



North Star is a Siberian husky who was hit by a car on Interstate 15. Friends of County Animal Shelters is trying to either reunite her with her owner or place her with a permanent home. Courtesy of Kathy Hensley

Rescuers seek home for dog in hit-and-run

By Lillian Cox | SPECIAL TO TODAY'S LOCAL NEWS

Around 5:30 on Christmas night, a motorist traveling north on Interstate 15 near Rainbow witnessed the hit-and-run of a young Siberian husky.

The Good Samaritan pulled over and called the California Highway Patrol. The dispatcher contacted the County of San Diego Department of Animal Services. Officer Tammy Cervone of Animal Services in Carlsbad responded to the scene near the Rainbow Valley Boulevard exit.

"The CHP officer was waiting for me when I arrived," Cervone said. "I knew the dog was in trouble when the (CHP) officer shined a spotlight on the pup who was lying at the foot of a 100-foot embankment up against a fence. Apparently, she got scared after being hit and tumbled down the hill."

Cervone and the CHP officer slid down the embankment and made their way to the injured husky.

"I called out to see if she was friendly," Cervone said. "She crawled on her belly toward me and licked my hand. Her leg was dangling, and it was obvious that she was in a lot of pain, but she never tried to bite me."

Cervone and the CHP officer made a sling from blankets and carried the dog

Dog

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up the embankment. Cervone transported her to Escondido Veterinary Urgent Care for X-rays, which revealed a broken femur. The next day, Cervone delivered the dog to the North County Animal Shelter in Carlsbad with its leg wrapped and splinted.

The dog was dehydrated, in a lot of pain and wasn't eating well. Antibiotics and painkillers were administered.

Cervone took a personal interest in the pup and hand-fed her meatballs from a can to stimulate her appetite.

"She had an expensive collar and was so friendly that I was shocked no one claimed her," Cervone said. "I started calling vet hospitals in Bonsall and Fallbrook as well as the volunteer fire department and a little market and restaurant in Rainbow."

After the animal shelter's four-day hold lapsed, the husky most likely would have been euthanized since the shelter isn't equipped to handle severe fractures. Instead, Friends of County Animal Shelters got involved.

"This was a Christmas miracle," said Kathy Hensley, rehabilitation and relocation services coordinator for FOCAS.

"Normally, this is the type of case where Caltrans finds the dog a few days later either dead or barely alive," Hensley said. "It was incredible that a person witnessed the incident and was willing to get involved."

"In addition, Officer Cervone went above and beyond the call of duty to find the owner."

The dog was named North

Star after it was transported to the Animal Medical Center in El Cajon, Hensley said.

On Jan. 4, Nancy Hample, an orthopedic veterinary surgeon, repaired the fracture with a femur plate and a bone graft.

"North Star is doing absolutely great," Hensley said. "She'll stay at the hospital for a couple of weeks while we arrange a foster home. She'll have to be crated to prevent her from moving too much and refracturing the leg."

FOCAS is working either to reunite the dog with her owner or to place her with a permanent home.

"North Star is very sweet, and definitely house-trained," Hensley said. "She'll go to the door and scratch to be let out. She has a very soft, squishy personality and will come to you to play. Those are qualities we look for in family pets. Despite the pain, she is very friendly and willing to cooperate."

All that is known about North Star is that she was in heat, and is approximately 8 months old. She was wearing a brown collar with a small piece of rope attached when she was found.

"There was no microchip or tag, but she was otherwise well cared for," said John Carlson, regional director at the County of San Diego Department of Animal Services. "That's why it's critical that people get their dog licensed. We prefer microchips since they don't get lost."

To inquire about claiming or adopting North Star, call FOCAS at (619) 685-3536. Contributions to North Star's medical fund are welcome.

Lillian Cox is a freelance writer who lives in Encinitas.