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## Many upset by dog's death

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The death of a stray golden retriever that bit a Shirley woman and then was euthanized last week by the Town of Brookhaven Animal Shelter, has raised the ire of some local animal lovers who hoped to adopt the dog.

The unnamed retriever, said to be a 4-year-old purebred weighing 70 pounds, was turned over to the shelter on Dec. 16 after Suffolk County police reported the dog bit the woman, who tried to feed her, according to shelter director Charlie McGinley.

"I couldn't in good conscience adopt the dog out," McGinley said.

After keeping the dog for a state-required 10 days to check it for rabies, McGinley said he decided to put the dog down on Dec. 27 because of her aggressive behavior, including violent lunges at her cage door when food was nearby.

But Dr. Anthony Sakal, a veterinarian from Westbury who tried to adopt the dog, said he may have been able to help.

"I've done this for 36 years," Sakal said, referring to his experience handling difficult dogs. "We deal with dogs that would make Osama bin Laden run."

And he said the dog's breed, a line of canines renowned for their gentleness and affection, offered hope for rehabilitation.

The retriever was not advertised for adoption, but Sakal was alerted by a network of animal lovers, including a volunteer at the Brookhaven shelter, who sent out an e-mail hoping to save the dog.

Despite Sakal's credentials, McGinley insisted the dog was still a public safety risk and ultimately the shelter's responsibility. Sara Whalen, an animal activist



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in upstate Middletown, had also called the shelter, hoping to keep the dog while alternatives were explored.

"It's possible she had an owner who lost her. Purebreds are usually not wandering the streets," Whalen said.

But Melanie Mayo of the Long Island Golden Retriever Rescue said that in the end, perhaps the shelter did what was necessary.

"My experience with this shelter is they call us all the time if a dog comes in there that they can adopt out," she said of the Brookhaven shelter. "It is bad for a shelter to put a bite dog with a known history in the community."

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