

Driver tosses cat from car on Haverhill street Woman rescues 'Pretty Girl'

By Mike LaBella
Staff Writer

HAVERHILL — Jessica Santos could not believe her eyes.

She and her fiance were driving through Haverhill on Sunday behind what they described as an "old, blue station wagon" that had stopped at a stop sign in the west side of town. Santos said the driver of the station wagon tossed a cat out his window. The animal landed in a pile of leaves, ruffled and shaken, but unharmed. Santos said she was unable to get the station wagon's license plate as it drove off.

Santos, 29, of Billerica said the shaking cat scampered in her direction.

"The cat was adorable and cuddled right up to me in the car," Santos said. "How some jerk could do something so cruel to such a beautiful animal is beyond me. If he didn't want the cat, why didn't he just bring it to a shelter?"

Santos described the cat as a "gorgeous, young, long-haired female calico." She named it Pretty Girl.

"She must have been an indoor cat because she's very clean and her paws are very soft and don't show any wear," Santos said. "She is very friendly and she has a wonderful demeanor."

Santos contacted the Billerica Cat Care Coalition — which immediately informed other local cat rescue groups, including Animal Rescue Merrimack Valley, which is based in Haverhill.

"We have her in foster care," Sharon DuBois, president of Billerica Cat Care Coalition, said of the cat. "We're sending her to the veterinarian to make sure she's OK, then we'll check to see if she has a microchip. If she does, we may be able to locate her owner."

She said that if the owner cannot be located, the cat will be put up for adoption through her agency, a no-kill cat rescue organization.

If Santos had been able to take down the station wagon's license plate number and police caught the driver, he could have been charged with animal cruelty and subject to criminal prosecution. Anyone convicted of animal cruelty faces up to two and a half years in jail or a \$2,500 fine.

Cats being tossed out like trash are nothing new, DuBois said.

"Last year we had two kittens come in that someone had tossed out of a car," DuBois said. "We've found cats in trash Dumpsters. We've found them in taped up boxes outside of housing complexes, and in cemeteries — just wandering around."

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Rescue efforts

Information about local cat rescue groups is available online at www.billericacatcarecoalition.org or www.armv.org.

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