great difficulty and appeared to be broken in spirit and was afraid of everything around it. In the report Petix said that the dog seemed very lethargic and afraid. Afterward, Wright directed

Petix said that she was aware of the incident immediately once it hit the Internet, and KPD and KHD responded immediately. "I did reply that everything looks fine and taken care of, simply because, like any other search warrant, it cannot be announced on Facebook," said Petix. "If we did, when we got there, we would come to an empty house with no dogs." She said people need to understand that the authorities cannot just go barging into a home. "We have to go by the rules, because if we don't, then we can be accused of breaking the law. If we did that, we run the risk of messing up our case, or arriving and the animals not being there. Or we run the risk of the animals being returned to the owners because we did not carry out our investigation properly."

Petix added that she did not care how much flack she took on social media, by the media, or from anyone else, but in the end, the problem will be taken care of. "Time doesn't always permit us to do it as fast as people think it should," she explained. "We have to have all of our ducks in a row. We have to have a vet on call in order to take them straight from the environment they came out of to the vet." She said that she could not take them to the pound and wait two or three days before getting them to a vet. "We had Dr. (Everett) Mobley from four o'clock on accommodate us and vetted the animals," she said. "We had to make arrangements, where we were all where we needed to be so we would be in sync with one another."

Petix said that people need to understand that KHD is not a rescue. "We do rescue dogs, but we handle the criminal part," said Petix. "We work with excellent rescues, but the fact remains, that once we finish, the rescue will tag the dogs for adoption." She said that people need to understand that it is like removing a child from a home, it takes a warrant from a judge. And like a child, she said the animal has to go immediately to the vet to make sure it receives treatment. "In this case, we have allegations about dogs being beaten, so we had to do what was needed."

According to Petix, Mobley found all of the dogs underweight, and the majority of them had internal parasites and fleas. One had mange, and two had leg fractures that require surgery. "This type of surgery will cost approximately \$5,000 per dog," said Petix. "The allegations were that the dogs were being beaten, and people wondered why the neighbor did not report it sooner. He is a kid, and he had a parent afraid for his safety because of what they were seeing. He did the next best thing, and that was to Facebook it." She said the juvenile's story never wavered.

Petix said also that were allegations on social media that Kennett would not take action and another outside agency had to be called in to take over; however, she said that was not true. The case was handled by the KPD and the search warrant was requested by Cpl. Alan Campbell, Petix, KHD Officer Kayla Gozell, and because they

were short on the street with officers tied up on other calls, the sheriff was aware and offered Petix assistance if she needed it. She accepted his offer and sent Deputies Joey Philpott and Aaron Waynick to stand by in order to keep the peace, but no other agencies were at the scene. The dogs were tagged as property of the City of Kennett immediately, and they were driven directly from the residence on Harrison Street to Mobley's clinic where they were vetted and later transported to the KHD pound. They will be housed there until they are released by the court system to go wherever they may go.

*Updated at 8:30 a.m. 1/6/15- A tenth dog was picked up by KHD after press time Tuesday.**