

2 FRANKLIN COUNTY NEWS, MAY 22, 2012

NEWS

Doggity is autistic lad's best friend and helper

The addition of a disability assist dog to a family is life-changing, as **Briar Hubbard** found out.

Night terrors and anxious sleeping patterns for Sam Weir's three-year-old foster son have been chased away by his puppy, Doggity.

Ms Weir's son, who she did not want identified, was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and developmental delay when he was two years old.

Besides sleeping troubles he has difficulties socialising, is hyperactive and an escape artist.

His new puppy, Doggity, is being trained as a disability assist dog to calm him when he gets anxious or to find him if he runs away.

Ms Weir, of Waiuku, said the chocolate labrador-retriever cross had already changed her son's behaviour.

"They are going great, they are best friends already. The night terrors have completely stopped just by having the dog on his bed," she said.

"He's definitely a lifesaver, it's a huge help to have him." Ms Weir said she decided her son needed a dog after he picked up their cat and made it watch the movie *Happy Feet* with him.

"I then decided to look into a disability assist dog as I thought he may as well get the added benefits out of it."

She said a lot of thought went into choosing what type of dog to get. "Chocolate labs are placid and my son is hyper and can be



GREAT MATES: Sam Weir's son formed an instant bond with disability assist dog Doggity.

aggressive. These dogs can take a lot without being aggressive themselves."

Occupational therapist at Perfect Partners Assistance Dogs (disability assist dog trainers) Belinda Simpson, said she was surprised at how quickly the young boy bonded with Doggity.

"They had a connection from the start which is remarkable. For a child who doesn't connect with the world but made an instant connection with the dog, that's huge," Ms Simpson said.

"We can already see it is hugely beneficial for the child and life-changing for the family."

She said the first stages of training the dog would be getting him used to different situations. "The beginning

stages include socialisation and learning manners.

"He needs to be comfortable around different people and different scenarios. We want him to be bomb-proof."

She said that as Miss Weir's son grew older the dog would be trained for his specific needs.

"With autism, the dog needs to be aware of when the child is feeling anxious, leaves the room or walks away. The dog has to be aware of the individual's needs."

Ms Weir said that in a few weeks they would start public access testing, which would allow Doggity to enter shops, public transport and other public areas.

■ Briar Hubbard is an AUT journalism student.

ELVIS AND THE BIG O SHOW

Che Orton as Elvis - 3rd best in Australia 2008, new Zealand's top Elvis Tribute Artist 2009, placed in the top 20 in Europe 2010

Tony Wellington as Roy Orbison Heat winner in new Zealand's first "Starts in Their Eyes"

PUKEKOHE COSSIE CLUB

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IN BRIEF

FRANKLIN: The weather statistics that are printed on P2 of *Franklin County News* on Tuesdays will be back in early June. Carla Salinger of Weatherwise Auckland who supplies the information is on holiday. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

DRURY: The Drury Rotary charity book sale is on this weekend. Member Riet van der Gulik recently picked up a car-load of 1000 paperbacks, donated by Drury couple Tony and Norma, to add to the sale. The fair will run from 9am till 4pm on May 26 and 27 at Rosehill College.

WAIUKU: Celebrate the Queen's birthday with an early *Night at the Proms* at Waiuku's Kentish Hotel. Guests are invited to don tiaras, fur coats and top hats and act like royalty for a posh late afternoon outing with sing-alongs and festivities. The event runs from 3pm to 6pm on Monday, June 4, with a toad-in-the-hole \$15 special. Admission is free. Well-behaved children and corgis are welcome.

PUKEKOHE: About 100 keen scavengers entered the Pukekohe Business Association's Easter Scavenger Hunt last school holidays.

Business manager Kendyl Gibson said the hunt was a great success, with more than 47 businesses taking part. "Due to having more businesses on board we could offer more prize money. We had very positive feedback from children, parents, grandparents, caregivers and business owners." Taleina of Pukekohe was first, winning \$500 of vouchers, Ashanti Wilson was second and won \$200 in vouchers, Jessica Lansdown won \$150 of vouchers for third, while \$50 spot prizes went to Tremayne Moana and Jizaya Hatene.

Weather & Tides metSERVICE.com For the latest info including Weather Warnings © Copyright MetService Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Monday, 21 May 2012

Weather	Sun and Moon	Waitemata	Kaitiaki	Manurewa	Onehunga	Port Waikato	Raglan	Tauranga	Whitianga
Fine weather. Light winds.	Sun 7:17 AM R 5:13 PM S 8:06 PM	L 1:55 AM H 8:16 AM L 2:12 PM	L 1:45 AM H 7:59 AM L 2:02 PM	L 1:40 AM H 8:01 AM L 1:57 PM	L 1:18 AM H 7:28 AM L 1:40 PM	L 4:22 AM H 10:20 AM L 4:37 PM	L 4:34 AM H 10:47 AM L 4:49 PM	L 1:53 AM H 8:01 AM L 2:07 PM	L 1:44 AM H 7:55 AM L 1:58 PM
Long fine spells. Light winds.	Sun 7:18 AM R 5:13 PM S 8:06 PM	L 1:55 AM H 8:16 AM L 2:12 PM	L 1:45 AM H 7:59 AM L 2:02 PM	L 1:40 AM H 8:01 AM L 1:57 PM	L 1:18 AM H 7:28 AM L 1:40 PM	L 4:22 AM H 10:20 AM L 4:37 PM	L 4:34 AM H 10:47 AM L 4:49 PM	L 1:53 AM H 8:01 AM L 2:07 PM	L 1:44 AM H 7:55 AM L 1:58 PM
Cloudy periods increasing. Westerlies developing.	Sun 7:19 AM R 5:12 PM S 8:06 PM	L 1:55 AM H 8:16 AM L 2:12 PM	L 1:45 AM H 7:59 AM L 2:02 PM	L 1:40 AM H 8:01 AM L 1:57 PM	L 1:18 AM H 7:28 AM L 1:40 PM	L 4:22 AM H 10:20 AM L 4:37 PM	L 4:34 AM H 10:47 AM L 4:49 PM	L 1:53 AM H 8:01 AM L 2:07 PM	L 1:44 AM H 7:55 AM L 1:58 PM
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