

# Burned pooch, rescuers reunited

## Dog on the mend after abuse ordeal nearly left her dead

By Cyndi Lieske  
SPECIAL WRITER

The four-legged guest of honor bounding into Last Chance Rescue's Christmas party Thursday was a dog that 18 months ago was burned so badly she nearly died.

Spirit, a 4-year-old Australian shepherd mix, was found in Cohoctah Township in the summer of 2004. The stray dog had deep burns, apparently from battery acid being thrown on her face, and was suffering from malnutrition.

The first veterinarian who saw her said she should be euthanized immediately. Volunteers from Last Chance Rescue searched until they found a veterinarian who would save the dog. Several surgeries and skin grafts later, Spirit was adopted by Kelly McDoniel of Farmington Hills.

"We had no shortage of people

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Photo by CYNDI LIESKE

Spirit has fully recovered from abuse in 2004 that nearly left her dead.

# Dog reunited with rescuers

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who wanted to adopt her," said Sharen Kizer of Last Chance Rescue. "We probably had more than 30 applications. It's obvious we made the right choice. She has a good home."

The plan for reuniting Spirit with her rescuers came about when McDoniel was visiting the Pet Expo in Novi last month. She stopped by Last Chance Rescue's booth to give Kizer an update on Spirit.

Kizer invited McDoniel to attend the group's annual party at Waldenwoods Resort and Conference Center in Hartland Township.

McDoniel told those gathered at the party that her energetic pooch now spends her days as a pet therapy dog at Botsford Hospital in Farmington. Once a week, she and McDoniel visit the hospital. While there, Spirit wears a bandanna and McDoniel wears a T-shirt to identify them as volunteers with the Dr. Paws organization.

"She loves going to see the people," McDoniel said. "I have to cover up my T-shirt with a sweatshirt when I am getting ready to go because if she sees it, she will drive me crazy."

When rescuers first found Spirit, she was near death. Thursday night, she was the picture of health as she sprinted from one end of the room to the other looking for handouts. Her face bore no signs of the deep burns that once covered it.

McDoniel explained that fur from behind Spirit's ear was grafted onto her snout to cover the damaged tissue. Since the downy fur is longer than the other fur on Spirit's face, McDoniel trims it with a mustache trimmer.

As McDoniel watched Spirit make the rounds, she said it was unusual for Spirit to get such rich treats.

"She's getting spoiled tonight," she said.

Kizer said it was good for the volunteers to reunite with one of



Photo by CYNDI LIESKE

Spirit, right, was the special guest of Last Chance Rescue's Christmas party Thursday. Spirit was found badly burned and starving in 2004. Last Chance Rescue helped her recover and found her a good home.

*"With as sad as (Spirit's) story was, seeing her now makes it worthwhile."*

— Sharen Kizer  
Last Chance Rescue

their success stories.

"So many people were involved in helping her," Kizer said. "Some people who were there had heard the story but had never seen her."

Seeing the healthy, vibrant dog makes it easier to take the tough cases the volunteers hear about each day, Kizer said.

"With as sad as her story was, seeing her now makes it worthwhile," she said. "It is nice to have a happy ending to know that a dog that a lot of people cared for has got a such a great home. It kind of keeps us going."