

August 21, 2012

HUFF POST GOOD NEWS

'Miracle Dog' Missy Rescued From 14,000 Ft. Colorado Peak by Team of Heroic Strangers

The Huffington Post | By [Meredith Bennett-Smith](#)



In an amazing feat of both mountaineering and selfless teamwork, a group of hikers, organized via an Internet message site, banded together to rescue a wounded dog stranded along an inhospitable stretch of rocky terrain between Mt. Bierstadt and Mt. Evans in Colorado.

Hikers Scott Washburn and his wife Amanda had accidentally wandered a little off course during a hike when they stumbled upon Missy, a German Shepherd mix who was wedged in a crevice off the main trail.

"She wasn't making any noise. My wife just about stepped on her," Washburn told The Huffington Post. Puzzled, the two had no idea where the dog had come from. "It was just really weird, and definitely not a place for a dog to be," Washburn told HuffPost.

Missy was in very bad shape. Her paws were bleeding, and the good Samaritans could tell she was severely dehydrated. Washburn said her nostrils were plugged shut and she was clearly having trouble breathing.

The two gave the dog food and water, but were not able to transport her back down. Once back on the ground, the two started calling around, trying to find an organization that would help rescue the dog.

In July, the *Denver Post* reported that more than 20 members of the Summit County Rescue Group helped rescue two dogs who were stranded with one of their owners on Quandary Peak, in Colorado.

But because this emergency situation was without human victims, no agency wanted to take the risk. That's when the two turned to climbing site 14ers.com. The Washburns posted a picture of Missy, with a location. On Sunday night a search team tried and failed to find the dog. But on Monday, a second team of eight volunteers, including Washburn and veteran hiker Chris O'Riley, found her.

But then, of course, they had to get the 100-pound animal back down.

The team rigged a makeshift sling to get her off her crevice, and then settled her into a backpack, which members of the team took turns carrying.

Several hours later, as the team continued with the rescue, the weather turned bad, as if often does on peaks of that height.

"It started raining," Washburn said. "Which turned into snow, and by the time we got back to the top of the mountain to start hiking [Missy] out, it was pretty slick and wet and cold and definitely compounded the danger aspect."

Finally back on the ground, the team rushed Missy to a hospital, where the vet proclaimed her a "miracle dog."

Meanwhile, a man claiming to be Missy's owner turned up on the 14ers website.

"At this point I made the decision that I honestly never thought I would even be faced with. I left her there so that my friend and I could get down safely with intentions of calling S & R when we were off of the mountain," wrote someone identifying himself as aortolani14. "All I can say is that I am relieved that she is okay, I am ashamed that it was not me that started this thread, I am ashamed that it wasn't me who got her off of the mountain, I underestimated the good will and resolve of the hiking community of Colorado, and I am eternally grateful to all of you," the post continued.

David Crawford works with AnimalHelpNow, a website and mobile phone app that directs people involved with animal emergencies to the appropriate resources.

Crawford had been recruiting for the rescue team, and was monitoring the 14ers site as comments and offers to help rolled in. Crawford told The Huffington Post that emotions were running high among rescuers – they wondered if the owner had, in fact, exhausted all possible options in his bid to help Missy.

"He says he made calls to try to get help for her, and nobody would," Crawford told HuffPost. "He could have made those calls, I don't know. What he didn't do at that point is get resourceful."

The presumed owner did not respond to an initial request for comment.

For his part, Scott Washburn said he was shocked when the owner came forward to share his side of the story. "I'm a huge animal lover, and the thought that someone would abandon their dog up there is just appalling to me," he said.

For now, Missy is still in the custody of the county, waiting to be cleared by the vet. She is expected to make a full recovery.