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Neville is a three-year-old pit bull terrier.

Pit bull gets second chance with U.S. police

Updated Sat. Mar. 18 2006 11:33 PM ET

CTV.ca News Staff

A police dog that specializes in sniffing out bombs and explosives in a Seattle ferry terminal has come a long way from where he was just months ago -- on death row in an Ontario pound.

Neville, a three-year-old pit bull terrier, now works with Washington State Troopers on the front lines in the U.S. war on terrorism. He sniffs for explosives in vehicles waiting to be loaded onto the ferry.

But not long ago, like many of his breed, Neville was abandoned by his owners, and was found wandering on a lonely country road about 60 kilometres north of Toronto by animal control officers.

Officers tracked down Neville's owners, but were told he wasn't wanted.

"With the new legislation they didn't want to pay to have him neutered and muzzled and they didn't have a fenced property," Angela Cross, an animal control officer, told CTV.

Tough new legislation in Ontario known as Bill 132 makes it difficult for pit bulls to find new homes, as it requires that the dogs be neutered before adoption, and muzzled when they are in public places.

Neville remained in the shelter for months, facing an almost guaranteed death sentence.



State Trooper Dave Dixon says 'If some great people didn't believe in him or his breed he certainly wouldn't be with us today.'



VIDEO

CTV News: Peter Murphy on

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But over time, staff at the shelter grew attached to Neville and decided to make him their pet project.

"He's very friendly, intelligent, playful, and that's why we wanted Neville to make it out alive," Closs said.

Then Sharon Hewitt got involved. Hewitt has a soft spot in her heart for pit bulls and is involved with an organization called Bullies in Need, which places pit bulls in loving, responsible homes.

Working with the shelter, Hewitt helped arrange for Neville to be flown to Washington to be adopted by the Washington State Police through the state's Law Dogs program that puts "abandoned but exceptional" dogs to work for police.




After a few weeks of training, Neville was deputized and began work with his new partner, State Trooper Dave Dixon.

"If some great people didn't believe in his breed or him he certainly wouldn't be with us today," Dixon said.

"I've had dogs all my life but I never thought I'd actually get paid to work one or be with one and enjoy his company, this is awesome."

With a report from CTV's Peter Murphy

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