

READING COMPREHENSION

Read the story below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Mister Peters...Far Beyond Being a Vagabond

My World Turned Upside Down in an Instant

"I have too many dogs! — Just take these two dogs!" yelled my former guardian to the Animal Control Officer. I was then placed in the back of a truck, driven to a strange place, a huge building with high ceilings and clanking metallic fans. There were lots of dogs and other animals in enclosures and many of the dogs were making a lot of noise. I wasn't used to being indoors and was used to walking around whenever and wherever I wanted to. I did not have a microchip or identification tag either. I was two years old when all this happened. I arrived at this big, noisy place not having been neutered. Jeepers, the lady I used to live with sure needs to take the Kids 4 Critters course to learn how to be a more responsible pet guardian. Talk about overpopulation—this place was so crowded and I had neighbors all around me, some very stressed-out.

I had been at this place for a few days and they gave me the name "Mister Peters." Sounds dignified, doesn't it? I was named after a staff member whose last name was Peters. I liked the pleasant sound of it. Another staff member wanted to take me home and prepare me to be adopted. She was worried about me getting sick. I am an easy-going sort and I don't scare easily. But, at that time at the shelter, animals who had the slightest fever or had nasal discharge (a dripping nose) were euthanized. You know what that means...adiós, life! How things have improved! The shelter staff screen all animals for illness when they arrive, and the main veterinarian has procedures in place to protect all of the animals. In the last two years, the veterinarians have not euthanized any animal due to having too many animals at the center. Hurrah!



This is William Peters – the staff

Another Exciting Adventure

So, the staff member took me home and she was really nice to me. She let me sleep on the couch and she fed me well. She even bought me a rope toy, and to this day, I love rope toys, although I sometimes shred them. This lady had to go out of town for a few days so Dr. Federico, Director of the Wake County Animal Center, offered, "I'll take care of him for you!"

I was with Dr. Federico from a Friday to a Monday and, after that, she decided to adopt me. Another person had contacted the shelter interested in adopting me. They must have liked my handsome face, but Dr. Federico said, "No, he's staying with me."

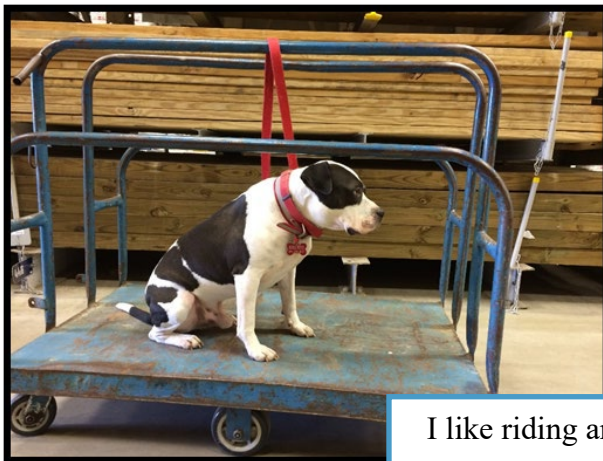
I heard Dr. Federico—I call her "mom"—say that "He's just perfect!" She took me to her parents' house and I heard her tell a friend, "He gets along with dogs and cats, he loves people and he just hung out in the house." I wagged my tail wildly upon hearing her say those words and looked up at her with my big thoughtful eyes and toothy grin. I then went over and sat on her feet, leaning my body into her legs to tell her I liked her too.



Some of my original "for adoption" photos

Mister Peters goes to the North Carolina State Legislature

My "mom" took me everywhere she could. We visited Tractor Supply and I met lots of friendly people. We go to Lowe's often, but mom says that shopping there takes three times as long because of the number of people who want to meet me. I'm pretty gregarious and like to make people happy.



I like riding around on the cart at Lowes!

Kids & Critters

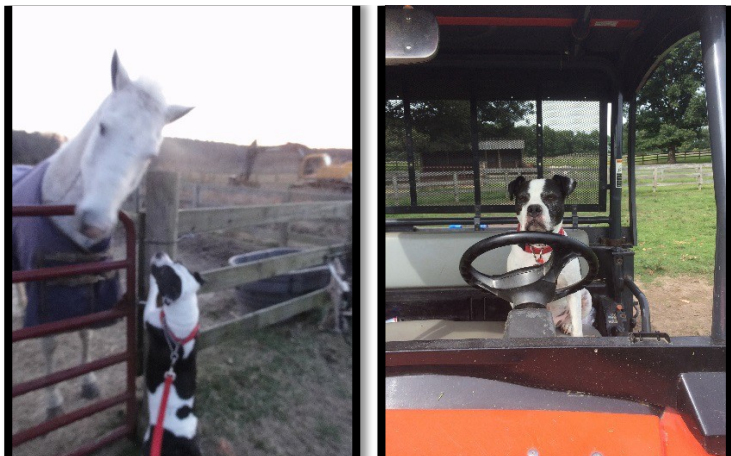
Mom took me to the state Legislature when she had to meet with law-makers about a law concerning animal welfare. We go to the Wake County Justice Center from time to time and I jumped up twice on the County Manager's coffee table. I wasn't meaning to being rude, I just thought that he would be able to take a better photo of me if I were sitting on the table. We were escorted to that office by the Sheriff, because dogs aren't supposed to be in this building.

We go to a lot of meetings and once attended an "Extended Leadership" meeting where the upper management people of Wake County were gathered. They always introduce new members before the meeting. I was sitting in a chair next to Dr. Federico so I could hear every word. When she introduced me as a new member, I opened my mouth to show my widest smile and lovely tongue. I looked at everyone directly and straight in the eye. After the meeting, there were many people who wanted to meet me personally and it was a pleasure meeting all of them.



My "fans" after a meeting downtown!

I love it when we go to the barn to see Sammy, my mom's horse. Sammy and I play fun games...I'll jump up and "boop" him on his nose. This doesn't hurt Sammy but, at first, Sammy was a bit startled. Now he anticipates my actions and moves back before I can "boop" him, which makes the game even more fun. When I'm waiting in the Kubota, (it's a farm utility cart, a bit like a golf cart but bigger and stronger) and Sammy is alongside, we continue this game.

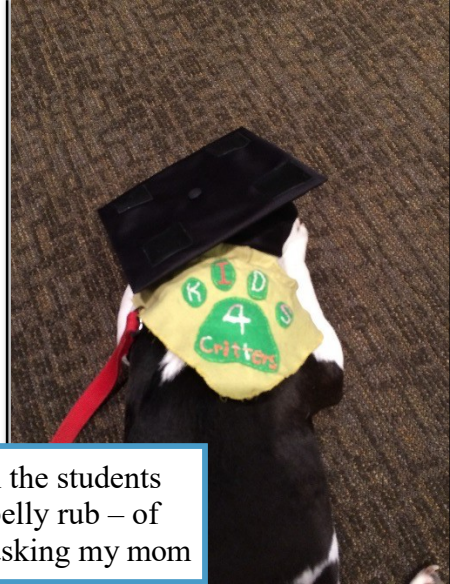


Kids & Critters

I also adore visiting schools to meet fourth graders in the Kids 4 Critters classes. The fourth graders all ask for permission to pet me and I allow it, being the very laid-back and friendly dog that I am. I show them how wonderful the dogs can be at the Wake County Animal Center. I'm even in a short movie that you'll see at the end of the Kids 4 Critters program—I loved all the costume changes!



I love when the students give me a belly rub – of course, after asking my mom



You Shouldn't Judge a Book by Its Cover

Once we went to the NCSU Open House to tell people about the wonderful dogs up for adoption at the Wake County Animal Center. People come from all over our state and even other states to attend this yearly event! One father with his children told my mom, "Do you think it is safe for HIM to be here?" I looked around and behind me trying to figure out who "HIM" was, but I'm smart and deduced that the man was talking about me.

Some people just look at you and immediately think the worst. I am 50% Bull Dog, 25% Staffordshire Terrier, and 25% Miniature Bull Terrier. How do I know this? My mom had my DNA tested to find out my heritage. A lot of people misjudge the breed of shelter dogs—they think they are one breed and it turns out they may be another, or combination of several breeds.

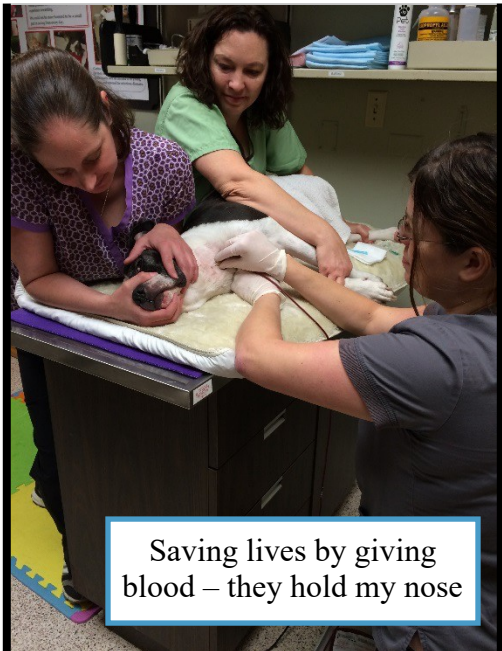


See! I was just hanging out with the kids at the Open House – being a good boy. Hmmph.

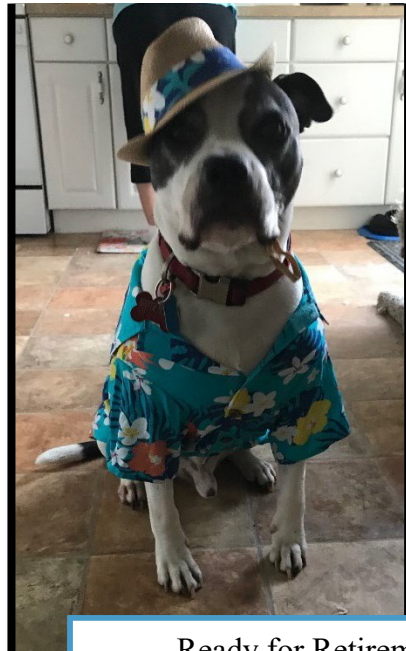
Kids & Critters

“In the beginning of the twentieth century, pit bull-type dogs were among the most popular dogs. They were referred to as “nanny” dogs.”¹ My mom took me to school to learn certain social graces so that I could go to public events with her. I earned the “Canine Good Citizenship” certificate awarded by the American Kennel Club. This certificate shows that I have good manners in public and am safe to be around. I even marched, wearing my favorite warm winter coat, in the Raleigh Christmas parade one year to promote the “Positive Pit Bull.” There are some mean Pit Bulls, but there are some mean dogs in all breeds and sizes—just like with people.

Additionally, I visited the NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine for another reason. I have a universal blood type that allows me to aid others. I gave blood 23 times and each donation I helped four dogs. Just like humans donate blood through organizations like the Red Cross, dogs do this too to help other dogs live. I retired from this job when I turned eight years old. Here is a photo of me in my retirement clothes, but I’m not yet ready to relax at the beach. Plus, I don’t like water much. I’m still having too much fun and getting so much attention!



Saving lives by giving blood – they hold my nose



Ready for Retirement!

Mister Peters as a Wake County Animal Center Employee

I love to go to work with mom. I lounge in a comfy chair in her office when I’m not working. I like to sneak out sometimes when she is immersed in her work. I explore what’s in the garbage bins and, in particular, what people ate for lunch. When I sneak out, I move stealthily, like a cat, so slowly that my tags don’t make any noise. I really liked the Kung Pao chicken I found one day. I quietly deposited the lid of this dish by hiding it under another desk. I knew mom would be upset with me because she watches my diet.



My chair at work.

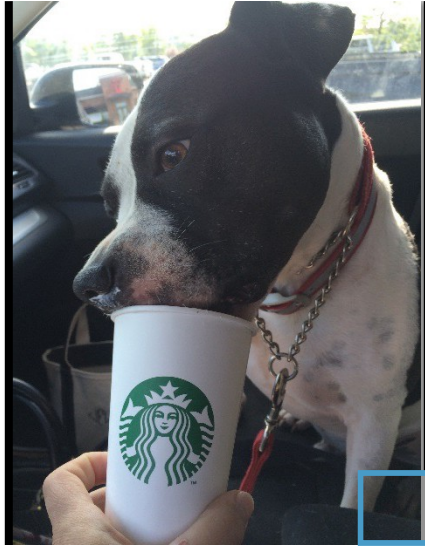
On another day I entered the Transfer Coordinator's office and smelled some yummy mozzarella cheese and meatballs in baked ziti. I jumped up on a chair to easily get a bite and bit into the bottom of the pan. The pan flipped up and rest of the ziti was on my face. There was no way I could get out of that mess!

When mom saw me with sauce and cheese all over my face, she was embarrassed that I had stolen a colleague's lunch and a bit angry with me, but she does not stay angry at me for long. Later on that day she said, "Mister Peters! Even when you are naughty, I have to laugh." She and I really are the best of friends and co-workers.

When I work, my job is to conduct the "dog test." My mom puts me on a leash and a co-worker puts another dog on a leash. We go to the play yard in the back. We approach each other and I have to see if the other dog is nice or not. I'm really good at my job. Sometimes I'll know right away that they are nice and play bow at them. Sometimes I will bark at them to see what they will do and oftentimes, the other dog won't do anything. I am very happy to say that I have gotten some dogs into rescue group care because of my tests. On the other hand, there are dogs that I will not go near...I just know instinctively that they might hurt me. Mom describes me as "tolerant," but I know to be careful. Don't let your dog get near any other dog without knowing if that dog is dog-friendly. You can ask, "Is your dog friendly with other dogs?" before letting the two meet. I'm a professional and work with my mom, who is a veterinarian, to make sure that everyone is okay during these meetings.

I enjoy riding in the car and going places. We sometimes go out for lunch or a treat. When mom orders a coffee at Starbuck's, I usually get a "puppuccino" or a small dish of whipped cream. Yum! My favorite place is Wendy's. Once the man said, "I threw in an extra package of chicken nuggets for him." Now that's service! At the credit union, too, they always give me a treat and I wiggle in my car seat.

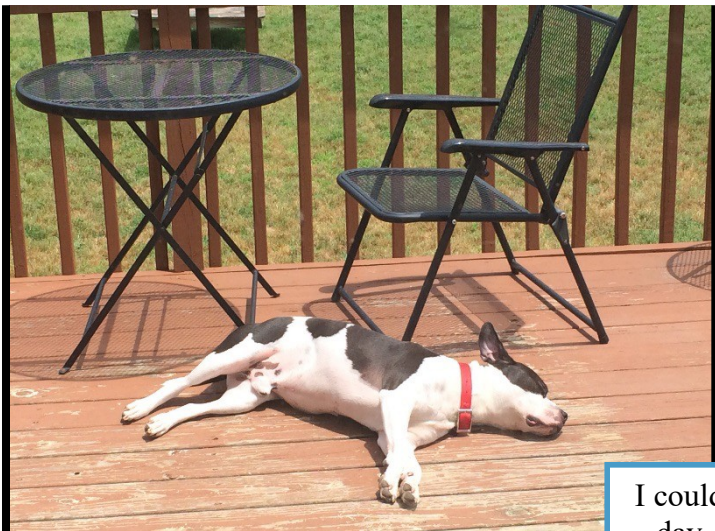
Kids & Critters



Yum! My Puppuccino!

I can't help myself... I just miss all the attention!

When I cannot go to the shelter I sometimes have pouted and acted out. I know this is infantile behavior and I should be grateful for all I get to do with my mom, but...Mom was not too pleased with me when I once destroyed a photo album of hers and shredded a blanket. At home, my favorite room to be in is the sun room, which is technically the cat's room and off-limits to me. I make my body small to squeeze through the cat door. I am a sun worshipper and like to bask in the sun. If I hear someone calling me, I just stand behind the cat door really still. When I don't respond, they open the big door and pick me up, and I just go limp in their arms to apologize abjectly.



I could lay out here in the sun all day – but my mom makes me come in so I don't get too hot!

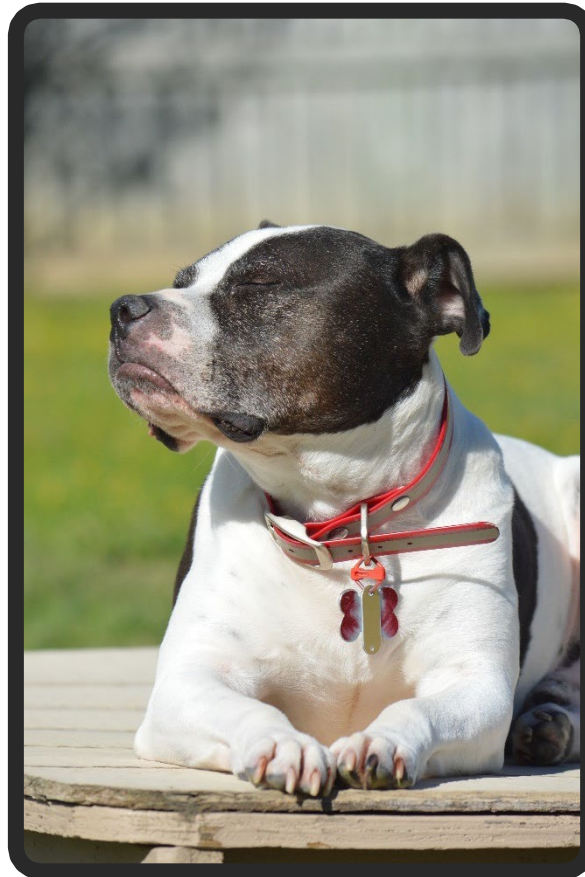
You, Kids 4 Critters fourth graders, are the future leaders!

As you have seen, I am a "happy go lucky dog," who believes in "carpe diem." That is a Latin phrase that means, live life to the fullest and make the best of every day!

Kids 4 Critters

I'm also an optimistic dog. I sincerely believe that the condition of animals in Wake County will improve when the fourth graders who take the Kids 4 Critters class will go out and teach others all they have learned about how to care for animals responsibly and with respect. Look how my life has improved!

With your help, and with the help all of in our community, things will get better for all--animals and humans.



¹ Do Unto Animals: A Friendly Guide to How Animals Live, and How We Can Make Their Lives Better by Tracey Stewart (Artisan, NY 2015), page 65.