

## Former bomb dog needs a new home

Local state trooper saves post-9/11 pooch from death but cannot keep it

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BETHLEHEM-- Lacey beat death by a nose.

It didn't happen when the bomb dog sniffed for explosives in vehicles heading into the Holland Tunnel toward Manhattan in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. It didn't come when the four-legged member of the Ocean County (New Jersey) Sheriff's Department Canine Unit used her snout to monitor people going into Giants Stadium.

No, Lacey's true race against the Grim Reaper took place in an overcrowded New Jersey animal shelter. That's where she found herself in a cage last month with other crates stacked on top, waiting to be euthanized.

Fortunately for Lacey, shelter officials remembered being told that she and a German shepherd named Gretchen with whom she had worked for years had been police dogs, and that at least one of them had unique sniffing skills. Because of her work as a bomb dog in post-9/11 New York, Lacey's euthanization was put on hold.

That's where Robin Edwards of Glenmont, a New York state trooper, comes in. Edwards and her boyfriend, Bambino, are volunteers with the Chesapeake Bay Retriever Relief & Rescue, and they got word of Lacey's plight.

A retired bomb dog being close to death didn't sit well with Edwards.

The dog had once been handled by a fellow policeman in New Jersey, who had left the dog with his former wife.



"It's sad to think what was considered this man's partner for eight or nine years wouldn't be priority," Edwards said.

Edwards and Bambino, who decided to take the dog in temporarily until a permanent home could be found, drove to Newburgh, where another volunteer from New Jersey met them with Lacey.

She was severely underweight, Edwards said, to the extent that you could count all of her ribs. She also had ear mites and long nails.

The Ocean County Sheriff's Department confirmed that Lacey worked in their canine unit and that

most of their dogs work an average of six years. An official said the dogs typically live with their handlers once they are retired.

Lacey's former handler, Capt. Steve Bauman, said he was not aware his dog had ended up in a shelter until a reporter called. He said he had moved to an apartment complex where pets were forbidden and that he had left the dogs with his ex-wife, who took them to the shelter.

Bauman said Lacey, who went through 18 weeks of training to be a bomb dog, loved people and that she could work longer than any other dog.

"She's one of the best I trained out of 60 dogs," Bauman said.

He said Lacey insists on being the dominant dog in any pack.

That's why Edwards and Bambino reluctantly have to give her up for adoption. Lacey needs to be the only dog at home and they already have another Chesapeake Bay Retriever.

Lacey proved this week that her bomb-sniffing skills have not weakened. She dashed to a paper bag in Edwards' backyard that contained spent ammunition. She sat down a few sniffs later, her trained response when finding explosives.

Edwards said Lacey favors toys with gunpowder sprinkled on them. Still energetic and spry at 9, she paused from greeting visitors with her wagging tail to knock a bag of the spent bullet shells to the ground and then sniffed them hungrily.

Bambino and Edwards said they had grown attached to her.

"She thinks she's a big lap dog, a 75-, 80-pound lap dog," Edwards said.

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Do you want me? To learn more about how to adopt Lacey, visit [www.cbrrescue.org](http://www.cbrrescue.org).