

## Reward Money

*By Marilyn Reeves*

Charlie, Eddie and Jayden sat on Eddie's front porch in a deep purple funk. One of the wheels on Jayden's skate board had come off as he was racing down the hill and flown off into the grass. They finally found the wheel, which he was now attempting to reattach to the bent axle. The boys were also feeling despondent because the flyer for the \$100 reward for the return of the lost golden retriever puppy had been removed from all the corner telephone poles. They had spent three days searching for that lost puppy, but apparently somebody else had found it. Somebody else had claimed that reward. It was probably somebody who didn't even need the money half as bad as they did.

Here it was the middle of June and the rest of summer vacation loomed ahead of them with no hope of going to the ball game, or even to the movies, for crying out loud! Charlie was the only one of the three who got an allowance – a pitiful \$5 dollars a week. Just barely enough to get him into the matinee, if he snuck in his own popcorn, but not nearly enough to pay for his two friends.

Then Charlie had an idea. "You know what, guys? Maybe we could find another 'lost puppy'! You know that neighborhood on the other side of River Street, the one with the fancy houses? Remember that two-story green house with the cute little black lab that stays out in the back yard while his folks are at work? Wouldn't it be a shame if that pup got 'lost' and we were to find it?"

"Yeah, that would be a shame, wouldn't it?" said Jayden.

"Oh, yeah, I get your drift," said Eddie, with a big ear-to-ear grin. "Wanna go over there and check it out ... see if anybody's home?"

So the three boys mounted their skate boards and headed over to the green house on the other side of River Street. The black puppy was there alright, barking excitedly and wagging his tail as they approached the fence, which just happened to have a gate facing the driveway. A quick look around reassured them that nobody was watching as they opened it. It was no trouble at all to get the little lab to follow them, although Eddie used his belt as a leash, just in case the pup needed some guidance.

They took it back over to Eddie's house, knowing that his mom had a soft heart, and decided to keep it there for a few days, and just wait and see if anyone posted a reward sign for the lost puppy. Sure enough, a couple of days later, there it was, posted like the other one on all the telephone poles. "Lost: Black Lab Puppy. \$150.00 Reward." Along with the phone number. So that evening Eddie called the lady in the green house, who was so delighted to get her lost puppy back, that she handed him three \$50 bills with a happy smile.

The boys could hardly contain their glee over their new-found riches. They treated themselves to the ballgame, a couple of movies, and Jayden even bought himself a new wheel mount for his skate board. The money only lasted about three weeks, however, so they decided to play their scam all over again.

Unfortunately, this time the puppy's owner turned out to be a cop, Officer Biden, who caught them red-handed in the act of letting his puppy out of the yard.

Charlie, Eddie, and Jayden spent the rest of their summer vacation mowing, trimming, pulling weeds and sweeping for both Officer Biden and the people who lived in the green house. Not quite the kind of reward they had been hoping for, but they learned a valuable lesson: Crime pays ... until you get caught!