

Get Out Your Hank-Kerchiefs

He's come to be known as "Hank," but that's not his real name. And his owner's real name isn't "McKenzie."

We're not going to tell you what "McKenzie's" former boyfriend's name is, either. (We have some ideas about what we'd call him, but they're not printable here.)

What we can tell you is this: In 2011, when McKenzie's boyfriend attacked her with a hammer and threw her through a wall, the 110-pound Great Dane got in the way, lying on top of his owner and taking many of the blows, suffering a fractured hip and broken ribs in the process. When the dog wouldn't get out of the way, the abuser dragged him out of the house, threw him off the porch, and then left the severely injured dog at a busy intersection, threatening McKenzie with a shotgun if she interfered.

When she later sought refuge at the Rose Brooks Center, a domestic violence refuge in Kansas City, Mo., she found the center had a "no animals" rule—a common policy at many family shelters.

But there was no way McKenzie was leaving Hank, and on hearing her story, the Rose Brooks Center broke the rule. It broke it first for them, and later changed its policy and took in dozens of pets of people in need of shelter.

In June, the center acted on its recognition that protecting pets is part of protecting families. It opened Paws Place, a small shelter that will have the capacity to hold up to eight pets of people who've come to stay at Rose Brooks, so that victims of domestic violence won't have to choose between protecting their animals and saving their own lives. Several local animal welfare organizations, including Wayside Waifs, Great Plains SPCA, and Spay and Neuter Kansas City, have helped out by providing spay/neuter, grooming, and vaccines to some of the pets taken in.

Hank won both the Valor Dog of the Year award and the People's Hero award from The HSUS this year—fitting for a dog whose bravery helped saved not only his person's



life, but whose inspiration may have helped save many more people and pets. Sarah North, director of communications at Rose Brooks, says he and McKenzie are doing well now, living in their own apartment, and that the dog has really enjoyed all the attention he's gotten.

He's a truly great Great Dane—and a reminder to everyone not to overlook the many Big Black Dogs waiting for a home. ■

To watch a video about Hank and McKenzie, go to rosebrooks.org/forms/pet-shelter.html. To send us your own great shots and stories of animals you've helped or adopted, go to animalsheltering.org/unforgettable.