

Family says pit bull saved their lives

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ONEIDA - While pit bulls tend to have a bad reputation, one local family couldn't be happier with their two-year-old pit, Mimi.

Andrea Potter of McGuire Street said Mimi woke her and Gene Martinez up early Saturday morning, around 3 a.m. and wouldn't lay back down in her bed.

"She laid down in between our room and kitchen and started growling," Potter said.

She and Martinez got out of bed to investigate what had the dog all riled up.

Potter said she heard popping but could not find the source of the noise. Then the flames started.

"The fire department said we would have had an electrical fire in the wall," Potter said. "They told us it was the heater."

There was no further damage done to the home but the family did have to turn the power off to the heater.

The fire resulted from a hole that had been dug in an outside wall by a previous pet. The hole had been covered in plastic.

"We never had any problems with it but with the snow being heavy and melting," Potter said, citing a cause for the fire.

Potter and Martinez adopted Mimi from the Humane Society of Rome in August.

"We went looking one day to see what they had and we both fell in love with her," Potter said.

She said the dog must have already been trained because she is well-behaved.

"I don't think you could own a better dog," Martinez said. "If something seems to be wrong at night she'll wake us up."

He also said that Mimi was brought into the shelter as a stray.

Michael Massurin, executive director of the Humane Society of Rome said "how it's raised and treated is going to determine in part its disposition, much like people."

He says the horror stories about pit bulls attacking people are not the dogs' fault.

"It seems that they've become the dog of choice for many people who are using them specifically for the purpose of either fighting or attacking," Massurin said. "If it's been trained to be vicious and attack people or attack other animals, we need to look at the humans who did that to the animal and perhaps look to address that issue there."

The Rome Humane Society has a variety of pit bulls and pit bull mixes, Massurin spoke of one who he thinks had been "traumatized" in the past.

"He's so docile and in many ways he's afraid of people," he said. "This is an animal that's just the opposite; instead of us being fearful of him, he's somewhat fearful of us."

Massurin warned that any dog can be trained to be vicious and advises dog owners to "treat your dog with love and care."

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