

BowWOW!

Facts, observations and musings about Our Best Friends

Dog Gone AWOL

Part Three: How Do I Get Him Back?

Time is of the essence; Carter has a several-hour head start and that's more than enough time to get into big trouble. Because Carter has a good human he was micro-chipped and was also wearing ID tags. With a little luck Carter will be found. Somewhere. Soon.

His human rallied some friends and hit the neighborhood. They knocked door-to-door for a four block radius. They talked to everyone they ran across, showing a current photo of Carter. They distributed written descriptions and a contact phone number. (For safety's sake they did not include a home address.) There was a reward, but a specific amount was not mentioned.

His human carried his favorite squeaky toy and used it to help make familiar noises; everyone called his name. They would wait and listen for him to make a noise in reply. It looked a bit crazy, but, hey, this is Carter's life we're talking about! One carried a flashlight in case Carter was injured or frightened and hiding under a house, in a culvert, storage shed, garage or under a car.

A neighbor went, in person, to the Beaufort County Animal Shelter instead of simply calling in a lost dog report. The shelter is a busy place and descriptions of pets are subjective and can vary. She left with them a current photo of Carter, the contact number, the information on Carter's tags and chip number. Sad to say, our shelter is euphemistically known as a "kill shelter". As many as 5,000 animals have been euthanized there in one year's time. Statistically and logically some of those included unclaimed, lost dogs. The Beaufort County shelter will hold a dog for three days and they will try very hard to reunite pet and owner, but it is the responsibility of the owner to keep checking back. The shelter can provide contact information for all other animal rescue groups in the area. The neighbor spent the afternoon on the phone with PAL, HAL, Chain Free Beaufort, Camp Green Dog and Maranatha Farm.

Another friend posted almost 100 flyers about Carter within a one-mile radius of where he was lost. He used fluorescent paper for higher visibility, listed the date and place Carter was lost, his breed, sex, age, weight, color, markings, a recent photo and the contact number. He withheld several identifying marks in case the owner needed to use them later to verify that a person had actually found her pet and was not trying to run a scam. The reward was mentioned again with no amount stated. He volunteered to place ads in the newspapers and check the "found" ads every day if Carter was gone for much longer. He was also going to call radio stations and see if the cable companies would run announcements.

Another, more stalwart friend, volunteered to check with the city, county, and state road crews, DOT, and Animal Control every day to see if Carter might have met his end on the highway. This was a sad but necessary task.

The best conclusion to this story is that a Good Samaritan found Carter heading for the shopping center a mile and a half from his home. She leashed him, walked him back to her house and called the number on his tag. Carter's human drove over to find him playing happily in her backyard her dogs. He had been AWOL for only ten hours. But it's not always such happy ending.

Safeguard your pets before they go AWOL by pet-proofing the yard and creating a Lost-Dog kit. With luck you'll never have to use it. Train your dog in a positive way to respond to a special whistle/squeak toy so he'll more likely to come running when he hears it. Keep your dog tagged and chipped; keep the rabies tags current. And, of course, spay and neuter your animals.

BowWOW! Is a production of Tracie Korol and wholeDog. She is a holistic behavior coach, a canine massage therapist (CMT), herbalist, and canine homeopath. Want more information? Have a question? Send a note to Tracie at letstalk@wholedog.biz or visit www.wholedog.biz.