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News

8-year-old inspires police

By *BRIAN WALKER*

It's rare, but sometimes the smallest thing can be the inspiration for something special. For an 8 year-old to get the attention and recognition of the police, elected officials and several nonprofit agencies, one might think it would have to be for something spectacular. In truth, Peyton L. Goodman just wanted to find her lost dog.

The girl, of Vine Grove, received accolades at a ceremony Saturday for being the inspiration to create a new free service to help those like her, who just want something back that's missing.

Goodman's trip into the spotlight began about a year ago when her Jack Russell Terrier puppy Emma ran away from home.

She began to organize her neighbors into a search party and begged her mother, Bridget Goodman, to call the police for assistance. Against her better judgement, she dialed the non-emergency number to the Vine Grove Police Department and officer David Evangelista responded.

"It broke my heart when I saw Peyton," Evangelista said. "She had a crayon drawing and said 'Please help me find Emma. This is what she looks like.'"

The poster was an honest effort, but would be useless in the search, Evangelista concluded.

The pup was found safe and sound by a neighbor, but Evangelista said he couldn't forget the look in Peyton's eyes and her frustration that she couldn't provide a better "missing dog" poster.

The officer, who is also the executive director of the non-profit agency United States Internet Crime Task Force, decided to create a new service to users of its Web site, www.usict.org.

The free program is called Net Poster and allows users to create very professional-looking color fliers that can be printed right at home.



N-E/Brian Walker

Police and officials recognized Peyton L. Goodman, 8, of Vine Grove on Saturday for inspiring a free Internet service that will help people find things they've lost.

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Police officers are allowed to use a secure feature that creates wanted posters and private citizens can make posters for lost or missing items of any type.

The program takes very little computer savvy beyond basic Internet surfing skills and is literally as easy as 1-2-3, Evangelista said.

In roughly one to five minutes, depending on a user's Internet connection speed and overall ability, a poster can be completed.

Peyton received gifts of \$50 cash and a \$100 savings bond from the Vine Grove Optimist Club, proclamations from both State Sen. Elizabeth Tori and State Rep. Mike Weaver, and child safety software from Evangelista and his partner, Darin Oberhart.

Although she was grateful to meet Weaver and the others in attendance, Peyton was disappointed that Vine Grove Mayor Gary Minter did not attend.

"All she kept saying was she was excited to meet the mayor of her town," said Bridget Goodman.

Peyton will get the chance to meet Minter in a few weeks when she will be one of the few people allowed into the Vine Grove Optimist Club Park for the initial viewing of its Christmas light display on Dec. 5.

Although she did nothing more than love her dog and wish for its safe return, she inspired many, Evangelista said. The software will likely help thousands of others just like her, he said.

"This is the biggest day of my life," Peyton said.

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