



Eukanuba Canine Heroes Award

Category: Life Saving

Dog's name: Nikita von Grevenbroich (aka 'Nikki')

Breed or crossbreed: German Shepherd

Dog's age and sex: 15.05.1993

Merena was presented with Nikki's Eukanuba Canine Heroes Award for the Life Saving Category at the Eukanuba National Dog Show 2014 on Friday 3 October. Fellow Kotuku Foundation Assistance Dog Rica was at the ceremony to accept the award on Nikki's behalf. Nikki's story as told by Merena.

"There are few among us who can surpass him in fidelity and unconditional readiness to sacrifice himself."

Captain Max Emil Friedrich von Stephanitz (1864 – 1936)

I acquired my courageous girl 'Nikita von Grevenbroich' (aka Nikki) in 1995, little knowing that in two short years I would owe her my life.

From the outset, Nikki proved to be a 'one in a million' companion and extraordinary ambassador for her breed. She excelled in NZKC Obedience classes, rapidly gaining the title 'Companion Dog Excellent' as well as gaining the Breed Survey Working Qualification and representing her local club at the NDOA and the NZKC National Dog Show.

A consummate working dog, Nikki willingly and successfully turned her paw to therapy activities and every NZKC discipline possible; mastering each new challenge she met. Undertaking preliminary training with Central Search Dogs, to the astonishment of the

instructor, she learnt in less than 10 minutes what it had taken his dogs months to achieve.

In addition to her working accomplishments, Nikki and I shared an exceptional bond, the like that (if one is sufficiently blessed) one may be fortunate enough to experience perhaps once in a lifetime. Thanks to that bond and the exceptional dog that she was, Nikki saved my life in a manner worthy of all that her breed is renowned for.

Driving home from work one afternoon, mechanical failure caused my vehicle to plunge off a cliff, coming to rest upturned in a creek with the engine still running. Nikki, who was in the car with me, leapt out of the back window, rushed to my side and hauled me from the wreckage up the cliff to safety, undoubtedly saving my life.

Tragically in 2005 she was diagnosed with osteosarcoma. A campaign was launched to save her, but devastatingly in 2006 my saviour and soul-mate passed away. The trust established to save her continues her life-saving legacy, training Medical Response Dogs to assist those with life-threatening medical conditions, who would otherwise not be helped. The charity Nikki inspired bears the name Kotuku Foundation Assistance Animals Aotearoa in a fitting tribute to the rare and special dog she was in life and continues to be in spirit.



Merena with Rica and portrait of late, loved award recipient Nikki.
Photo/Stuart Munro

Eukanuba
Extraordinary Nutrition