



THE STORY OF HERSHEY: A Microchip is Important, but a Registered Microchip is Crucial

If you ever doubt the importance of microchipping, when you hear the story of Hershey you'll be a confirmed believer in the importance of having proper identification on our furred friends at all times and why microchipping can make all the difference in the world.

On October 6 of this year, a scrawny, very matted cocker spaniel arrived at the LA/SPCA as a stray. Animal control officers found the dog and brought her to the shelter, we realized that she was not only alone and wandering, she was also blind.

As with all strays, LA/SPCA staff scanned the dog for a microchip in the hopes that this lost dog's identity could be ascertained. When the scanner lit up and the readout revealed a chip number, it's the best feeling in the world. We realized that we were just a phone call away from finding the owner, of course when we find a dog in such condition we also want to make sure we're putting them back into the best environment. However, when we pulled up information on the chip number it revealed that the chip had never been registered. Although a pet has a microchip implanted, unless the owner registers their contact number with the microchip manufacturer, the chip is almost useless.

However, resident lost and found detective extraordinaire, Laurie Weisberg, used the lot number on the chip and tracked it down to a veterinarian that lived out of town, but had participated in microchipping several years ago at a local pet store chain. Based on that information, Weisberg finally tracked down a customer, and possibly the owner.

In the meantime, the LA/SPCA named this lost cocker spaniel Lily, in honor of Lily – a dog who was separated from her owner during Hurricane Katrina and was ultimately reunited with them months later in December 2005 in Fort Smith, Arkansas.



Rewind the time back to a Gentilly neighborhood in April 2007, when Jeanne Marie Jean's cocker spaniel, Hershey, slipped out of the house when guests were visiting. Jeanne immediately went around the neighborhood looking for Hershey, certain that she couldn't have wandered that far in such a short span time. Hershey's vision was already waning so Jeanne felt an even greater urgency to find her. However, those hours turned into days, those days into weeks, and those weeks into months. Jeanne searched throughout the neighborhood and beyond looking for Hershey to no avail. After almost a year, Jeanne painfully accepted that she would never see Hershey again.

So when Jeanne answered the phone in mid October 2008 and was told that the LA/SPCA thought they had found her lost dog, Jeanne couldn't believe what she was hearing. She was asked if she had ever lost a dog and could she describe the dog. When she began describing the distinctive white mark under Lily's (i.e. Hershey's) otherwise brown muzzle, LA/SPCA staff knew they had found Lily's (i.e. Hershey's) owner.

With a range of emotions – shock, relief, and almost disbelief – Jeanne arrived at the shelter the next day to make sure this was indeed her dog. She was somewhat tentative, not wanting to get her hopes up and afraid of the chance that it wasn't Hershey after all, especially after being told that Lily was found less than a mile from her home. How could she have been so close to have never found her?

Early the next day, Jeanne arrived at the shelter and when staff finally brought out the newly groomed dog into the lobby, Jeanne had no doubt – Lily was indeed Hershey. LA/SPCA Humane Officer Beth Horner, who had rescued Lily (i.e. Hershey) was there as well for the beautiful reunion, overjoyed to see a happy ending to the often difficult task of bringing in strays, traumatized and injured.

And for Jeanne, it was both a joy to once again see her Hershey, and a lesson learned on how important it is to have a microchip registered.

Most importantly for Hershey, it was finally home sweet home.

- Gloria Dauphin