



## Belinda's Happy Ending - November 2002

Belinda was a 3-4 year old female purebred Chinese Shar Pei that was rescued from the harsh streets of Hartford, Connecticut in early 2002, just before having five puppies. Volunteers from a non-profit rescue group saved her from the pound and brought her to a no-kill animal shelter in Middlebury. Homes were easily found for all the puppies, but because Belinda was scared and very aloof, the volunteers posted that she needed help from someone who

knew about the Shar-Pei breed.

A former student of mine e-mailed Belinda's picture to me, so I called to offer help. My husband and I began working with Belinda three or four times a week to build up her trust of people. It took three weeks just to get a collar on her. Using positive reinforcement and non-threatening gestures, Belinda transformed into a very curious and affectionate dog.

After seven months at the shelter, she finally found a family from New Hampshire who wanted to adopt her. On Sunday, October 27, 2002, I drove Belinda half-way to her new home and then made my way back to Connecticut with tears in my eyes - a little piece of my heart had stayed with her.

The following weekend, the family took a trip to visit relatives in Saugus, Massachusetts and brought Belinda with them. Her week-long adventure began on Sunday, November 3, 2002, when she bolted out the door and ran off into the woods. After her family notified me on Monday, I immediately began to e-mail and call everyone I could think of. Pictures of Belinda were sent to people who made up posters and went out with treats to try to find her. I left detailed descriptions with Animal Control Officers in Saugus and Lynn, the North Shore Animal Hospital in Lynn, and Animal Rescue League.

That very day, Animal Control began receiving reports of a loose Shar Pei near the Iron Works, a local historical site about a half mile from where she first bolted. Being three hours away, I could only pray for her safety.... and wait. Each day I received a call that told me where she had been spotted. I was overwhelmed by the constant outpouring of support from Animal Control, Animal Hospital's employees, and countless citizens from Saugus and Lynn.

At 7 AM on Saturday, my husband Matt and I arrived in Saugus to help look for Belinda. We walked the woods and up and down every street where she'd been spotted, plus all those in between. Fliers were posted on utility poles and handed out to everyone we saw. Even Cub Scout Pack 61 joined the search. Fliers were given to anyone who was walking, hiking, or biking. Starting well before dawn, our search continued Sunday morning. At 9 AM we were watching the woods at a sighting area when my cell phone rang - someone who had gotten one of our fliers saw Belinda.

Now, with help from neighbors and people I had e-mailed, the pursuit began. Though we had numerous sightings and got close to Belinda, she would dart away when approached by anyone. She was extremely scared and looked terrified.....like we were hunting her. Late that afternoon, a humane cage trap was set up just off of a trail in the woods where she was last seen. Then it got dark and began to rain, so we had to return to Connecticut, empty handed. Belinda proved to be elusive.

Early in the morning on Monday, November 11, 2002, a woman who was walking her dog spotted Belinda in the trap and, thinking someone had left this dog in the woods, she nearly let her out! Then she saw the posters on the trees surrounding the cage and immediately called me. Lynn Animal Control was called and one of the neighbors who helped with the search stayed with Belinda until they arrived. We went to the North Shore Animal Hospital where Belinda was held for "safe keeping." The Vet said that she was in good health, just thin and very scared.

Belinda enjoyed the remainder of her life in her new home...mine.  
THANK YOU to all the wonderful people who took a flier and helped us search. We could not have spotted and caught her without you.

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