

# **San Jose pit bull named Hero Dog of 2008 for scaring away owner's attacker**

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A pit bull mix that scared away a San Jose woman's attacker has been honored by the Animal Miracle Foundation.

Maya, who's 5-years-old and weighs about 25 pounds, has been named the foundation's Hero Dog of 2008.

In addition to saving her owner from a violent attack, Maya "is a testament to the fact that the pit bull breed can be hero dogs just like any other breed," Colleen Paige, founder of the group, said in a statement.

Based in Washington , the foundation is a non-profit that aims to improve public awareness about pet and wildlife issues. It sponsors National Dog Day on Aug. 26 and National Mutt Day on Dec. 2 to highlight the high number of dogs in shelters that need homes.

Angela Marcelino adopted Maya from Humane Society Silicon Valley when she was three-months old. She's proud Maya is being honored but was not surprised when the dog tried to protect her early on the morning of June 17.

Without the intervention by Maya, the man who grabbed Marcelino outside her door last June "would have raped me," Marcelino said.

"I cry sometimes when I hug Maya and ask her, 'what would I do without you?'"

As part of the award for Maya, Marcelino wrote an account of what happened the morning her dog became a hero.

"I opened my front door and was about to walk inside when I saw someone's shadow out of the corner of my eye," she wrote. "I turned my head just as a man pushed me into my house. I screamed as loud as I could, but

the man had slammed the door shut behind him.

"'Shut up' were the only words he said to me. He was choking me with one hand. I was able to scream one last time. After I did, his grip tightened around my neck. That is when I saw a white streak run in from the other room. His grip was so tight that I could only gurgle the words 'Maya, get him.' He still had a grip on my throat, as his other hand was busy trying to fight off my angry dog.

"I don't know how, but I managed to get on my feet. His attention turned away from Maya for a second so that he could push my front door open and she followed. At that point I grabbed him in the groin as hard as I could. He doubled over and released the grip around my neck. I pushed him away and grabbed Maya by the collar. I like to think, at that moment, he told himself he had picked the wrong woman to mess with. He looked at me one last time, only for a second, and then simply walked away."

A drop of blood above Maya's right eye was later tested for DNA by investigators, which led to the arrest of Anthony Easley. His preliminary hearing is pending.

Maya has been resting up - perhaps for the next time she's needed to protect her owner. "My parents bought her a bed for Christmas," Marcelino said. "She just lays in it in front of the fireplace" and watches TV with Marcelino and her son.

Marcelino will be interviewed at 11:30 a.m. today on [www.adogsview.com/](http://www.adogsview.com/), blogtalkradio.

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