



With persistence and a nonjudgmental attitude, The HSUS's Amanda Arrington persuades people to free dogs from their chains.

## A Dog's BEST Friend

For this advocate, it's all in the approach

**In an earlier era,** Amanda Arrington might have made a terrific door-to-door vacuum cleaner saleswoman. She's got plenty of persistence and a firm belief in her wares.

But what Arrington is selling as she knocks on doors in the Durham, N.C., area is the idea of better lives for dogs stuck outside on chains.

The North Carolina state director for The HSUS since last May, she also directs the Coalition to Unchain Dogs, a citizens group of 40 volunteers who've built enough backyard fences to help more than 150 animals.

Founded in 2006 after Arrington moved to the Tar Heel State from her native east Texas, the coalition initially consisted of Arrington and her husband. Though

people in her adopted state showed more concern about animals than she'd seen back home, some neighborhoods had dogs chained at nearly every house. Carrying a flier with her name and phone number on Saturday mornings, Arrington began the old-fashioned way—by knocking on doors.

At first, she recalls, she drew skeptical and puzzled reactions from the crime-ridden communities where “the people are just as forgotten as the animals are,” she says. “Nobody really comes into those neighborhoods to work. And so the fact that I kept returning really shocked people, but I think that that helped, because they saw I was serious about it.” Some residents assumed

Arrington was an enforcement officer who might fine them or take their animals away, but she assured them that she only wanted them to take better care of their pets.

Even if she sees a dog in a horrific situation, Arrington focuses on the positive when she first approaches the owner—perhaps commenting on how great the dog's coat looks. “I don't want to go in and say, ‘You're a bad person, you're doing a bad thing. Change,’” she says. “I want to kind of build some commonality and let them know I'm not there to get them into trouble.”

In the beginning, weeks often went by before people opened their doors just enough “to where I could leave them information and introduce myself,” Arrington says. When she first visited a pit bull breeder named Rodney one morning last year, he was none too happy about being woken up and became defensive when Arrington tried to persuade him to provide more care for his dogs.

One of the dogs had no shelter from the heat and was panting on a short chain, so Arrington offered to put up a tarp. Rodney resisted at first but relented when she told him it was free. Then he “literally pulled up a chair, opened up a Coke, and sat there and watched me—and was just really a big smart-aleck about it,” Arrington says.

But Arrington went back the next weekend with some dewormer for the dogs, who looked a bit thin. In subsequent visits she and Rodney struck up a friendship, and he started seeing his dogs differently. “Over time I connected with him and talked to him a lot and convinced him to spay and

neuter his dogs, which is a huge deal, because he did breed pit bulls,” she says. “He did want the fence, and he wanted to do better for them, and started seeing the light about what he was

contributing to and how dogs were living on the chain.”

Rodney's transformation is so complete that he's now a volunteer for the coalition, helping deliver food and accompanying Arrington to areas where he's more

a part of the community than she is. “So he kind of gives me an ‘in’ sometimes where I wouldn't have it otherwise,” she says.

In her new position with The HSUS, Arrington is taking her grassroots efforts to the statehouse. The Coalition to Unchain

Dogs helped enact stronger tethering restrictions in Durham and Orange counties, and Arrington plans to push for a statewide tethering law this year. The proposal will likely put a time limit on chaining and allow local jurisdictions to adopt even stricter reg-

ulations, she says. Though a similar bill died within 24 hours a couple of years ago, Arrington is optimistic this time: “We have a lot more people interested in this issue and a lot more momentum.”

— James Hettinger

## There Ought to Be a **LAW** . . . and here's how to get one passed

**Persistent chaining isolates dogs**, invites health problems, and encourages aggressive behavior. Recognizing this, communities nationwide are passing anti-tethering ordinances—and Adam Goldfarb is there to help.

“It's so important to make the point that our pets should be treated as members of the family,” says the director of The HSUS's Pets at Risk program, which offers expertise and encouragement to communities seeking to ban or restrict chaining. “Dogs are pack animals. That long-term isolation is so tragic that it makes me want to get involved and help those dogs.”

More than 100 jurisdictions in 30-plus states have passed anti-tethering legislation. Goldfarb is optimistic about expansion of these efforts, which draw significant attention from officials because they address both humane treatment of animals and community safety. His



Adam Goldfarb helps break the chains.

efforts recently helped boost a successful push for chaining restrictions in Frederick County, Md., when he met with advocates and officials, helped draft legislation, and testified at a county hearing. “You could tell that when he spoke, they listened,” says Terri Rutter, president and founder of Justice for Dogs, a local anti-chaining group that has worked with Goldfarb on several legislative efforts. Goldfarb's work often involves calculating political feasibility. In Frederick County, for example, he and Rutter initially drafted a total ban on chaining, but the county commissioners and animal control director decided a time limit would address the worst situations. The new restrictions prohibit chaining for a total of more than 10 hours in a 24-hour period.

It's a solid start in a traditionally rural county now experiencing suburban sprawl. “Five years ago, this [bill] never would have passed,” says Goldfarb. “Even though a lot can happen to a dog in 10 hours, it's such a huge step forward.”

If you want to make similar changes in your own community, check out the following tips from Goldfarb and other experts:

► **LEARN THE ISSUES** Download The HSUS's free step-by-step guide to passing a chaining ordinance—*A Dog's Life: Chaining and Your Community*—online at [humaneociety.org/chainingkit](http://humaneociety.org/chainingkit). Other resources include [helpinganimals.com](http://helpinganimals.com), [dogsdeseverbetter.org](http://dogsdeseverbetter.org), and [unchainyourdog.org](http://unchainyourdog.org). Read *The Public Safety and Humane Implications of Persistently Tethering Domestic Dogs*, available for download at the Animal Protection of New Mexico's website, [apnm.org](http://apnm.org).

► **SWEAT THE DETAILS** Consider how extensive you want your chaining law to be. Ordinances that ban chaining during a particular time of day are generally easier to enforce than those that merely limit the number of hours a dog may be chained. Communities can also consider restricting the type and weight of the chain and specifying a minimum space requirement for outdoor enclosures.

► **BUILD A TEAM** Your coalition should include animal control officers, community leaders, veterinarians, public safety officials, humane societies, senior citizens' groups, and child safety advocates. Consider broadening the group to include organizations with tangential concerns. Neighborhood organizations, for example, might want to help limit chaining because chained dogs are notorious nuisance barkers; anti-crime groups might be interested because chaining is sometimes associated with drug houses and gang activity.

► **MASTER THE GAME** Get to know your local lawmakers and work with them to understand the legislative process. And if you get nervous addressing a public hearing or buttonholing a county commissioner, it may help to remember that your efforts could make a difference in a lonely life.



Tethering can result in neck sores, embedded chains, and even strangulation.

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