

Between
the lines



**ANNA MARIE
LUX**

Accident took 'an angel on Earth'

Terri Tinsley didn't know the man who lost his dog.

But she drove to Milwaukee five nights in a row after work to help search for the missing animal.

"She was like an angel on Earth," said Terri's friend, Sarah Kalnajs of Madison. "If someone needed something, Terri was there."

It's no wonder hundreds attended Terri's tribute service last weekend.

"Many were crying as though they

had lost their best friend in the world, because they pretty much had," Sarah said.

Terri of Fort Atkinson died after a head-on crash with a semi trailer truck Dec. 9.

She was best known and loved for her animal-rescue work, especially involving German shepherds, and her unlimited energy on behalf of homeless and unwanted animals.

In March 2002, she founded and was

president of Arf's German Shepherd Rescue Inc.

The volunteer group finds good homes for German shepherds and has helped 50 so far.

Terri, who had a master's degree in education and technology, showcased dogs needing homes on her Arf Web site, including photos and detailed descriptions.

People who want to adopt a dog have

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**Terri Tinsley and her rescued dog,
Owen Meany.**

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to fill out a 7-page application and pass a home visit.

Terri also was in charge of the Web site for Wisconsin Dog Rescue and Pet Rescue Network. It brings together reputable rescue groups and shelters from around the state to help all kinds of animals.

The group has more than 170 members, representing different dog breeds, cats and other creatures.

One shelter worker said the rescue site helps adoption by getting more information into the right hands and unifying groups with the same purpose.

About three years ago, Terri compiled a book, listing all the animal-rescue groups in the state, information about them, pictures of dog breeds and details on how to identify them.

She gave the information to Wisconsin shelters, so they can more easily help abandoned or neglected animals.

"Thanks to Terri, we have this wonderful book," said Chris Konetski of the Rock County Humane Society. "We have channeled some incoming animals directly to rescues listed in the book."

In the last five years, humane societies have come to depend on animal-rescue groups to place different dog breeds, especially German shepherds, golden retrievers and Dalmatians.

"The rescues are a blessing and an absolute godsend to shelters across the country," Chris explains. "People in rescue groups know the breed so well and can do a better job of placing dogs in homes."

Terri, 39, also spearheaded many events to educate people about animals and raise money for rescue organizations.

"But to characterize her only as an animal rescuer is not accurate," Sarah said. "She rescued lost souls, whether human or animals. When my father died in March, I didn't think I would survive. But Terri was here every day, in one way or another, to encourage me."

Sarah first met Terri face to face when the two spoke to the state Legislature four years ago in favor of an anti-puppy mill law.

Prior to that, they knew each other through e-mail.

Sarah serves on Arf's board of directors and is president of Wisconsin American Eskimo Rescue.

"Terri did more in the four years that I knew her than I could ever imagine doing in a lifetime," Sarah said. "She was one of those people who burns so brightly."

In addition to her animal-rescue efforts, Terri worked full time directing a distance-education network, based at Fort Atkinson High School.

She was married to Perry Tinsley and had a house full of pets, including two German shepherds, cats and birds.

"Terri grew up loving animals," Perry said. "She was never one to play with Barbie dolls."

Terri believed pets go to a place called Rainbow Bridge after they die, where there's plenty of food, water and space for them to run and play.

"When I die, I intend to ask God if I can stay at the Rainbow Bridge instead of going into heaven," she wrote in an e-mail to friends this year. "Because there are so many pets that go there without ever knowing the love and compassion of a human being."

In the days before Terri's death, she took in nine dogs, after vowing to take a break from rescue work through Christmas.

"We all wondered when she slept," said Barbara Blaski of Lindenhurst, Ill.

Barbara is a member of a German shepherd rescue group based in Stoughton.

"I don't think Terri ever looked at anything and said she couldn't do it," Barbara said. "There was no mountain she wouldn't attempt to climb. For so many people to feel this way, you know she was special."

Terri's death caused Barbara to do some soul searching.

"We are determined to carry on her work," Barbara said. "She brought all the rescue groups closer together. All of us have lost a valuable friend."