

Cat In Distress

Plaintive cries. Wailing. Mournful bone-chilling cries. Howls from Hell. These are some descriptions by West Village Circle residents of the sounds emitted by an animal in distress. Yet the cries were episodic, and initially it was unclear just where they were coming from—likely from a nearby wall, residents speculated.

Sue Brophy was the first to call the MV main desk to report the cries. Staff members who came to investigate over the next few days neither saw nor heard anything. Yet the cries persisted at least two weeks—again, episodic but haunting.

Finally, it was determined that a cat was trapped in a storm drain, one in a network of drains and surface grates. The howls were so loud because of the intense echoes against the concrete underground. In compliance with neighborhood-hatched strategies to rescue the cat, Joe Schaffer initially cranked open two cans of tuna to toss down to lure the cat. To no avail. In another neighborhood scheme that sought to provide egress for the cat, Joe knotted a Sesame Street sheet to toss down so the cat could climb up. Hot dogs were the lure. To no avail. That was October 6.

On October 7, Nina Schaffer sent an email to Dan Soos, and that day

West Village Circle residents participated either by email—Bob Greene provided particularly vivid prose—or in a small problem-solving conversation cluster to continue the push for rescue. Brad Senick came, heard the cries and climbed down to the bottom of the drain.



The cat fell silent and fled. Brad then fetched a Havahart trap. Jennifer Granda solicited wet cat food from apartment resident Jean Kuttruff. Her cat Bee Gee never missed it. The trap set, Brad returned two hours later to find an unhappy feral cat inside.



Marty Sullivan, quick with her phone, took pictures for posterity.

The trapped cat was now in the main MV building. Teri Benner checked online for missing cats reports and called various shelters and Bethlehem Animal Control. To no avail. Brad called his sister, who has a farm in Bethlehem Township, to see if she would take the feral cat. She said yes, and Brad set the cat free on her farm.



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Quiet has been restored to West Village Circle. But memories of Howls from Hell are still vivid.

Carol Shiner Wilson

Note: While the author gathered information through interviews with humans and from their emails, the cat was unavailable for comment.



From Staff Scarecrow Contest

