

Southern Chester County Pets



Anne's K9 partner, Heidi, appears ready to go to work. Courtesy Photos (6)



Tamara describes her relationship with Sheba as being similar to dance partners.



Sheba arrives in Oxford for her mission.

Dogs Finding Dogs

Our Noses Know Where Your Pet Goes!

www.dogsfindingdogs.com
410-908-6374

Several Dog Finding Dogs K9 partners posed for this t-shirt design.

Dogs Finding Dogs
Our Noses Know Where Your Dog Goes!

Dog gone!

Non-profit helps owners find missing pets

By Nancy Johnson
Staff Writer

"People are so down lately that when they hear this story it just seems to brighten them up," insists Pat Berrett. Pat, who, with her husband Kory, resides just south of Oxford, is happy to relay what she calls their "tragic story with a happy ending."

She recalls that on Sunday, January 31, they got up as usual and were leisurely enjoying their Sunday morning coffee when they noticed that only two of their three dogs were in the kitchen. Millie was missing.

The Berrett dogs can come and go as they please through a doggie door. They play in the yard, but are confined to the property by a radio controlled electric fence system. Of the three dogs, Millie at 14 is by far the oldest and tends to stay closest to the house. This is also due to the fact that the Bichon/Cocker spaniel mix is completely blind.

"We immediately went to all her usual places - like the garage, under the deck, but no Millie. Then in the light dusting of snow we saw her tracks, going right out toward the woods," says Pat. "Although she can't see the property boundary, she can hear the audio signal it gives off and had never left the property before."

Pat and Kory followed Millie's tracks out in to the woods. Then the snow started melting and "we realized we couldn't track her any further."

"We did all the usual things you do when you have a missing pet. We called the SPCA, put flyers up everywhere, contacted Pet Finder on-line and called homes in the vicinity."

By Tuesday the Berretts had not heard a word about Millie from anyone. Especially worried as a major snowstorm was headed our way, Pat got back on the computer and searched for databases related to lost pets. She came across a site, FindToto.com that assists dog owners by getting the word out on a missing pet. Similar to an Amber Alert for pets, FindToto.com, notifies thousands of people about the missing pet by telephone.

While the Berretts did subscribe to Find Toto, no sightings of the little dog were reported. However, the real key was another organization, Dogs Finding Dogs, that

was referenced on the Find Toto website. Pat immediately contacted Dogs Finding Dogs, a non-profit organization of highly trained handlers and dogs that can track and find a lost pet.

After four days outside in the winter weather, "we assumed she had died, but we wanted to find her body," Pat says solemnly. They knew that once the blizzard arrived there would be virtually no chance of finding a white dog, dead or alive, in the snow.

"Anne Willis at Dogs Finding Dogs was just such a tremendously encouraging resource person. After talking with me extensively on the phone and making sure we had covered all the other bases, on Thursday, February 4 she sent a team, Tamara and K9 Sheba to help us look for Millie."

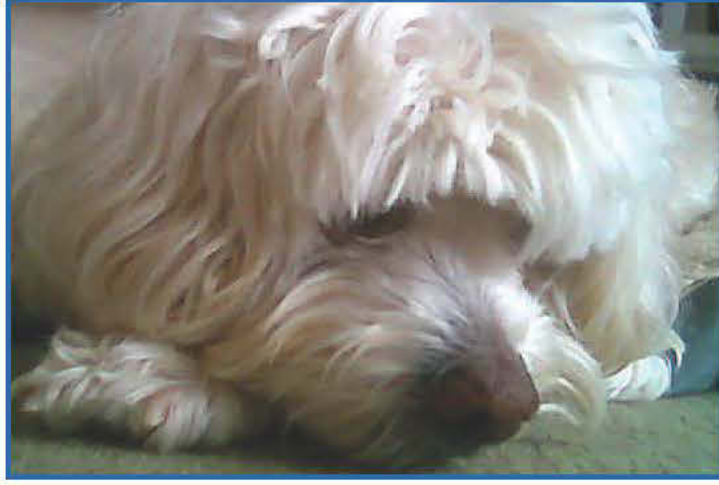
Sheba, like several of the 10 dogs currently working with Dogs Finding Dogs, is a rescue dog. Since Tamara adopted the three-year-old white German Shepherd, she has undergone extensive training for over a year to prepare for her job. Arrowwood Shepherds, which works with all dog breeds, has trained all of the Dogs Finding Dogs teams in tracking and obedience. Arrowwood is renowned for training service working dogs as well as preparing dogs for competition in American Kennel Club (AKC), Protection Sports Association (PSA) and Schutzhund events. Many Maryland State Police dogs have been trained at Arrowwood.

"You can easily have \$5,000 to \$6,000 wrapped up in training a dog," says Anne. She adds, "I know all of our trainers personally and they are very capable."

Obviously, the dog is a critical part of the team. It takes a special dog for this job. "You can't have a dog that is aggressive, either towards cats, dogs, or people. Plus, you have to have a very well trained dog with a very good temperament," she stresses.

Upon their arrival from York County, Sheba was given Millie's bed for her scent. Then she and Tamara, along with Kory, were off on their mission. Despite tracking a rather circuitous route taken by Millie, Sheba found the little dog in under an hour!

"I was always very confident that we would find her," claims Tamara. "Throughout the entire trek Sheba



Millie is happy to have returned to her own warm bed.

was showing that she was on a strong scent."

Tamara emphasizes that pet owners often don't realize how far or where their pets will go. In Millie's case, her route took her, and hence her trackers, through thick briars in the woods, across a creek, and even under barbed wire!

"As we were tracking Millie, Kory said to me, 'My dog would never come here.'" Several times during their zigzag search Tamara reassured him saying, "But this is where Sheba is tracking her."

"I was pretty skeptical," admits Kory. "I really wasn't expecting too much at first and when Tamara said to me as we were about to head out, 'You better bring a leash,' I thought she was a bit optimistic given the situation."

At one point, Sheba tracked Millie to a large thicketed area. She was convinced that Millie had been in the there, but Tamara did not want to let the tracking dog off leash, lest they lose her in the dense thicket area. Sheba eventually found the scent on the other side of the thicket and headed on, but Kory hung back searching the thicket area as he could easily envision Millie being stuck there.

"In a few minutes Tamara shouted to me that they saw Millie," he recalls. "I ran to catch up and there she was about 10 yards ahead sitting in a sphinx like pose in the middle of an open field!"

The first thing Kory did was to send a text message to Pat telling her that they had found Millie - and she was alive! Then he walked towards Millie while Tamara and Sheba stayed put, fearing they might scare the poor little dog. "When I called to Millie she turned and looked and then as I approached her she wagged her tail."

"I'm a believer now," Kory says adamantly. "Tamara and Sheba really knew what they were doing. There's no doubt they saved Millie's life."

"It was such a joy finding Millie, especially since she is blind," Tamara insists. "It has been a thrill

every time Sheba and I have found a lost pet. Dogs Finding Dogs is a wonderful service that has brought many pets home and hopefully will continue to find many more."

Immediately after her rescue, Pat took Millie to their veterinarian, Dr. Carl Mease of Oxford Veterinary Hospital to have her examined. Dr. Mease was so taken with Pat's story of Millie's tracking that he wrote an email to Anne telling her Millie was "a little lighter, but otherwise no worse for her adventure." He added how impressed he was with what Dogs Finding Dogs had done for the Berretts in finding Millie and promised to tell other clients about their services and Millie's amazing rescue.

"It is extremely rewarding to find a missing dog. There is just no price tag you can put on that feeling of reuniting a family with their pet," Anne explains. "We usually wind up crying right along with the family when they are reunited," she chuckles.

Since Anne founded Dogs Finding Dogs about a year and a half ago, the non-profit organization has located over 250 lost pets - mostly dogs and cats. In addition, they have helped with the return of many others by assisting owners with web postings and other alerts.

"It's a real tragedy when you have a missing pet. We don't turn anybody down," Anne emphasizes. "We have a special fund for those who can't afford it."

Pat reports that upon her return, "Millie did nothing but drink, eat and sleep for a week." Since her escapade, Pat and Kory are very careful to make sure their bedroom door is securely closed at night, lest Millie should wander out the doggie door early in the morning again.

Millie's Tale is included among Dogs Finding Dogs' many success stories. See the website, www.dogsfindingdogs.com or call 410-908-6374 to learn more about this organization that tracks pets in Maryland, DC, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.



Anne and Heidi on a tracking mission.



Kory scooped Millie up and carried her all the way home.

Governor of the State of Maryland, to

ANNE WILLIS AND HEIDI, Greetings:

Be it Known: That on behalf of the citizens of this State,

in recognition of a special tribute to honor you and your K9 Heidi for the fast and successful assistance you provided the police during a search for a person suspected of robbery... in appreciation of your quick response during the police chase; and as our citizens join in expressing our gratitude and admiration for your expert dog training skills and the talent and ability demonstrated by Heidi,

we are pleased to confer upon you this

Governor's Citation

Given Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland
this 31st day of August
2010

Robert W. Zellmer

The governor of Maryland awarded Anne and Heidi this citation for their work with police in catching a purse snatcher.