

Pup's tale: Found after 3 years

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It was something close to a holiday miracle.

A puppy who ran away from home was finally reunited with her owners in Lake Ronkonkoma just before Christmas — more than three years after she disappeared.

The remarkable reunion was made possible by an electronic identification device that was implanted under the dog's skin. But the family that owned the dog never knew that an animal shelter in Brooklyn had installed the electronic ID before she was adopted.

Apparently no one had bothered to look for the device the entire time the dog was missing, until one persistent dog lover found it after she saved the black Labrador, named Trudy, from doggie death row.

Trudy had gone missing in 2001 after seven months of living with the Kelly family in Lake Grove. She had been "a runner," said Carol Kelly. "She loved to chase cars. She would jump the



PHOTO BY ED BETZ

Janine Kelly, 8, with long-lost Trudy yesterday

fence and off she'd go."

One day, Trudy took off with Carol and her daughters, Susan and Janine, in hot pursuit. They lost her on Middle Country Road and never saw her again.

After giving up hope, the family moved to Lake Ronkonkoma and got another dog, Sandy, a yellow Lab. But they kept

their phone number.

Hope resurfaced on Dec. 16, when Susan, 11, picked up the ringing phone to find Dori Scofield on the other end of the line. Scofield, from the Save-A-Pet animal shelter in Port Jefferson Station, asked Susan if she was missing her dog.

Both Susan and her father

Patrick assured the woman that Sandy was fine. It wasn't until Scofield started describing the black Lab mix that they realized she was talking about Trudy.

Scofield had found Trudy at the Brookhaven municipal shelter and taken her along with six other dogs to Save-A-Pet.

"She was so cute and so good," Scofield said. "She was this sweet little Lab mix, and I knew she was somebody's dog."

Save-A-Pet routinely scans for identification devices, and Trudy's ID led her to the Kellys, just in time for the pooch to be home for Christmas.

It is unclear where Trudy spent most of the past 3½ years, but she spent six months with a woman in Miller Place until running off from there two months ago and disappearing again, Scofield said. Sometime after that, Trudy was picked up and put in the animal shelter.

Since Trudy's return, the Kellys have gotten Sandy an electronic ID, and there's a new rule in the house: Trudy stays on a long lead now before anyone opens the door to the outside.