

Loyalty and Inspiration

One dog's love inspires 4 Legged Designs' new jewelry line for pets. ■ By Meghan E. Murphy

Shyamala Littlefield spent much of 2005 in bed recovering from injuries suffered in a terrible car accident. For months, her loving Weimaraner, Mansur, rested his noble gray head on her fractured legs.

"I could feel his love and his concern and his intention to do whatever he could to help me," Littlefield says.

But after some time it appeared that Mansur himself wasn't well. Although he ate the same amount of food, he was losing weight.

The veterinarian couldn't figure out what was wrong. But Littlefield knew: The energy Mansur was contributing to her healing was taking its toll. So she decided to try a nontraditional method of healing that she'd studied for almost 30 years, the power of gemstones.

Beginning a Career

Littlefield, now of Fairfax, Calif., first began designing jewelry in the early '70s after a trip to India. The culture inspired her to transition from meditation teacher to a new craft.

"I saw this gorgeous Tibetan woman wearing coral and turquoise and gold and silver," Littlefield says. "She was so magnificent. There was something about it that just awakened me to the fact that jewelry is sort of a sacred adornment."

At first, Littlefield just created jewelry for herself. As she learned more, she began to design for friends and then eventually customers. But it wasn't until Mansur was sick that she thought to create an adornment for her faithful friend. Not long after donning his first turquoise necklace, Littlefield's extraordinary dog was thriving again, and 4 Legged Designs was born.

Healing Properties Of Gemstones

Turquoise: A spirit stone that can be used for any situation to bring happiness and joy.

Amethyst: For calming a pet that trembles and is fearful of loud noises, like thunder and lightning. Good for restoring trust in humans for nervous rescue dogs.

Rhodonite: A stone for pets going through a transition to a new home or for elderly dogs who may be leaving soon.

Black tourmaline: For shielding and protecting, helps with animals who are around a lot of emotional energy or environmental damages.

Citrine: Extremely calming for hyperactive dogs and aggressive dogs who have experienced trauma.



Benefit of Jewels

Even before Littlefield, others studied how gemstone affected animals. In fact, the stones benefit dogs and cats slightly differently than humans, who have been using the therapeutic rocks for millennia.

Littlefield has traveled all over the world observing the ways in which different cultures apply gemstones. In China, she saw that jade was used to bring abundance and joy, similar to the way native Americans use turquoise. In New Zealand, the Maoris carve beautiful drawings into stones.

Littlefield has also lived all over the country, bringing her studio along each time she and her husband moved. She was

raised in Great Neck, N.Y., and lived upstate for 25 years. Two years ago her husband's job moved them to Oakland, and only in October did she land in Fairfax to create her designs in the shadow of the sacred Mount Tamalpais.

For all those years, Mansur sat by her side as she created her designs, an inspiration for her jewelry for humans and now for her new line.

Once Littlefield created a necklace for Mansur, her friends asked for designs for their four-legged friends. She started thinking about selling the product alongside her two-legged creations but had to first find durable material to ensure a long-lasting piece.

She experimented with every stringing material she could find, aiming for something that was not only comfortable around the neck but also strong. Eventually, she discovered industrial thread, a string so robust scissors can't cut it.

Littlefield also tried a variety of clasps but found that many had crimps that weakened over time. She now uses the highest quality, figure-eight silver clasp money can buy.

"We want to make sure people are really satisfied," she says, explaining that each necklace also has a 30-day guarantee. "This is a new idea, and we want people to buy it with confidence."

Another important mark of quality in 4 Legged Designs jewelry are the all-natural gemstones Littlefield employs. The beautiful baubles aren't easy to find, but Littlefield feels that the real thing is imperative for a healing effect. More commercially available gems are irradiated and dyed to enhance their coloring, a practice Littlefield feels destroys restorative frequencies.

"You just don't want to have anything toxic around your dog's neck," she says.

Each of the stones has a different property to heal, comfort, protect or calm animals. Littlefield attests to the impact of amethyst on Trixie, a rescue dog staying at her home. Trixie was afraid of everyone and everything, but within five minutes of wearing a gem-laden necklace, he hopped into Littlefield's lap and made himself at home.

Some of Littlefield's customers don't prescribe to her healing theories, but simply buy the jewelry for its beauty.

"Some people just buy it for the beauty of it or because it's a unique gift," she says. "My intention in creating it is to bring something that's beneficial to an animal."

Either way, the decorations draw attention wherever a puppy flaunts them. And this alone, Littlefield says, benefits the dog. In fact, one happy customer told her that her otherwise humble-looking dog was thriving under all the attention his gemstone necklace attracted. "Everyone would stop to pay attention and comment on it," she says. "The beauty has a healing property."

Accessories


Although her necklaces can be worn alongside store-bought collars, Littlefield is designing a hemp and silk



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collar to match her dog jewelry. The hemp, she says, becomes softer and more comfortable after being washed.

The 4 Legged line isn't limited to necklaces either. Owners can also adorn their pets with pendants designed to clip on to their dog's collar. Littlefield's other recent innovation is matching pendants for two-leggeds, so a human and pet can go out on the town in matching-style.

And, although her design is for dogs, Littlefield can also make custom sizes for cats if they are indoors. She's working on a necklace with a catch-release, but until then felines should stay inside when donning their jewels. 

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