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When animals speak, she listens, pet psychic claims

Telling their stories and feeling their pain is all in her day's work

By **ELISE YOUNG**
Knight Ridder Tribune News

HACKENSACK, N.J. - Renaissance the Rottweiler knows the person who hurt him.

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The dog was tied in a yard, barking as usual, hungry and thirsty. At last, a heavyset man in shabby clothing appeared.

"There! Have your water!" the man said, pouring boiling liquid over the dog's hind end, searing his fur and skin.

Today, rescued and healing at Associated Humane Societies in Newark, N.J., Renaissance asks: "Should I not bark?"

All this is according to Colleen Nicholson, a professional animal communicator who says she

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telepathically bonds with abused and neglected animals as well as beloved household pets.

With her help, the shelter — and the law-enforcing state chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals — is hoping to find and convict Renaissance's torturer.

"It comes to me in the form of mental pictures, thoughts, feelings," Nicholson said. "Sometimes I get words."

Hooey? That's debatable. But proponents say that when all leads grow cold and a \$2,000 reward for information has no takers, they're no worse off putting their faith in someone who claims to gab with cats, dogs, horses, birds, fish, rabbits and even iguanas.

"She's been very accurate in the past," said Roseann Trezza, executive director of the shelter. "It's easier for her to find out from them what's wrong than for us to find out."

Nicholson says her first jolt came 14 years ago, when she started getting vibes from her newly adopted potbellied pig. She believes anyone can talk to animals once they learn to recognize subtle mental messages.

She says Renaissance described a yard and a small back porch with four or five white steps. Nicholson got the idea that he had been "a tied-up dog who had a barking problem" and that he barked because he needed to eat and drink.

The dog's abuser could face 18 months in jail and a \$7,500 fine, said Terry Clark, deputy chief of the state SPCA. His investigators are focusing on the neighborhood around Vailsburg Park, where Renaissance was found in late February.

"She didn't give us an address, which would have been nice," he said. "To me, what she says isn't fact, not in investigations. But things she has said ... quite a lot of it falls into line."

Trezza said the Rottweiler's recovery will go on for three or four months, and then he likely will be put up for adoption.

In the meantime, Nicholson has some advice for

Renaissance: A new owner will give him love. "I'm telling him it is a good policy to only bark when needed," she said.

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