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Sheriff's Office to Pay Shot Dog's Veterinary Bill

By Jenna Johnson
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The [Charles County](#) sheriff's office agreed yesterday to pay veterinary expenses for a Waldorf family whose dog was shot this week by an officer in front of two children.

A spokeswoman for the sheriff's office said an initial investigation found the shooting to be justified. Even so, she said, officials decided to cover the cost of treatment for Dixie, a black-and-white sheepdog, after learning that the family could not.

The shooting occurred as Tammy Shabani stood in the front yard of her home Thursday night, talking with two process servers from the sheriff's office.

Dixie charged toward the officers, and one opened fire out of fear that the dog would attack, said [Diane Richardson](#), a spokeswoman for the sheriff's office. She declined to name the officer.

Richardson said the officers arrived at the home about 6 p.m. to serve legal papers to one of Shabani's relatives. Dixie was running loose in the yard. At the officers' request, Shabani put the dog in the house.

"They took extra steps to make sure they were outside and away from the dog," Richardson said. "It's unfortunate the child opened the door. It's unfortunate that the dog got out."

The dog escaped when Shabani's 2-year-old granddaughter, watching from inside with Shabani's 12-year-old son, pushed open a screen door.

After the shooting, the family found Dixie -- wounded but alive -- in the woods near their home, in a rural area on St. Peter's Church Road. Larry Grenier, Shabani's brother-in-law, said veterinarians at a nearby animal hospital wrapped Dixie with a bandage and sedated her but told the family they would need at least \$1,600 up front to operate on the dog.

The family decided to have Dixie put down instead, Grenier said.

"My sister-in-law has three kids, health problems. She's on welfare. She can't afford that," he said.

But late Thursday, Shabani received a call saying Dixie was still alive and not as severely injured as was originally thought, he said.

Grenier described Dixie as friendly and said the officer overreacted. "It was a pretty terrible thing to do in front of two kids," he said.

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The property manager of Shabani's house described Dixie as aggressive. In October, she said, the dog chased her back to her car when she stopped by the house to collect rent money.

"It was barking and showing its teeth, so I just ran back to my car as fast as I could," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity because she was concerned about retaliation. "I'm not into anybody shooting dogs, but I don't know what I would have done" in the officers' situation.

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