

Unconscious woman roused by dog in time to alert help

By Cynthia Overweg

Correspondent

As she lay unconscious and bleeding on her living-room floor, 21-year-old Kimberly Sanchez didn't know that her adopted dog, rescued from the streets as an abandoned puppy, was about to do something to save her life.

In the early morning hours of Sept. 28, Sanchez was unable to sleep because of abdominal pain and vomiting.

She felt a wave of fatigue take over her body. Her hands and feet were tingling and she began to bleed from her nose.

Except for Joey, her 10-month-old Dutch shepherd, Sanchez was alone in her Newbury Park home. She was scared.

As the bleeding grew more profuse, Sanchez lost consciousness and sank to the floor.

"The next thing I remember is my dog, Joey, licking my face and my ears and yelping and barking. She was walking around me and making a lot of noise," Sanchez said.

She believes that Joey's behavior roused her to a waking state, making it possible for her to call her stepmother, who took her to the emergency room. At Kaiser-Permanente Medical Center in Woodland Hills, Sanchez was placed on intravenous fluids and stabilized.

According to Sanchez, emergency room doctors told her that her blood was not clotting, her red cell count was very low and a sudden plunge in blood pressure caused her to faint.

Worse, if she had not awakened when she did, and had fallen into a deeper state of unconsciousness, "blood could



Eric Parsons / Star staff

"I'm in awe of her," Kimberly Sanchez says of her recently adopted dog, Joey. Sanchez had passed out after she was unable to stop a nosebleed. "The next thing I remember is my dog, Joey, licking my face and my ears and yelping and barking," Sanchez said.

have accumulated in my throat and I would've choked to death," said Sanchez.

Sanchez, who works for a Westlake Village executive recruiting company, has been battling iron-deficiency anemia since she was 15. While she had grown accustomed to feelings of fatigue and dizziness over the years, she said the stomach pain, tingling sensations and nose bleeding were something new.

She is now under a physician's care for the condition.

"When I got to the house, she was collapsed on the floor," said Maria Sabados, Sanchez's stepmother, who lives about 20 minutes away.

"We put a towel around her face and it was soaked in blood. I practically had to carry her to the car," Sabados said. "It's frightening to think about what would've happened if the dog had not been there."

The chain of events that brought Sanchez and Joey together began in the streets of

downtown Los Angeles in March, when Joey was 3 months old.

A security guard spotted stray puppies darting in and out between cars.

He managed to catch three of them and contacted Judy Crozier, an animal activist and independent filmmaker based in Los Angeles.

Crozier brought the puppies home and cared for them. When they reached their normal weight and were given a clean bill of health, Crozier put photos of them on her pet adoption Web site.

Coincidentally, Sanchez had just begun an Internet search for a dog she could adopt. When she saw Joey's picture, she was smitten.

She contacted Crozier, filled out the required adoption paperwork, and brought her rescued dog home.

"And now, Joey has returned the favor in a way I could not have imagined," Sanchez said. "I'm in awe of her."