

In Las Cruces, deaf teen, dog reunited

By Christopher Schurtz Sun-News reporter

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LAS CRUCES -- It was an incredible journey for a Las Cruces dog, and a sweet reunion with the boy with whom he shares a unique bond.

Thirteen-year-old Camino Real Middle School student Ruben Ortega III and his dog, who he decided to also name "Ruben," were both born deaf, and had developed a particularly close connection over the past year.

But the dog, a sweet-natured, white-spotted Boxer, went missing about two weeks ago from his backyard in the Del Rey Boulevard neighborhood. Frantic searches of the neighborhood and daily visits to the animal shelter yielded no results.

Last week, the dog was located almost five miles from his home, remarkably by a relative of Ortega's.

Ortega's mother, Anita Dominguez, said she got a call from an uncle last week, who told her he had read in the Sun-News about her missing dog, and that he thought he'd seen him a few houses down from his home.

"He said, 'I know it's your dog.' So I called my brother, and he went to look. At first he didn't see the dog, but he went to a house down the street that had some dogs, some pitbull-type dogs in front," Dominguez said.

At first the occupants denied knowing anything about the dog, but eventually one of the men acknowledged the dog was, in fact, there, and he brought the dog out to Dominguez's brother.

"He ran outside the house to my brother and just started licking his hand. He recognized him," Dominguez said.

The dog was wearing a brown spiked-leather collar, which was not his original collar, and appeared scarred from a possible dog fight. They took the dog to a veterinarian, who noted what seemed to be minor injuries on the dog's body.

"He's very skittish now. You go to pet him and he kind of pulls away a little," Dominguez said. "I'm really glad we found him. My son couldn't believe it when he saw him."

Dominguez said she has been surprised at the outpouring of support from people who offered help, including a local high school coach who offered to find Ortega another dog.

"I'm amazed by the community, and so happy. I just want to thank everybody," Dominguez said.

Dominguez said her family specifically got the boxer as a puppy because he was deaf, and that her son picked the name.

"We asked him what he wanted to call him," Dominguez said, "and he showed us the sign for his name, 'because he's the same as me.'"

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