

CANINE CORNER

by Kathleen Crisley, CSMT, CTMT, SCMT
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Remarkable Meg



Dunedin watercolour artist Rachel McCoubrey has found a niche in the writing and illustrating of children's books. McCoubrey credits, in part, her book *Remarkable Meg* for sparking the interest in her work.

Meg, a Labrador-Huntaway cross, was missing for five weeks in 2018 after the car she was riding in with a family friend crashed and she was thrown from the vehicle. Owners Andy and Alison Cunningham were on holiday at the time. An extensive search followed and, just as everyone was about to lose hope, a farmer spotted Meg in a remote gully on her property. Dehydrated and having lost almost half of her body weight, Meg required surgery on two broken forelegs and large doses of antibiotics.

Andy decided that his companion's story was worthy of a book and contacted McCoubrey, who is a qualified teacher. "The book was a collaborative effort; Andy would bring Meg to me here in my kitchen and we would talk over cups of tea so I could observe Meg to capture her properly.

"She has these brown, sad, puppy-dog eyes and her ears sit a certain way on her head."

Rachel says that Meg's story ticked all the boxes for her: a local animal story that was emotional, inspiring and, best of all, true.

Andy and Alison also helped with editing the book, which was printed in New Zealand rather than looking for cheaper printing options in China. LANDSAR Search & Rescue Dunedin and The Wildlife Hospital in Dunedin each receive \$1 from every copy of

the book that is sold.

Self-publishing is not a job that allows her to earn a living wage, explains Rachel. She's lucky to be able to pursue her 'Mummy job' while her husband supports the family. "The job of making your own book is a lovely thing", she says. As a result of the Meg book, she has also been commissioned to paint a number of pet portraits which is in addition to her classes where she teaches others how to paint in watercolours.

After working with Meg and witnessing the bond she had with Andy, Rachel was inspired her to get her first dog, a Spoodle. "I would have loved to have a Labrador but both my husband and I suffer from allergies."

Meg and Andy regularly walk around Dunedin where Meg is a local celebrity; many residents participated in the search to find Meg and are familiar with her story. Meg turned 10 in August of this year.

Copies of *Remarkable Meg* are available through the University Bookshop (unibooks.co.nz) and some other independent booksellers and, failing that, you can contact Rachel directly to order a copy.

Meg has her own Facebook page—facebook.com/megadogspage. Rachel can be reached at www.rachelmccoubrey.co.nz.

