

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tom's Farms faces backlash from discrimination against autism service dog

Shorty Rossi, of Animal Planet's Pit Boss and non-profit, Shorty's Charities, requests a formal apology to family of autistic daughter whose service dog was asked to "leave the premises"

Corona, California, US September 13, 2013

It started off as any other day in the life of a parent raising a child with autism. This particular woman, wife and mother works daily as her daughter's guardian, protector, therapist, diligent parent, and simply wants to go about her day without apologizing for a developmental disability that affects one (1) out of 88 children. Autism Spectrum Disorders are only as disabling as the limits set upon them by society. Compound this by their chosen trained and certified service dog being the most discriminated against breed of dog in America; the pit bull terrier. As Kori Santos states, more often than a mother with a child who requires to have a service animal should have to: *"This is a service animal. It is allowed anywhere my daughter goes as she needs it..."*

When an animal becomes and animal of service the breed is no longer recognized, rather the service they provide. So this is not a pit bull this is an autism service dog."

Tom's Farms' website states:

*"Today, the property ... include(s) a variety of shops, restaurants, and attractions for **family entertainment**. Staying true to Tom's original core values,... **visitors are always welcome**. Tom wouldn't like it any other way."*

But Tom would not come when requested as his staff subjected the Santos family when they were repeatedly asked to step outside. These visitors in August, 2013, were not welcome; in fact, they were asked, repeatedly, to leave. The following is a recounting of the day, in their own words:

This is my 2nd post to [Tom's Farms FB page](#). I am still waiting for a reply from anyone from Tom's Farms regarding this matter:

"This correspondence is a follow up in regards to an injustice that took place in the sweet shop on Saturday August 3rd. While my family and I were shopping we were approached by a woman who stated she was the assistant manager and told (not asked) us to leave. When I inquired as to why, she stated that dogs were not allowed in the store. We informed her that the vested dog was a service animal, offered appropriate identification for the service animal and offered to answer any questions she may have had. Due to my willingness to clear up any lack of understanding that she may have had, I am at a loss as to why she then decided to call security on us all while yelling at my family and repeating "leave".

"I cannot even begin to express to you how hard it is for a mentally handicap child to

be aggressively cornered in the way we were, you see, not only is my daughter mentally handicap she has various other issues as well. Issues that we tried to explain to the assistant manager, however I assumed she could not hear us over her yelling. I would like to assume that any employee of Tom's Farms would have the basic understanding that if a person has the need for a service animal their lives are hard enough already without being placed in position to feel as if they are less than anybody else.

"We try our best to provide our daughter with the independent freedom she deserves all while not bothering the world around us and the situation that I speak off took that opportunity away from her. While I could continue with "he said she said" I am choosing a different path in regards to this scenario. There are an excessive amount of laws that pertain to service animals and the disabled. It is painfully apparent that Tom's Farms is not aware of them and I would like to assist with rectifying that.

"So at this time I come to you and offer my assistance in regards to the proper training of ALL employees. I can assist you in the training of service animal identification as well as sensitivity training to ensure that my family is the only family that is discriminated against on your property. I sincerely hope you take the above situation seriously and strive to not only set but reach a new standard of equality not only for your patrons but for your employees as well. I look forward to hearing from you."

Shorty Rossi faces similar discrimination throughout his travels on the Shorty Rossi and Hercules' tours. One of his primary goals with [Shorty's Charities Inc.](#), a newly approved 501(c)(3) charity in the state of California, is to keep pit bulls in their homes, where they belong as well as to educate, enlighten and inform individuals, and companies, about responsible Bully Breed Guardianship.

Tom's Farms owes the Santos family a public apology and to be informed enough to improve their business' practices in regards to service dog rights. We are simply asking for the opportunity to enlighten them, because discrimination bites.

END

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If you'd like more information or to schedule an interview, please call Julie Hernandez at 818.850.2310 or email julie@shortyscharities.org

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