

## Rescue dogs help write happy tales

By KATHLEEN D. BAILEY  
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**NORTHWOOD** – Jeanne Menard stood before a group of campers at Saddleback Campground with her dog-in-training Scout, a 2 1/2 -year-old German Shorthair Pointer, sniffing at the ground.

"I want to make a correction," she said, referring to an anecdote offered earlier during the gathering. "I did not find that young girl; I drove my other dog, Cheerio, to the search. Cheerio found the girl."

Menard, of Deerfield, and fellow search-and-rescue worker Paula Harper were at the campground Aug. 11 to give a lecture and demonstration on their work. Both women have worked with New England Search and Rescue for about 10 years, and both say the benefits far outweigh any inconveniences.

What inconveniences? They're on call 24/7 and do most of their work at night. They buy and train their own dogs, taking up to two years to get a dog where it should be. And they get called out on major holidays. Harper hasn't had a Mother's Day off in years.

According to Menard, they go mostly at night because dogs have a strong sense of smell where a lost person is when there's less activity.

"There aren't a lot of other people running around," she said. "Also, the air is still, so it's hard to find a source where a missing person is."

Also, she added, more "paid" help is available in the daytime, such as local law enforcement.

Cheerio, a seasoned rescue dog who is also a German Shorthair Pointer, is still in training, but "tends to get distracted," she said. She wants her dogs to be on her hand.

Also, she said, training a rescue dog is different from training a house dog. A house dog sits on the counter, but a rescue dog may find a small child in a cabinet, so the counter is off-limits.

The New England Search and Rescue Team has nine members, five from New Hampshire and four from Vermont. Menard and Harper often work together and were called out 57 times last year. That's 57 trips into swamps, woods or mountainous terrain, often with only a flashlight and a dog's keen senses to guide them.

They don't work on snowy days; trackers can find a person through footprints, Harper said. "Snow days are my day off."

The women and Missy Rollins gave a hands-on demonstration at Saddleback Campground. Allison Irish, daughter of campground owners Les and Nancy Haskell, hid on the other side of a pond. Harper took her 8-year-old shepherd, Annie, on a walk.

Annie sniffed at rocks and plants, almost found Allison, didn't find her, and finally led Harper to where Allison was lying on the ground. Annie was rewarded with a game of Frisbee.

"We don't do punishment training," Harper said. "Whatever makes the dog happiest in the world, that's what they get."

Menard searches for people in a variety of situations: dementia patients who have wandered off, children who took hide-and-seek a little too far, people who were simply "in the wrong place at the wrong time." For her, search and rescue outranks the excitement of movies, TV and mystery novels.

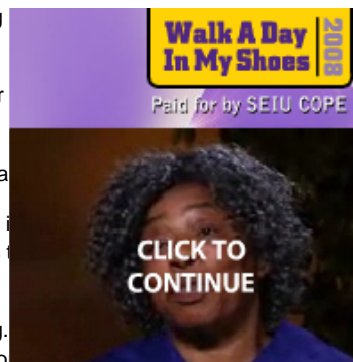
"There is nothing like it," she said. "To live through it, to participate in these events is so rewarding."

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My German Shepherd lead me out of the woods once. I was hiking through conservation land abutting my property and got turned around as it got dark. I told the dog "I want to go home," his snout hit the ground, and he was off. Next thing I know we're coming up in our backyard. Note, we did not enter the woods from the backyard. We entered through the trail entrance up the street. GOOD BOY!!!!

- Dawn, Amherst, NH



Dogs rock! It's time that people realize we are nothing compared to the animal kingdom!!  
- Denise Bailey, Manchester

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