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WEST ROXBURY

Disabled dog's "wheelchair" stolen, prompting N.H. company to donate a replacement

Posted by Matt Rocheleau June 6, 2011 03:22 PM

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(Matthew J. Lee/ Globe Staff)

David Feeney in his West Roxbury yard Monday with his dog, Lucky, and his pet's new wheelchair.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

After a disabled dog's "wheelchair" was stolen from the front yard of his owner's West Roxbury home Sunday, a New Hampshire-based company that aids handicapped and injured pets has donated a replacement cart.

"The disaster that happened yesterday is now turning out to be a wonderful experience," said David Feeney, the owner of 12-year-old "Lucky," a **Belgian Malinois**. "It's been overwhelming the support I've been given."

(To see photos of Lucky's new cart and more, [click here](#))

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Feeney, 63, believes his beloved dog's "wheelchair" was stolen from the front of his Temple Street home in West Roxbury after Lucky had his usual Sunday morning playtime outside of the cart. The wheelchair elevates the dog's hind legs.

"Somebody must have grabbed it right away," he said. "Who knows why this happened."

Realizing later in the evening that the cart was missing, the owner called police, who helped him search the neighborhood using a spotlight.

"They were fantastic, very compassionate," he said of the police. But, the chair was nowhere to be seen, and Feeney said he does not believe police have made any progress in tracking it down.

After hearing the story of dog's stolen chair, which was [first reported by WBZ-TV](#), Nashua-based [HandicappedPets.com](#) donated a chair to Lucky, who is unable to use his hind legs to hold himself up. The company fitted Lucky in a new, fully-adjustable chair Monday afternoon. That chair type can retail between \$400 and \$500, the company said.

"We wanted to do anything we could to right a wrong," said HandicappedPets.com spokeswoman Lisa-Marie Mulkern, who said the company was notified of the theft Lucky's chair by a former customer from Jacksonville, Fla. who called after reading media reports online.

Feeney said Lucky's former, custom-made chair cost only around \$100 less than his monthly income -- \$638 through Social Security. Mulkern added that custom-made chairs often take two to three weeks to make.

"It certainly didn't appear that anyone was going to return Lucky's chair and we didn't want him to have to wait," she said.

Feeney, a Boston native, rescued Lucky several years ago while teaching and doing humanitarian work in Bogotá, Colombia. The dog had been hit by a car.

"He was just lying there in dying in the street. No one wanted to help him," said Feeney recalling how a doorman to his apartment told him not to worry about the dog; that the garbage men would take the animal away the next morning.

After several other veterinarians refused, Feeney said he was able to find one to take Lucky in.

The dog had severe internal bleeding. "He was supposed to die overnight," Feeney said.

But, the resilient dog pulled through and became Feeney's best friend, traveling with his owner to other countries where Feeney has continued his humanitarian efforts, including in Guatemala and Mexico.

"He brought a lot of joy and happiness to a lot of sad children in these places," Feeney said by phone Monday. "He's been the light of my life."

Lucky was able to walk and even run for a while after being struck by the car, but eventually the injuries called for surgery which has left him immobilized without the help of a cart.

"To me that's OK," said Feeney of his dog's disability. "As long as he's alive that's what matters. I love him."

The owner said Lucky is also a cancer survivor and was likely abused before

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being rescued.

Feeney said he was born into homelessness and raised in poverty himself before joining the Army, which allowed him to later attend Boston State College. The school has since merged with UMass-Boston. Feeney is now working to establish a fund to help aid his humanitarian work.

Last summer, a dog fitted with a wheelchair donated by HandicappedPets.com two years prior scaled the tallest mountain in the Northeast -- Mount Washington in New Hampshire. To see a video of that ascent, [click here](#).

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