

## ACCES for Pet Health

<http://blog.seattlepi.nwsourc.com/accesforpethealth/archives/157158.asp>

### The Real Pet Detectives

By Christina Ryan



Losing a pet can be hard on any family. I know that back in April, when our indoor-only cat Oliver escaped, my husband and I were devastated. Like many couples we don't have children, but instead prefer to fill our household with animals to care for. Our cats are members of the family and when Oliver disappeared, we were beside ourselves with worry.

Working in a veterinary hospital you learn early on that microchipping your animals is very important. On an almost daily basis I see my coworkers struggle to find the owners of stray animals brought into our building. So, of my four cats, all of them were microchipped the day we got them...except for Oliver. I guess somehow we missed him. He also didn't wear a collar. Two strikes against us.

The moment we realized Oliver was missing, he was already long gone. Cats have an amazing ability of not letting you find them if they don't want to. But we went out searching anyway. That day happened to be the coldest day of the year-and it began snowing about 11p.m. For April, that's pretty odd. Of course this only served to increase our franticness.

We did everything we could think of to get Oliver home, and some things we read about on the Internet. We went door-to-door, we went searching with food and treats countless times, we put up posters with his picture and our phone number, and we rented a humane trap and set it up in different places. For weeks we tried, and came up empty-handed (well, we caught OTHER cats and a squirrel, but no Oliver). Not only was it exhausting, but emotional havoc on the system.

One option we didn't know about was a local Pet Detective group. Sure, we've all seen the Jim Carrey movie. But these people are nothing like that...and they're amazing.

[Missing Pet Partnership](#) is a national organization that works to help reunite you with your pet. On the basic level, they have a wonderful web site that provides tips based on animal behavior to help you recover your animal. There are tips on how to create effective

posters, the most likely places for animals to hide, how to offer rewards for recovery, how to work with shelters and veterinary hospitals, and more. One section even offers tips on prevention so you are never in a situation where you have to seek professional pet detective services.

The Missing Pet Partnership has teams of detectives all around the country that get together and go out looking for your pet. The neatest part is that most teams use tracking dogs to do it. To train their dogs, they use trained cats as "bait". All the technicians are trained using similar techniques to law enforcement, and even collect "evidence" to help you recover your pet. This can come in especially handy if someone has stolen your pet or taken it in and won't return it, and legal action is necessary. The drawback to MAR (Missing Animal Response) is that they are fee-based and can often be very expensive-too expensive for most pet owners.

So, the Missing Pet Partnership is currently getting together teams of volunteers to aid in finding missing pets. These teams are locally-based and are made up of volunteers within the community who simply want to help. There is no cost, and they are trained in the same manner as MAR teams. In the greater Seattle area, there is a newly formed group that works within King County called [Seattle Pet Hunters](#).



Photo courtesy of [msnbc](#).  
Missing Pet Partnership founder  
Kat Albrecht with her search and  
rescue dog Rachel.

Had I known about MPP and the Seattle Pet Hunters, I would have called. Ultimately, an entire month after Oliver disappeared, a very kind woman from a nearby condo complex called and said she had spotted our cat in her area. Although we were not optimistic at this point (as a result of many false leads and even more false alarms), we actually did



find our kitty and he is now home and happy and doing well. All my cats now have microchips as well as collars with tags. But now I know that if one of my babies does go missing again, there are people out there who understand how serious a situation it can be and are on the ready to help us and others. If your pet means as much to you as Oliver does to us, you'll keep their number handy-just in case.

If you are considering hiring a Pet Detective, be sure to check references beforehand. Because time is an issue when an animal gets lost, I recommend doing this in advance so you have the information already. And remember: prevention is always the best medicine.

Oliver, several months after his escape, is now doing very well at home.

[Missing Pet Partnership](#)  
[Pet-Detective.com](#)

For more information on Pet Detectives, visit:  
[The National Directory of Pet Detectives](#)

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