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Bear cub at Noah's Ark gets sweet, new name

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After a month-long search and hundreds of contest entries, one of Noah's Ark Animal Rehabilitation Center's newest residents has a new name – Hershey.

Hershey is a nine-month-old, black bear that came to live at the Locust Grove shelter in October. He was officially named at a ceremony Wednesday.

The contest to find a name for the bear produced 436 entries, according to Diane Smith, assistant to shelter director, Jama Hedgecoth.

"I think one of the neatest things that happened was that schools got involved, and we had several teachers submit lists of names submitted by their students," Smith said.

The winning entry was from Jennifer Vickers, a 14-year-old freshman at Jackson High School in nearby Butts County. The teen said she was "thrilled" when she learned her entry had been chosen. She came up with the name while eating candy at school.

"I was eating a Snickers bar in class, and I thought about naming him Snickers," she said. "Then, I was eating M&Ms, and I thought about naming him M&M. Then, I just summed it all up to name him Hershey."

Smith said Vickers' decision was a good one, as the shelter already has a cat named Snickers.

Hershey, one of three bears who live at Noah's Ark, first came to the shelter after being confiscated by an animal control facility in Detroit, Mich. He now lives in a designated habitat on the shelter's 250-acre farm that contains more than 1,000 animals.

Vickers got an opportunity to feed grapes to Hershey when she met him. She said she will likely come to visit the bear at the shelter.

For submitting the winning name, Vickers will receive a T-shirt with a picture of her and Hershey together, along with the words "I named the bear."

In addition, Vickers received a Christmas ornament with a bear on it. She said she will hang it on her Christmas tree at home as a reminder of Hershey.

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