We Can Do Better

OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH DOGS

Synopsis

Dogs are an integral part of our lives. Nearly half of all American households share their homes with one of the 90 million dogs in the United States today. We celebrate the companionship they provide and the measurable benefits they bring to our physical and emotional well-being, including reduced stress, stronger social connection, and greater overall happiness. In the United States, 97% of all dog owners think of their dogs as family. Yet despite our love for dogs, many owners still struggle to understand their dog's most basic needs, contributing to widespread behavioral issues, abandonment, and shelter overcrowding.

We Can Do Better is a feature-length documentary that explores how we can strengthen our relationships with dogs and take greater responsibility for their well-being.

The Story

The film opens by addressing a dog's most basic and important need: a safe and secure home. Each year, nearly 6 million dogs experience homelessness in the United States. Close to 3 million entered shelters in 2024 alone. Behind these numbers are stories of neglect, confusion, and misunderstanding—all of which can be prevented.

Through interviews with experts and frontline advocates, **We Can Do Better** examines how a nation that deeply loves dogs has arrived at this crisis and asks an essential question: if humans helped create these problems, can we not also be the source of the solution?

Our journey unfolds in Fauquier County, Virginia, at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, just an hour from Washington, D.C. Through the eyes of rescuers, shelter workers, veterinarians, adopters and behaviorists, we witness the full arc of a dog's journey: from crisis to safety, from uncertainty to belonging, as we meet the extraordinary people whose collective dedication, resilience and heart give each dog another chance at a new family and a forever home.

We ride along with seasoned rescuer Karissa Gregory as she locates and secures stray dogs. We take to the skies on a Seuk's Army rescue transport flight with pilot Kley Parkhurst. We witness the difficult realities and heartbreak of animal welfare alongside Animal Control Officer Deputy Chris Hubert during the seizure of a neglected dog. These frontline perspectives reveal both the urgency of the problem and the compassion of those fighting to solve it.

From the field, the story moves inside the Fauquier County Animal Shelter where viewers step behind the scenes and see the formidable challenges dog shelters face to rehabilitate dogs, prepare them for adoption, and guide families toward successful, lasting matches. We meet Facility Director Devon Settle and Manager Maddy Garrison and we witness their extraordinary dedication to give each dog another chance at a forever home with a loving family.

But rescue is only the beginning.

As we watch the dogs move into adoptive homes, the film shifts from advocacy to education. The misunderstandings that lead to abandonment and the trauma of the resulting journey must be overcome to break the cycle of failed dog adoption. Through the insight and work of veteran dog behaviorist Brian Kerchner, we begin to understand a deeper truth: many "problem behaviors" are not signs of bad dogs, but reflections of a dog's unfulfilled needs.

By reframing the human-dog relationship, Brian demonstrates how small shifts in perspective can transform frustration into partnership. When we stop viewing dogs as possessions and start seeing them as intelligent, emotional teammates with specific needs we are fully capable of meeting, we unlock the possibility of a harmonious transformation. As families learn, dogs thrive. As dogs thrive, families grow stronger.

We Can Do Better ultimately serves as both a wake-up call and a roadmap, offering viewers not guilt, but guidance. It reminds us that loving dogs is not enough. Being responsible for their well-being is essential.

And the good news is: we can do better.

Distribution and Outreach

We Can Do Better will be made available for viewing through the following platforms:

- Online through partnering with regional and national rescue and shelter organizations
- Theatrical screenings for community events
- Broadcast on public television stations
- Distribution to educational outlets, community groups and library systems

Production Team

Brian Kerchner — Executive Producer
Brian has been working with dogs for over 25 years. His ability to 'read' dogs (and people) allows him to quickly get to the root cause of a dog's behavior problems and immediately begin resolving the issue. As the owner of Good Dog Workshop, Brian has helped thousands of dogs and their owners achieve a harmonious relationship through natural training.

Bill Reifenberger — Producer/Director
Bill has been producing and directing documentaries for more than 30 years. His films have shown on PBS, ESPN, Discovery Channel and other national outlets. His works include *The Tuskegee Airmen, Vintage: The Winemaker's Year, 1186 To Omaha* and *Pep Banned.* As the Senior Producer at Silverthorn Films, Bill leads a team of creative professionals that handle film projects from concept to completion.

To find out more and learn how you can help support this project, please visit our website:
https://www.wecandobettermovie.com/

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