

"HOORAY! FOR HANNAH" BY PATTI MEANS

IT WAS 6:30 P.M. ON A MONDAY NIGHT,

20 degrees outside, and 45 minutes since four year old Dylan Sharpe had been missing from his home when I got a call from our local police department. I scribbled down the address, jumped into my boots, grabbed my gear, and headed for the bloodhounds! As I was loading the hounds and latching the kennels, my husband, Al (and side-kick in this hound-dog hobby) pulled into the driveway from work. I yelled for him to "GET IN!" "SEARCH!!!" While en route, I briefed Al on the details.

The scenario was that independent Dylan (the youngest of four boys) opened the back door of their home, allowing "Wrinkles" the family pet (a Jack Russell Terrier) out into the yard. Dylan, clothed in just a t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers — followed "Wrinkles" on his enticing adventure into the cold, dark night. Within minutes, Dylan's mother called his name, but no response! She began searching frantically on her own and then quickly called her husband on his cell phone, who would be there soon, he had only a few more traffic lights to pass through until he reached their home. In the interim, Dylan's mother called the local police department, who in turn, immediately called us.



Dylan Sharpe, 4, gets a big wet kiss from Hannah, a bloodhound that located him after he wandered away from his East Lampeter Township home Monday evening. Intelligencer Journal photo by Barry Zecher

A dog and his boy

Bloodhound rescues missing East Lampeter child

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Hannah, a black and tan bloodhound, sniffed the white blanket that 4-year-old Dylan Sharpe sleeps with. At the command of "Find" from her owner, Allen Means, the 7-year-old dog's nose went to work. Hannah was on the trail of Dylan, an independent boy who had last told his mother, Melissa, that he was going to let the family's Jack Russell terrier, Wrinkles, out the back door Monday evening.

Next thing she knew, Dylan was nowhere to be found. Melissa searched and called Dylan's name. Then she called her husband, Nathan, on his cellular phone. He'd be there soon — he had only a few more stoplights to pass through as he headed out King Street to their home at 1601 Lincoln Highway East, behind Weis Market.

But soon wasn't soon enough. After all, Dylan had wandered off in just T-shirt, jeans and sneakers in 20-degree weather. It was about 5:30 p.m., and it soon would be pitch dark. So she called East Lampeter Police, who in turn notified the Red Rose

K-9 Search and Rescue — an 11-year-old nonprofit group with three handler/bloodhound teams — Charlie Hawkins with Ruby; Allen with Hannah; and Allen's wife, Patti, with Claudette.

They're called for everything, including missing children, Alzheimer's patients and escaped criminals, such as Norman Johnston. Hannah and Claudette were crucial to Johnston's capture in August after he escaped from state prison at Huntingdon. One

More BLOODHOUND on B-2

Another team member, Charlie Hawkins, arrived first on the scene and retrieved the boy's teddy bear as his scent article. When we arrived, Charlie and his hound "Ruby" had already started working behind the home. The first thing we did when we arrived was asked to be taken to the boy's bedroom so we could retrieve our own scent articles. As Al puts it, he

chose Dylan's "banky" (blanket) and I chose his bed sheet. We returned to the van and chose to use Hannah — Al's partner and veteran of seven years.

Hannah stepped into her harness, sniffed the "banky", and together with Al's command "FIND EM" — they were on their way. At that time, I urged the officer in charge to dispatch

our local search team who are trained and state-certified in search management. Given the extreme temperature, the boy's age, and the fact that all he was wearing was a t-shirt — it was imperative to have as many trained individuals respond as possible. My request was granted and additional help was en route.

As I watched Hannah work, she circled the back yard and then hooked a hard left around to the front of the house, headed out through the thick woods, down a steep, snow-covered embankment which lead directly to a heavily traveled roadway.

As soon as Al saw the traffic on the roadway at the bottom of the hill, he told the accompanying officer to get a police car down there to detain traffic while they worked along the roadway. The direction of travel soon took a direct route towards a major creek behind a warehouse, which escalated the fear level just a degree or two for both men. Hannah then turned and started working away from the creek, in and around one of the warehouses, and parallel to the roadway.

Al and Hannah were working on the berm of the road when headlights from a truck behind them shown on the curve ahead and the officer yelled, "I think I saw something white up ahead." Within the next few minutes, Al yelled, "There's the boy and the dog's still with him!" Al told the officer, "I want to work Hannah right up to him. You try to get the dog and I'll take care of the boy."

As they continued to walk towards Dylan, Al calmly told the young boy to stay still because of the traffic, and he did. Hannah bounded happily towards Dylan and started licking his face! Al asked Dylan if he was alright and he responded, "I'm really cold." Al told him to hold Hannah as he took off his XL Carhartt coat and bundled him in it. The total time that Dylan was exposed to the cold was about one and a half hours. "Wrinkles," however, was still 'on the lamb' as the officer wasn't successful in apprehending him!

Back at the house, the good news crackled across the police radio as we heard the officer



with Al (huffing and puffing) but clearly state, "WE HAVE A FIND!" YES! Oh! what a feeling! There's nothin' like it! THAT's what it's all about!

The EMTs responded to the location where Dylan was found and began checking his physical condition. Al and Hannah had done their job and started making their way back through the woods to the house. As I watched for them, I saw a headlamp bobbing through the black woods and then a floppy hound leading the way. Then, we heard a voice from the dark: "WHO WANTS TO KISS MY DOG?" and Dylan's mother shouted back, "I DO!" Both parents got a slobbery kiss from Hannah and in return — several hugs and ear rubs!

The reunion was filled with many emotions and as one of the police officers lifted Dylan into his mother's arms, there was a moment of silence—then tears. The little guy was still bundled in Al's Carhartt coat as we watched the family (huddled in a mass) walk back into their warm home together again. Hannah hopped up into her kennel and was given her favorite liver treats! We headed home and ate a late dinner — all in the day of a volunteer bloodhound handler!

Our local newspaper asked Dylan's parents if they would allow them to write a

human interest story, and they agreed. An evening was scheduled for us to meet the family once again under happier circumstances and to photograph Dylan with his new friend, Hannah. Everyone was excited to see Hannah again and the photographer had a great time trying to capture the best of the duo! Surprisingly enough, Dylan was a good sport despite getting a soaking wet ear!

Before we left, we took the opportunity that evening to educate Dylan and his brothers on a few basic survival tips. All in a row, the four boys sat in front of the television and watched the children's video we brought along entitled "Lost But Found, Safe & Sound" (produced by the National Parks Department). They were absorbing every detail as they related to their little brother's recent experience. Afterwards, we gave each boy a whistle and a hug goodbye. We left that evening, six friends richer! If anyone is wondering, "Wrinkles" DID make it home a few hours after Dylan!

In closing and most important — does anyone reading this story grasp the irony? Let's think about this!

A BLOODHOUND IN PURSUIT OF A DOG NAMED "WRINKLES"!!!

