

Extensive four-day search leads to ‘miracle’ dog rescue by professionals in Raymond

By Ed Pierce
STAFF WRITER

Rob Russell and Carmen Brothers aren’t superheroes, but it would be tough to convince Dawn Elwell of Raymond otherwise.

Elwell was desperate to find her lost dog Pearl, who had escaped from a groomer in Raymond and had disappeared on April 30. After four days of searching for Pearl and running out of hope, Elwell hired Russell’s 2A TAC Air Ops Drone Services of Barrington, New Hampshire to see if he could do something to help.

He is a former police officer and U.S. Army infantryman who was wounded in combat in Afghanistan. He now owns a drone equipped with thermal technology that can be used in searches for missing people and pets. Russell holds a FAA Part 7 Commercial Drone License, and he launched his business several years ago with a desire to assist people in searches and inspire them to not give up when all appears hopeless.

“I realized I was on to something nobody else was doing in New England,” he said. “Our fees are based on hours flown and distance driven.”

Russell contacted Brothers of Professional Pet Trackers of Virginia to



(Left) Rob Russell of 2A TAC Air OPS Drone Services, Carmen Brothers of Professional Pet Trackers, and Finley the tracking dog helped to find Pearl, a 2-year-old dog who became lost in Raymond earlier this month. (Above) The state-of-the-art thermal imaging tracking drone is ready to launch. COURTESY PHOTO

assist in the search for Pearl, and she brought along her almost 2-year-old black lab named K9 Finley whom Brothers had trained and has been working on cases with her since December.

“While I was aware of Rob and his company 2A TAC Air Ops Drone

Services, we did not meet or work together until March 2025 for a Yorkie named Leo that was lost in Greenville, Maine,” Brother said. “Throughout the search for Leo, we found that his drone abilities paired with my tracking dogs provided a larger, more complete picture to lost pet owners. What

the drone may be unable to see or pick up, if an animal is under something or has left the area entirely, a tracking dog would be able to pick up on and pinpoint the location an animal may be hiding in. Or at the bare minimum, a tracking dog can give you a

→ see RESCUE Page 6

School nutritionists honor WPS cook as ‘Maine School Nutrition Employee of the Year’ for 2025

By Masha Yurkevich
STAFF WRITER

Cheyenne Trynor, the cook at Windham Primary School has been honored as the “School Nutrition Employee of the Year” for the state of Maine and for the Northeast Region by the School Nutrition Association.

This is the third year that Trynor has been working for RSU 14 and the Windham Raymond School Nutrition Program. Prior to being hired as the cook for WPS for the 2022-2023 school year, she was employed in food service at local restaurants around the Windham and Portland area from a young age.

“As the cook, I prepare the recipes or foods needed for the main meal each day, as well as prepare and organize any alternative meal accommodations for students with food allergies or dietary restrictions,” Trynor said.

The employee of the year award is given to members of the School Nutrition Association who are currently employed in a school food service program in a non-managerial role. Nominations for the award are judged based on several factors such as customer service skills, creativity, commitment to professional development, dedication to school nutrition



Cheyenne Trynor, a cook at Windham Primary School, has been awarded the 2025 School Nutrition Employee of the Year Award for the state of Maine and the Northeast Region by the School Nutrition Association. SUBMITTED PHOTO

and if they currently hold a School Nutrition Association (SNA) certificate. Each state winner advances to judging for a regional winner.

“I was nominated because of the work I have put in, not only to master-batch cooking so that each of our six lunch periods can have fresh food from scratch, but also the amount of trust I have built with local parents of students with food allergies and the bond with those students,” said Trynor.

She says that she finds new ways to encourage children to try new foods and menu items by using fun posters, stickers and decorating the kitchen with fruit, veggie and food themed squishmallows to engage with the students.

“I have also completed culinary skills trainings during the summer, hold Servsafe certifications including additional ones for food allergies, and have done a number of other trainings while earning my SNA certificate,” Trynor said.

This award consists of not only local recognition at the state level for Trynor’s achievements and work, but

also nationally with the SNA in an award ceremony, published online and in the SNA magazine later this summer.

“I was completely surprised when I received a phone call from SNA letting me know that not only had I been chosen as the state winner, but also the regional winner for the Northeast,” said Trynor. “I was honored to receive this award and felt grateful to my coworkers who had seen my hard work and dedication and thought of nominating me for it.”

As a parent of four children, Trynor embraced the school nutrition opportunity and committed to learning all that she could about the guidelines and regulations that school nutrition programs are required to follow and continually sought out learning opportunities such as ServSafe Allergy training and a week-long Culinary Skills for School Nutrition Professionals, says Jeanne Reilly, Director of School Nutrition for RSU 14.

“She received this award based on

→ see COOK Page 4

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Cont. from page 1

direction of travel which will allow a more thorough action plan to be put in place and may even help determine a new area for the drone to cover.”

She has been helping reunite lost pets for roughly 15 years.

“I volunteered for a rescue, City Dogs Rescue in Washington, D.C., and they lost a dog,” Brother said. “I was assisting in search efforts such as flyers, community outreach, and eventually brought in a K9 tracker to assist in locating Maddie. Once Maddie was located, I continued to serve as one of their two lost dog coordinators. In 2015 I began volunteering with a non-profit based in Baltimore, Maryland where I was able to learn more about utilizing K9 tracking dogs to locate lost pets. Roughly one year later I was approached by National Geographic Wild and offered a featured role in their upcoming docuseries, Trackers, however I would have to quit my fulltime job in Human Resources and commit to filming full-time. I knew this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so accepted their offer, and never went back to Human Resources after that.”

The search for Pearl presented unique challenges to both 2A TAC Air Ops Drone Services and Professional Pet Trackers.

“When Pearl initially went missing there were many people out searching and calling for her which while that is people’s first instinct to do, it actually hinders the search,” Brothers said. “When dogs go missing, they go into what is known as flight mode, meaning that everything and everyone is predatory. Their animal instincts kick in and their goal is food, water, and staying away from perceived threats, which can unfortunately even apply to their owners. While at home they typically come running when called, in flight



mode all they hear is a loud noise and that can scare them out of the area even further. The community wanted to help, which is amazing, but we had to redirect their efforts into a productive task, such as hanging flyers rather than driving around and actively searching for Pearl.”

Russell said that initial efforts to find Pearl revealed that she kept coming back to an area in Raymond with foot traffic.

“We needed the dog to settle down and get comfortable, but she kept running into people creating a higher state of anxiety for her,” he said.

“Reuniting Pearl with Dawn was truly a team effort,” Brother said. “Dawn had done everything we recommended and then some. She had flyers posted in the community, she was working on actively maintaining feeding stations and following up on all sightings. Between her dedication, K9 Finley giving us the area that Pearl was hiding in, Rob giving us the eyes in the sky ensuring that we were not missing anything, and Jess Jackson with Lake Region Animal Control providing boots on the ground trapping support, we knew it was only a matter of time until Pearl was safe at home.”

Russell said during their extensive search they had to figure out where Pearl was bedding down and hiding.

Pearl was ultimately recovered

roughly 18 hours after they finished the tracking activities, and the drone was landed.

“While Pearl was not physically recovered while on the actual track, she was recovered directly on K9 Finley’s track,” Brothers said.

Both Brothers and Russell say finding Pearl was a team effort and they thanked Jackson for her help, Maine Lost Dog Recovery and the community for their assistance.”

“No one person is the hero here, we were all just cogs in the wheel,” Russell said. “The bottom line for me is if I’m part of the team involved in a rescue, it’s one of the best feelings in the world, and it’s amazing and it’s why we do this.”

Brothers said that every successful reunion with a lost pet is different, but each one brings a deep sense of purpose and gratitude for her.

“Seeing the moment of reunion – when a scared, tired pet is reunited back into the arms of their family – is something that never gets old,” she said. “It is like watching a miracle unfold right in front of you, you can literally feel the heartbreak turn into joy and it is amazing to know you were a part of that story.”

Elwell said she could not be more



Pearl is happy to be home in Raymond with her mom Dawn Elwell after being found by Rob Russell of 2A TAC Air OPS Drone Services, Carmen Brothers of Professional Pet Trackers and Finley the tracking dog. COURTESY PHOTO

appreciative for Russell and Brothers and K9 Finley’s work in bringing Pearl back home.

“This was probably one of the most distraught and scared I have been in my whole life,” she said. “I was lucky to have Carmen as well as 2A TAC Air Ops Drone Services recommended to me. Carmen, Finley and Rob never faltered from compassion, reassurance and more so skill and knowledge.”

On Sunday, May 4, she received a phone call informing her that Pearl had been found in a trap laying on Elwell’s sweatshirt.

“That feeling was something I had dreamt about for the longest five days of my life,” she said. “I do not believe I could have done this without this team of experts.”

To see photos of the search for Pearl, visit 2A TAC Air Ops Drone Services on Facebook. <

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(Some critters get all the talent.)

Chameleons can change color, bag dinner with their tongues in 1/100th of a second, and move their eyes in opposite directions. Not to be confused with lazy eye—amblyopia—a condition that causes blurry vision. Approximately three percent of children under six have amblyopia. That’s why it’s important for infants to receive comprehensive eye examinations. Because what’s cool in chameleons can lead to vision loss if untreated in people. GFVC: purveyors of fun facts and quality vision care.

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