

Breaking the Chain' Exposes Plight of Abused, Neglected Pets

Local Native Chris Klug Featured in PETA Documentary

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Photos Provided During a rescue mission in Lumberton, North Carolina in 2018, Klug and PETA's rescue team spotted this terrified and abandoned dog on the porch of a flooded home with no way to escape the rising floodwaters. Klug and his team brought the dog to safety.

By HEATHER ZIEGLER, The Intelligencer/Wheeling News Register

Life Editor

Wheeling native Chris Klug has never met a dog he didn't like. Even during his 10 years as an animal control officer near Virginia and Greensboro, North Carolina, Klug opened his heart to rescue animals from neglect and abuse.

Today that passion finds Klug working as a senior outreach field worker with PETA — People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. His work can be seen in part in the new documentary “*Breaking the Chain*,” produced by Anjelica Huston. The film introduces viewers to the nationwide crisis of abused and neglected dogs, cats and other animals through interviews and behind-the-scenes footage following PETA’s dedicated team of fieldworkers.

As a senior outreach field worker, Klug and others in the film show how they respond to calls for help around the clock in all weather extremes. “*Breaking the Chain*” also tells the animals’ stories, including those living in underserved areas of the South, and highlights the efforts of Klug and his team to improve and save their lives or, when needed, alleviate their suffering.

Klug is a 1999 graduate of Wheeling Park High School and a graduate of West Liberty University. After attending graduate school in Ohio, he served as an animal control officer in the northern Virginia area and in North Carolina. There he encountered numerous neglected, chained dogs. In 2015, he was inspired to join PETA at the urging of a friend involved with the non-profit agency..

“PETA was actually trying to make a difference for chained dogs,” he says, *“and I wanted to be a part of it.”*

He said he chose to join PETA, not only to rescue animals, but also to educate and help pet owners. With PETA, he has rescued many animals from drowning in flooded areas after Hurricanes Florence, Harvey and Matthew, in some cases by wading through neck-deep floodwaters or navigating a rescue boat to reach dogs stranded on rooftops.

“I think people don’t understand we are not law enforcement. We are a non-profit. We want people to know that we want to help them and their pets,” Klug said.

He said some of the worst cases are when they find dogs on heavy chains, living outside without proper shelter, water and food.

PETA field workers will offer free dog houses, spay and neuter services, flea and flea preventives and replace heavy chains with lighter, more humane tethers.

“We educate the public about our free wellness and vet services. Many of the animals we find are forgotten, isolated and on heavy logging chains. That is no life for any animal. We also encourage dog owners to bring their animals indoors. ... We see hunting dogs that lead a pretty rough life.”

PETA also encourages the public to adopt pets from shelters rather than buy animals through puppy mills. *“Shelters have so many great animals looking for homes,”* Klug added.

Klug said despite the often sad or overwhelming work he does, he says there is *“a silver lining knowing we can help.”*

He also finds refuge in music and cycling when time allows. Klug is the son of Judy Klug of Wheeling and the late Jerry Klug.

More information about the film is available at BreakingTheChainFilm.com.

“It’s one thing to hear about the animal neglect and overpopulation crisis and another to see for yourself how dogs are left to shiver, pant, limp and suffer in backyards, where they’re confined to wire cages or tied to pieces of junk,” said producer Houston. *“Seeing is believing, and I want people everywhere to see the individual dogs who would suffer or even die on a chain if PETA weren’t there to help.”*

Neel Parekh directed and edited *“Breaking the Chain.”* Huston executive produced along with Ethan Eliam, Lisa Lange and Daphna Nachminovitch.

The film is available on-demand as of today on platforms including Amazon, iTunes, AppleTV, Google Play, Vudu and Vimeo.

The hour-long film will also screen at the Richmond International Film Festival and the American Documentary and Animation Film Festival in Palm Springs.