



Message from the President

By Doris Day

'Police departments throughout the country need to develop better training so officers can more accurately assess which dogs are life-threatening and dangerous and which ones are not.'

Do you remember the letter we published after our 2003 story on the wonderful organization, Downtown Dog Rescue? Lori Wiese wrote us:

"Thank you for the terrific article on Downtown Dog Rescue in the Summer 2003 issue of the Animal Guardian. We have had the most wonderful responses and some very generous donations, as well as the opportunity to meet some of the people who donated goods and money. Your article has really helped our organization out a great deal."

Our article told the heartwarming and inspiring story of Downtown Dog Rescue, a non-profit program which cares for the abused, abandoned, neglected and injured dogs in the "Skid Row" area of downtown Los Angeles. It revealed the stories of some of the special people and their dogs and how this organization has helped them. Our members' generosity was overwhelming, and still continues.

It was nice knowing that we helped, and we have kept in touch with Downtown Dog Rescue about writing a follow-up story. Then came a jolt, as the *Los Angeles Times* reported:

"Slow-moving and heavy-set, Teri the pit bull was the pride of animal lovers who find homes for stray dogs roaming the streets of downtown Los Angeles. Leaders of the Downtown Dog Rescue would take those curious about their organization to an alley off 7th Place, where Teri lived with her master, Benny Josephs. Teri's photo even appears with

Josephs' in the group's 2005 calendar, representing April.

"But Teri won't be around to see the calendar page when it's flipped over at Josephs' alley alcove. On Wednesday, February 9, a Los Angeles police officer shot the animal in front of the gate to the pair's makeshift home. A city animal control officer said Teri died on the way to a clinic...."

The debate about what provoked the killing rages non-stop. As shocking as Teri's death is, we find this was not an isolated incident. We've recently learned about similar deaths of dogs in Ohio, Colorado, Texas, Minnesota and Michigan.

According to the *Times*, one out of every four times Los Angeles police officers intentionally fired their guns during the last 20 years, the target was man's best friend. "LAPD data show that shooting incidents involving dogs are commonplace. Since 1985, police have shot at more than 465 dogs, killing at least 200 and wounding at least 140, according to incident reports," we read in the newspaper story.

According to Holly Hazard, DDAL's Executive Director, police departments need to focus more attention on sensitivity towards canine companions. "While many police agencies have spent time and training to become sensitized to the plethora of different cultures and customs in their communities, the lack of education and understanding of how to deal with dogs has clearly had a negative

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