

SHOW ME THE MONEY \$

BY JULIE MILLER DOWLING

Pinups Pose for Pit Bulls

Can you put lipstick on a pit bull? Whatever you think of former VP candidate Sarah Palin's hockey-mom-pit-bull-lipstick comment, there's no denying that the lipstick-pit bull combination you'll see in the Pinups for Pitbulls calendar is making a difference for this much-maligned breed.

The calendar features corseted women and their pit bulls in poses reminiscent of those iconic pinups plastered in World War II army barracks. That vintage look is not accidental: World War II was also a time when the pit bull was considered a war hero, a companion, a member of the family. And this is how Deirdre Franklin, founder of Pinups for Pitbulls, wants the world to see today's pit bull.

She started Pinups for Pitbulls after returning from a search-and-rescue effort in Hurricane Katrina's wake, where she saw firsthand the plight of pit bulls on streets and in shelters. "I didn't want to be an arm-chair activist, hoping someone would stop breed-specific legislation, would stop mistreating pit bulls, and would stop misrepresenting them in the media," says Franklin, a Pennsylvania pit bull owner, burlesque performer, housing counselor, and animal rescue volunteer. "I realized I had access to something unique: photographers and models who stood behind me and many who stood for the same cause."

The result of that collaboration isn't one of those cute pet calendars that flood the market each winter. Rather, Pinups for Pitbulls targets people not easily swayed by a floppy-eared puppy propped next to a pretty fern. What better way to trick people into paying attention to our message, asks Franklin, than pairing a beautiful woman and a great dog?

Not just any pretty face can get into the increasingly popular Pinups for Pitbulls. "The women in the 2009 calendar are all dog advocates," says Franklin. "They were selected based on what they do to help the breed, what they were willing to do to help Pinups for Pitbulls move forward with



Little Darling (Deirdre Franklin), left, founder of Pinups for Pitbulls, and Audiogirl (Carrie Hunter), a graphic designer for the group, pose with Ciera, a dog sponsored by the organization and featured in its 2009 calendar. Ciera, who is deaf, was awaiting a new home at Critter Crossings in California.

Makeup and Hair by: Jennifer Corona
Set: Tiki Ray

education and fundraisers, and how strong their hearts and minds are." The dogs, who belong to the models, are all rescue dogs. Cover dog Ciera is a deaf, adoptable pit bull whose boarding fees were sponsored by Pinups for Pitbulls. Another canine model, T-Bone, was rehabilitated after being rescued from Baltimore's streets.

Franklin sneaks in lots of advocacy and educational messages near the pinups. Pinups for Pitbulls also sends its message through its huge online connections, extending beyond its comprehensive website to include Facebook, MySpace, Youtube, Cafepress (for merchandise sales), blogs, and postings on dozens of message groups.

Being Internet-savvy has helped the group bring in thousands of dollars from the online community, including MySpace fans. Quadrupling the money raised with its first calendar, in 2008 Pinups for Pitbulls grossed about \$16,000 from calendar sales



Carla Lou, a 13-year-old pooch known as the four-legged founder of Pinups for Pitbulls, enjoys one of the best seats in the house—the one next to Miss April 2009, Little Darling (aka Deirdre Franklin).

Makeup by: Jessica Berndt
Corset/skirt: Karen Von Oppen

and creative fundraisers ranging from small gallery events to burlesque performances to punk rock concerts. The funds—in 2008 more than \$10,000, the total raised minus overhead costs for printing and other expenses—go to small rescue organizations around the country. Franklin hopes to at least double the earnings next year with expanded fundraising and sales of the 2009 calendar, which came out in November. To learn more about the group's work, go to pinupsforpitbulls.com.