



Community Page

Microchip credited with return of lost dog

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

He was a lonely schnauzer named Willy, on his own for the first time.

What had seemed like such a good idea at one point — digging under the backyard gate to freedom — didn't seem so great at the moment, as he wandered down the sidewalk, lost.

Meanwhile, Willy's owner was just as lost without her furry friend, who had been a part of her life for the past six years.

"I was shocked and really upset," Marilyn Silk said about Willy's July 4 disappearance from her daughter's Graham Bell Court home, where Willy was visiting.

Fortunately, this tale — ahem, tale — has a happy ending.

Willy was spotted in Frieda Schmitz's Cabot Trail backyard, happily mingling with her own dog. Ms Schmitz could tell Willy visited a groomer with his well-maintained coat, so she decided to bring him to Donna Ralph, who runs Always Sitting Pretty, an animal grooming business. Maybe, she thought, Ms Ralph was Willy's groomer.

Although Ms Ralph had never before seen Willy, she decided to take him in, certain she could find his owner. He had no dog tags or visible identification, so Ms Ralph said her first step was to walk with Willy, hoping he'd lead the way to his home.

When he didn't and Ms Ralph didn't see anyone looking for Willy, she kept him overnight and decided to bring him the next morning to her vet, Dr. Ross Dawson at the Animal Hospital of Milton.

"Most dogs are now micro-chipped. I was hoping he was," Ms Ralph said.

Sure enough, Dr. Dawson's scan of Willy showed he was micro-chipped. Dr. Dawson found Ms Silk's phone number, and she and Willy were re-united.

Ms Silk said her husband, who's a veterinarian, had micro-chipped both of their dogs years before. "It paid off," she stressed.

Several things are different now at Willy's household, where he's once again head of the house. For one, his rabies tag, removed for a time just before his escape, has been put back on. And he'll soon have his dog licence, mandatory by the Town of Milton, renewed.

Ms Silk said she never again wants to lose a pet, and is on a campaign to make sure other people's lost pet stories end as happily as hers. In her case, micro-chipping proved invaluable.

The process involves implanting a tiny computer chip under the skin over the shoulder of a dog or cat. That chip, which is smaller than a grain of rice, contains a number that's revealed by a scanner.

"It's just a matter of phoning into a data base to find out whose dog it is," Dr. Dawson said, adding it's important for owners with micro-chipped pets to make sure the information is kept up to date.

Dr. Dawson explained that tattooing a number on an animal is another way for it to be identified, although he said tattoos sometimes become difficult to read over time. Any vet can micro-chip a dog or cat, he said, usually for a cost of about \$60.

Another useful tool available to pet owners is a Web site, www.getmehome.com. It's a service provided to many pet owners when they take their pets to receive their rabies vaccinations.

Owners register the information on their rabies tag on the Web site. Then, if the animal is found, the Web site can be consulted and once the number is entered, the animal's important information will appear.

There are four basic types of tags: a licence tag, the external tag normally given with micro-chipping, personal tags and vet tags, such as the rabies tag.

All of these are important, although simply having a vet tag isn't enough because if the pet is found on a weekend or evening, the clinic might be closed and unable to respond. The humane society is able to help 24 hours a day.

Properly identifying your dog or cat isn't just so it can be returned should it get lost. It's also important so that if it's found injured, the owner can be quickly contacted and consulted about treatment.

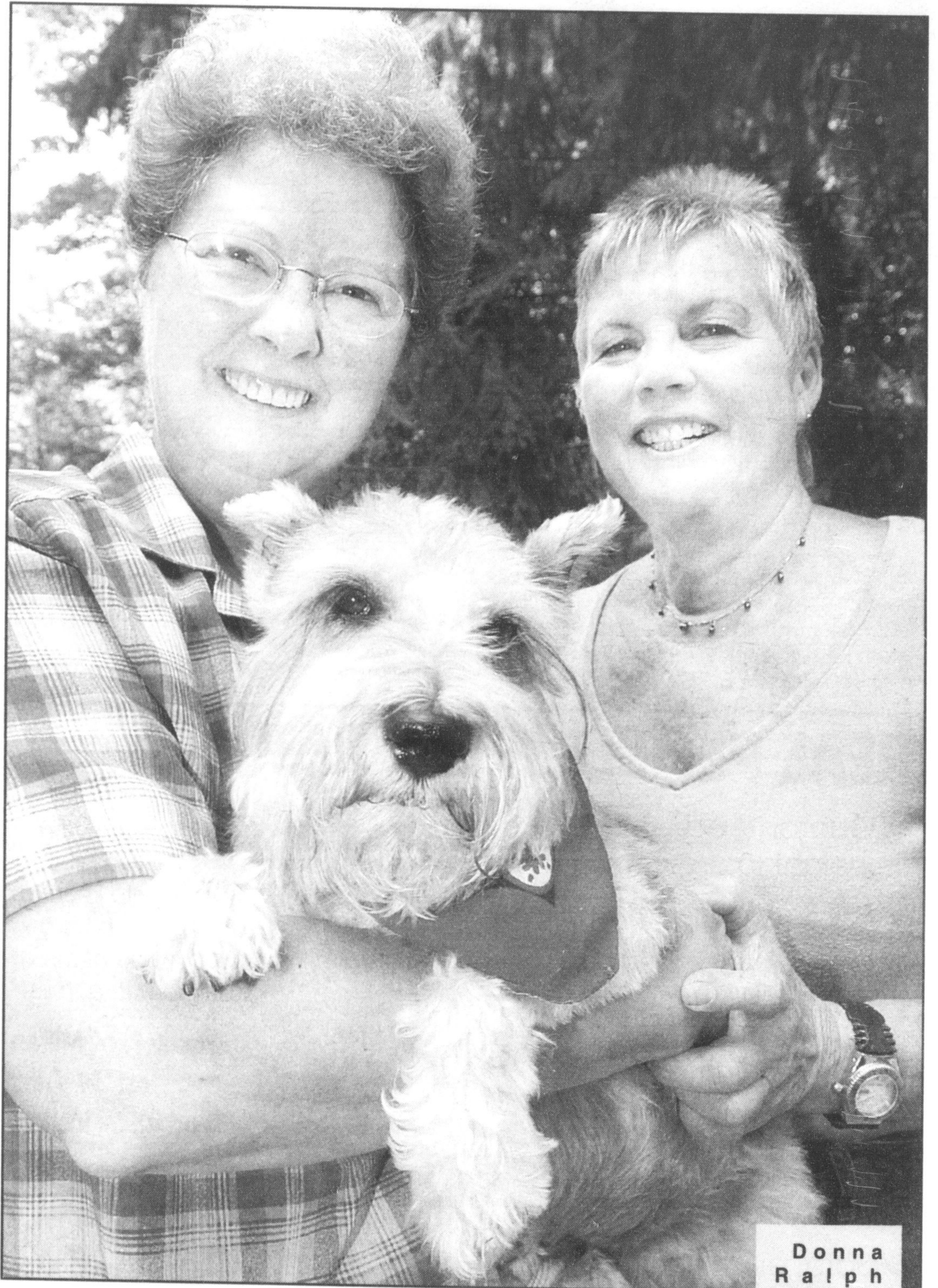
"What if Willy had been injured?" Dr. Dawson asked. "There are lots of ways (of identifying your pet), the most important thing is to do something."

The local humane society is one of the best resources for people who have lost or found a pet, Dr. Dawson said.

When Willy went missing, Ms Silk called the Oakville Humane Society — which took on the animal control contract for Milton in 1987. Although in her case it didn't lead to finding Willy, Heather White, community services co-ordinator of the Oakville Humane Society, said it was a good place to start. "Report it as soon as you know the animal isn't there," she said.

A lost report will be filed, and if someone finds the lost animal and calls the humane society, the owner and finder will be connected.

Ms White said although micro-chipping is incredibly effective, it's not enough on



Donna Ralph holds the dog Willy she found, as owner Marilyn Silk looks on.
Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

its own. "Keep as much ID on an animal as possible," Ms White said.

She explained an animal with visible identification appears loved and cared for, so someone finding it is less likely to assume it's stray and keep it.

She added sometimes a micro-chip can move around and might take a few tries for the scanner to locate it. In such cases, it

might be quicker to get the information off a collar, licence tag or vet tag.

The humane society offers reduced price micro-chip clinics twice yearly, with the next one in the fall. For more information, call (905) 845-1551 or visit www.oakville-humane.ca.

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Tuesday, July 13		Wednesday, July 14		Thursday, July 15		Friday, July 16		Saturday, July 17		Sunday, July 18		Monday, July 19	
9:10 11am & 12:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	9:10 11am & 12:30pm	Plugged In! Early Week Edition	9:10 11am & 12:30pm	Plugged In! Early Week Edition	9:10 11am & 12:30pm	Plugged In! Early Week Edition	9:10 11am & 12:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	9:10 11am & 12:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	9:10 11am & 12:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Early Week Edition	1:00pm	Halton Hills Awards & Council - July 12	1:00pm	Halton Region Council July 14	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition
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