

Tears as owner receives George's medal

BY GRETA CLEARY GRETA.CLEARY@TNL.CO.NZ

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MARK DWYER

The bronzed version of Jack Russell George, who was posthumously awarded a bravery medal yesterday is surrounded by owner Alan Gay, left, Governor-General Anand Satyanand and the five children the dog saved.

If George the terrier was alive he would have been jumping around with excitement yesterday.

Instead, his tearful owner Alan Gay received Britain's PDSA Gold Medal for bravery, the animal version of the George Cross, on behalf of his faithful dog who died protecting five children from pitbulls.

Governor-General Anand Satyanand presented the medal to Mr Gay at the Manaia band rotunda, as a small crowd watched on.

He paid tribute to the 14-year-old Jack Russell and the relationship people have with their animals.

"George is the perfect example of a hero dog," Mr Satyanand said.

"Those with a love of animals will understand the pride Alan Gay is feeling today."

He also said George was not only an extraordinary dog but exemplified the best attributes of a Jack Russell dog.

"It is often said that Jack Russells are a big dog in a little dog's body."

The five children saved by George's actions in April 2007 stood beside Mr Gay as he received the award from Mr Satyanand. "This is in recognition of your wonderful dog," he told Mr Gay.

It was hard to hold back tears as South Taranaki Mayor Ross Dunlop retold the tale of George when he was walking with his neighbour's children down the street.

Richard, Kelly, and Christian Rosewarne and Darryl and Ariana Wilson, who was in a pushchair, were approached from behind by two pitbulls.

George faced the pit bulls and ran at the dogs, barking as they closed in on him.

"Thanks to George's intervention the children were able to escape but they could do nothing to help the dog that had saved them," Mr Dunlop said.

"Sadly, they could only watch as the huge pit bulls launched their savage and relentless attack."

Due to the extent of his injuries, Mr Gay agreed to have George put down.

When the formalities were over yesterday the clearly overwhelmed and emotional owner Mr Gay was pleased.

"I'm glad it's all over. It's been a very emotional time," he said.

"I'm quite stuffed for words at the moment."

One of those saved, Richard Rosewarne, 13, said it was a great day. "It's cool to see George is getting a medal because he deserves it," he said.

"It was exciting to meet the governor-general too because I never thought I would."

George is the 15th recipient of the medal for animal bravery and only the third outside Britain. It is awarded by the animal charity People's Dispensary for Sick Animals of the Poor.

The award is part of a growing tribute to George that includes a statue on the town's main street, a song written by Swedish band the Talkabouts, and SPCA bravery award and a Purple Heart medal sent over by an American Vietnam veteran.

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