

Monday, July 14, 2008

Homeless man's dog declared vicious

To adopt the dog, any owner must meet strict requirements.

By **LAURA ASHBAUGH**

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

SANTA ANA – Junior, the 6-year-old chocolate Lab taken from his homeless owner Wednesday, was declared vicious Monday morning by animal control officers.

"Because the dog is being declared as vicious, the dog cannot be legally made available to the public for adoption," said Cpl. Jose Gonzalez of the Santa Ana Police Department. "But the dog will be made available to be taken and cared for by someone who meets the requirements."

Animal control officers took Junior after he bit the pants of a groundskeeper at the Civic Center. Junior and his owner, Dennis Davis, have lived on the Civic Center lawns for the

past five years and have befriended many Civic Center employees, who give them food and take Junior to the veterinarian.

Junior had been cited for two biting incidents involving children. Other citations included barking, being tethered to public property and lunging at a passerby.

A new owner would have to prove that he or she has a completely enclosed dog run, a "Beware of Vicious Dog" sign and \$100,000 in liability insurance.

The Santa Ana Municipal Code states that the owner of a dog that has been declared vicious has 10 days to appeal the vicious dog designation.

Gonzalez said that animal services officers are researching whether Davis can file an appeal, because he surrendered the dog to the officers Wednesday.

Charlotte Freeman, who works in the court system, tried adopting Junior last week and has been trying to help Davis get him back.

Freeman said she'd look into the appeal process to see if she can help Davis.

"I've pretty much given up trying to get him," Davis said Monday. "But if someone would adopt him, I could at least see Junior."

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Davis said that one woman approached him and offered to take him and Junior to Mexico, where she could find him work. "I'd be more than willing to do that if that's the only way I can get Junior back," Davis said.

A Davis friend, Paul Skerston, a lawyer from Fullerton, helped Davis submit a form to the Orange County Animal Center on Saturday evening explaining that Davis surrendered ownership of Junior under duress and that he wants him back. They haven't heard yet if Davis has regained ownership of Junior. If he does, Skerston said she'll help Davis appeal the vicious dog declaration.

"Preferably we'll have Dennis get his dog back, if not, at least I hope to get the dog a home," Skerston said.

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