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Dog helps youngster to safety

By BETH IPSEN
Staff Writer

Saturday, December 06, 2003 - A 3-year-old black and white pit bull resembling Pete the Pup from the 1940s "Little Rascals" shows grabbed the back of a girl's jacket and helped her out of a burning home Thursday night.

After 6-year-old Autumn Marley alerted her mother that the Nordale Road home where they were staying was on fire, the dog--also named Marley, by coincidence--grabbed the girl as she struggled to get out the back door of the burning house and helped her to safety, said the dog's owner, Jennifer Ingram.

"She's always been an awesome dog, but I didn't know she was capable to doing this," Ingram said of Marley, who she raised from a pup.

Thanks to Autumn's alert and Marley, no one was injured in the fire. However, the trailer with several additions was a total loss, Ingram said.

Ingram wasn't home at the time, but said her temporary roommate, Julie Marley, was cooking dinner for herself and her two daughters when Autumn noticed the entryway was on fire. The three couldn't go out the front door and Julie Marley had to force open a seldom used back door to escape from the burning building.

After Julie Marley stumbled out the back door, she turned around to see Marley the dog had grabbed her youngest daughter by the jacket and was pulling her out the opening, Ingram said.

North Star Volunteer Fire Department Chief Dave Tyler said Julie Marley flagged down a motorist who called 911 shortly before 6 p.m. By the time firefighters arrived at the house near the Freeman Road intersection, the building was fully engulfed by fire.

Ingram, 22, was shopping with her boyfriend, Daniel Martin, when Marley called her to tell her the house was on fire. By the time she got to the home, there were firefighters and lights everywhere. Marley the dog had been running loose during the chaos.

"I'm going to take her to the vet tomorrow," Ingram said. "Her feet are frostbit."

Tyler said the fire went up into the ceiling and Autumn Marley discovered the fire before smoke alarms sounded. Tyler said the cause of the fire is unknown, but it started in the entryway.

What flames didn't reach in the house, heat and smoke seemed to touch, Tyler said.

An initial estimate of the damage was \$20,000, the fire department said.

Ingram was at the house Friday with generators and flashlights her boss, John Keys, had loaned her while she and friends searched through the charred rubble in 25-below-zero temperatures for anything salvageable.

"We're trying to salvage everything thing we can, but it's not really looking good," Ingram said.

The American Red Cross has supplied Julie Marley and her children with clothes and Ingram with a pair of boots. The Red Cross set up a place to stay for the Marleys. Ingram is staying with a friend.

"I just thank God that nobody was hurt," Ingram said.

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