

Dog Rescue

After a rain storm last summer, Emily Bennett noticed dog walking in her neighborhood. She didn't recognize it. The dog was wet and tired. But it was healthy.

"The dog had a collar, but no tags. He looked well fed. My mom thought he was probably someone's pet. She thought he got scared. She thought he ran away during the storm." Emily wanted to help the dog get back to his owner.

"My mom called the local animal shelters. But no one had been looking for a dog that looked like the one we found."

The Bennett family was willing to keep the dog. But Emily knew it really belonged to someone else. "It made me sad to think that some other kid out there was missing his dog." They called the dog Stormy.

A week later, Emily's mom called the local shelters again. This time there was a match. A family had been looking for a dog that looked like Stormy. The two families met at the shelter. Stormy was reunited with his family.



"It was sad to say goodbye to Stormy," said Emily. "But his family looked so happy to have him back. I was really glad they had found each other again."

Anne Wilson runs one of the local shelters. She told Emily about other dogs. They were found after the storm. "Every time there is a big storm with a lot of lightning and thunder, we end up with at least three or four lost dogs coming to us. Dogs are often scared of the noise of the thunder. They run away and end up lost."

"Most of the time," Miss Wilson explained, "the dog's owners come here and find their dog. But every year there are at least two or three that end up staying with us. They never make it back to their family."

Emily couldn't stop thinking about Stormy. She thought of the other dogs that had been lost. The weather forecast was calling for more storms.

"Emily was very upset. She didn't want more dogs to end up lost," said Emily's mom. "She wanted to find a way to make it easier for owners to find their lost pets."

Emily had an idea. Her father works with computers. He helped Emily create a new website. On the website, Emily posts photos of all of the dogs from each of the local shelters. "This way," she explains, "there is one place where a family can go to see if their dog has been found."

Anne Wilson and the other shelters owners' loved the idea. "We try to talk with each other. But until now it's been the pet owner's job to call each shelter. They have to ask if their dog has been found and turned in there. It's hard for the pets' owners. They may be told many

times that their dog hasn't been found. Then they find the right shelter."

"Dogs have been known to run many miles when they are scared. Sometimes the dogs end up at a shelter. That shelter may be a long way from their homes. Their owners don't realize the dog could have ended up so far away."

When a new lost dog comes into the shelter, someone takes a picture of the dog. The picture is sent in an e-mail to Emily and her dad. The e-mail also includes a description of the dog. It tells the gender, color and other features. Emily and her dad post the dog's picture on their website quickly.

"Now someone calls to ask about a lost pet," said Miss Wilson. "If the pet isn't here at our shelter, we tell the family to check the website."

The website has been active for six months. Only one of the dogs featured has not been reunited with its family.

"It's amazing to see what a difference it makes," Miss Wilson said. "It's so sad when lost dogs and owners can't find each other. But now the process is much simpler. I'm so proud of what Emily and her family are doing to help."

Emily has a collection of thank you notes. She's received them from the owners of dogs who have been found through her website. She holds up one written with scribbled crayon. "This little girl's puppy ran away during a storm. This was a couple weeks ago. The puppy ended up at a shelter. Then we put the picture on the website. The owners saw it. They got the puppy back all within one day." Emily smiles. "It makes me happy that I could help this little girl get her puppy back."

Miss Wilson hopes that many more dogs will find their families. She also hopes that more families are careful so that their pets don't get lost in the first place. She offers these tips for keeping your dog safe:

1. Make sure your dog wears a collar with tags. The tags should include your name and phone number. This is so you can be contacted if the dog is found.
2. During a storm, allow your dog to come inside the house. Or make sure that the dog has a dog house or porch. Give him a place where he can feel safe and protected.
3. Put a fence around your yard. This is so your dog has a safe place to play. But he can't get out and run away.