



Bernie's Happy Ending - April 9, 2009

Nikki and her family were visiting relatives during the 2008 Christmas season when her dog Bernie bolted out a garage door that was accidentally opened. He ran and kept on running. Losing a dog is usually an ordeal in itself, but Nikki lived two hours away, making it worse. Around this time, a lost dog went up to the house of a woman named Patti. After posting on Petfinder, she was able to find its rightful owner.

Meanwhile, Nikki also saw the ad and got in touch with Patti. The two stayed in contact and worked together throughout the search. Because she lived in the area, Patti was able to provide much needed on-site assistance. She posted fliers, updated old ones, talked to residents, and followed up on all sightings and leads. A woman with a heart of gold, she worked diligently and is the reason there's a happy ending story to be told. She not only helped Bernie's family, but caught other lost dogs that would probably still be lost and wandering if not for her tireless efforts.

On March 8, 2009, Patti found the LostDogSearch website. She emailed Debbie about Bernie's plight and asked for advice and suggestions. Patti was given background support where she could ask questions, bounce ideas around, and come up with workable solutions.

At the beginning of April, a call came in about sightings at a log cabin used as a vacation retreat in the general vicinity where Bernie was first lost. The property owner said he'd seen a stray sleeping on the porch and under the deck a number of times since Christmas. He'd seen it again, but this time his neighbors also caught a glimpse of the dog in a field 500' behind their home. After agreeing it looked like the long lost Bernie on a recently seen flier, they called to tell him about the flier and provided contact numbers. Patti was at the cabin the next day with food and water bowls and scent items. Once he saw Bernie's picture, the man was 95% sure it was the same dog. No matter what, the stray was obviously starving and needed to be caught. Patti set up a 4' humane cage on the porch while looking for a longer one more suitable for a large dog. Food and water bowls were also placed on the porch. The cabin's residents left the next day and called Patti to say they'd seen the dog resting on the road in the exact spot where she laid down the other day while trying to lure it out of hiding with food. The dog knew the residents had left, came out of hiding and back to the cabin. Patti got to see Bernie for the first time.

He was very hungry and ate all the food in the bowl. While comfortable with Patti's presence, he seemed nervous about going into the cage trap to eat the food inside. Patti replenished the food bowl and then put more inside the trap. While this was going on, Nikki was already on the road making the two hour drive from home, so Patti left to meet her. Upon arrival, they parked at the street and slowly walked up the driveway leading to the cabin. Patti noticed the trap had been tripped but Bernie wasn't inside. He

entered far enough to step on the trip plate but backed out quickly, thus avoiding being trapped by the door closing down.



Nikki left food bits on the porch stairs and started to walk away calling out Bernie's name. Patti then saw him appear from the back side of the porch and called him with outstretched hands. He wagged his tail, then went directly to the stairs and began eating the food. Patti told Nikki, "Go to the food...Go to the food." As Nikki approached and called him, Bernie went right to her and started giving her kisses. He kept jumping up on her as she put his collar and leash on. He was obviously happy about seeing Nikki and to be getting

food to eat. Both women were a bit shocked how easily it all fell into place at the end, especially after three agonizing months.



Considering his ordeal, the vet declared Bernie to be in good shape. He did lose thirty pounds and has early Lyme disease, but is reunited with his family and loving life once again.