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Rantoul mayor opposes proposed dog-breed ban

By Tim Mitchell

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RANTOUL – Rantoul Mayor Neal Williams said one of his closest friends was a Rottweiler dog named Otis.

"I'll always treasure his companionship," said Williams, who owned Otis for 10 years. "My mother and sister also had Rottweilers. They are among the kindest and gentlest dogs, and they are great to be around."

Williams opposes a plan by village board member Chuck Smith to ban Rottweilers, pit bulls and Doberman pinschers from Rantoul.

"I will have no part of banning Rottweilers, and I am confident that Chuck's request to ban a certain breed of animal will meet resistance from the public," he said.

Pam Abare-Newton, president of the Barrington-based Illinois Doberman Rescue, said that villages like Rantoul that ban Dobermans, Rottweilers and pit bulls are contributing to the problem of orphaned dogs across the state.

"What's really sad is that we have some wonderful people who call us and have to give up their Dobermans because towns have banned the breed," Abare-Newton said. "These people have a completely well-trained, socialized pet, and the town bans them."

"Many of these people can't afford to move out of town, so they give up their dogs."

Dogs given up by families living in villages that ban breeds have helped increase the number of abandoned Dobermans, according to Abare-Newton.

Abare-Newton said that her own Doberman, named Melvin, has gone to obedience school and is great around children.

"I never have any problem with Melvin. He's the sweetest dog and wouldn't hurt anybody," she said. "If you take a dog to obedience school, he or she can be a good member of society. To hear Rantoul is thinking about banning Dobermans is very sad."

Marcy Setter, director of marketing for Pit Bull Rescue Central, which works with several hundred pit bull rescue organizations across North America, said banning pit bulls is not fair to responsible pet owners.

"It is very unfortunate when a village board does what Rantoul is talking about," Setter said. "This is a knee-jerk reaction. Public officials are punishing responsible people and pets for doing nothing."

Setter said that similar ordinances have been repealed because they have proven to be ineffective.

Setter said that her two pit bulls, a 2-year-old male named Hobbs and a 6-year-old female named Dakota Blue, are friendly and gentle pets.

"It is highly unusual for a pit bull to be aggressive toward humans, especially if they are unprovoked," Setter said. "The incidents that do happen are almost always preventable."

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