

## GOOD SAMARITAN

## A HAPPY ENDING FOR HIT PUP

■ When a dog was struck by a car and left to die on the street, a pair of Miami-Dade police officers sprung into action.

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Monday night, Samantha the German shepherd was yelping in pain on a dark Miami street, still bleeding from fresh wounds after a car struck her and drove away.

Two days later, she had been taken in by an animal-rescue group. A Deerfield Beach clinic volunteered to provide her surgery.

And she got a new name — Samantha Ray. The Ray was to honor one of her saviors, Miami-Dade police Det. Roy Rutland.

Rutland was on his way back to police headquarters Monday when he saw an impact up ahead. Brake lights flashed and an animal rolled on the street. He pulled up to the site of the collision, on Northwest 36th Street in Miami, and rolled down his window.

"I saw this beautiful shepherd on the ground and yelping so loud in pain," he said. "Two other dogs were there and they were barking, almost like they were asking for help."

It was about 10 p.m. He drove ahead, looking for the car that hit the dog, but couldn't spot the same set of brake lights.

What he found a few blocks ahead was a Miami-Dade police cruiser stopped at a red light. Officer Debbie Hilliard-Johnson was inside, driving home after a day on road patrol. She wouldn't have been there at Northwest 27th Avenue and 36th Street, she said, except that

her normal route was closed for construction.

Rutland pulled up, rolled down his window and asked, "Are you working?"

She wasn't. But Hilliard-Johnson could tell Rutland was another officer in need of help. "I've been on for 27 years, and you just do it. You don't ask when a fellow officer is asking for help, you just do it," she said.

They both made a U-turn and headed back to the dog, who had dragged herself on to the sidewalk.

At least part German shepherd, she had a blue collar around her neck and didn't look like a stray. Miami-Dade Animal Services would later discover that she had a microchip but that it wasn't registered to a person, only to a Humane Society in Carthage, Mo.

Out on the dark street, the two officers tried to make the dog comfortable. They gave her water and wrapped her in a blanket.

Rutland called Animal Services for help but said he was told it would be an hour before they could arrive.

On Wednesday, Animal Services enforcement manager Kathleen Labrada said injured animals are priority calls, but short staffing levels at night make quick responses difficult.

"At some point in the evening, one officer is handling the entire north end [of the county] and another officer is for the entire south end," she said. "We are short-staffed, and we certainly don't have the level of staffing that would allow an immediate response."

Rutland and Hilliard-Johnson knew that would be too long to wait.

Rutland called Miami-Dade's K-9 unit for guid-



**ALL PATCHED UP:** Two Miami-Dade officers rescued this dog, Samantha Ray, in Miami on Monday night.

ance. They recommended Knowles Animal Clinic, at 1000 NW 27th Ave. Rutland picked her up, placed her on the back seat of Hilliard-Johnson's patrol car, and they headed south.

At Knowles, Rutland said he was told they could take the dog if he agreed to be responsible for it. He said yes and paid \$200 so she could be sedated.

Hilliard-Johnson stayed outside with the dog and prayed.

"I opened the door of the car, and I just sat on the edge with the dog and rubbed her head. She was calm. I could see she was being comforted," Hilliard-Johnson said. "I just prayed. I prayed for the dog. 'Please, Lord, please:

Take care of the dog. Don't let her die.'"

The clinic took the dog, bandaged and sedated her. Rutland called Animal Services again, and they picked her up.

Tuesday morning, Hilliard-Johnson woke up and cleaned the blood stains from the back seat of her patrol car.

"Of course, my mind is completely on the dog, just thinking, 'I hope she didn't suffer,'" Hilliard-Johnson said.

As she drove to work, she got a call from Rutland. The dog was alive. She had survived the night. Animal Services told him it looked like she had a broken leg, although they couldn't check

for other fractures because they don't have X-ray equipment.

Hilliard-Johnson nearly jumped out of her seat.

On Wednesday, the good news continued. Judi Berger, a volunteer with the rescue group Paws 4 You, saw a story about the dog and immediately reached out to Animal Services to see if she could help.

Berger and Paws 4 You president Carol Caridad got the dog by Wednesday afternoon. Next would be a trip to Deerfield Beach, where a clinic offered to do any surgery needed this weekend, she said.

Given time to recover, and assuming no owners come forward, Samantha

Ray will be put up for adoption, Berger said. She has a very sweet disposition, Berger said, and would make a wonderful pet for a family.

She also got a new name. At Animal Services, she was dubbed Samantha. Berger said she tacked on Ray because it was pretty close to the name Roy.

"I wanted to give Roy credit," Berger said. "Most people do not pick up injured dogs."

Berger said updates on Samantha Ray will be posted on their website, [www.paws4you.org](http://www.paws4you.org). Anyone interesting in adopting her or any of their rescued dogs also can contact the group through their website.