

# Tail-wagging Happy Ending for Miss Millie

By Linda Harrington

Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade responded to a serious accident the evening of Sept. 12th, near the Crowes Mills overpass on Highway 104. A truck, towing a sea doo boat had gone off the road in the East bound lane, rolling several times. Fortunately, the driver Matt Lohnes and passenger Nina Blackmore escaped unharmed. During one of the rollovers, Millie, the family's six-month-old English Bulldog puppy was ejected from the vehicle.

"Millie was in my arms when the truck started fish tailing and then we went over the steep bank. As the truck rolled, the windows shattered. I was able to hold on to her for about three of the rolls but then she was gone out the window and the truck rolled again a few more times. We were terrified when the tow truck turned the vehicle over that she was going to be deceased under there and were so relieved when she wasn't," says Nina. "Then we started yelling, running around looking for her...things we now know not to do, but it was just instinct to try and find her."

It was a rainy, dark evening and there was a highly wooded area right by the crash site. OBFB Chief Greg Muise decided to request a thermal imaging drone from Bible Hill Fire Brigade to assist. Steve Currie, an experienced drone operator and member of Bible Hill Fire, was paged as part of the crew of 4 to the scene but upon arrival it was determined to be raining too hard to fly the drone. Handheld Thermal imagery cameras (often used at accident scenes to make sure all injured parties have been located) were used instead by the Bible Hill members but no evidence of Millie was observed.

Matt and Nina were heart broken to leave the scene without their pup, but decided they had to get changed into more appropriate clothing to continue their search. OBFB immediately made a post on Facebook for the public to keep their eyes open for Millie, using photos supplied by the family. This post was shared hundreds of times by morning.

"This post was the one of the most popular posts on Truro & Colchester Code 1

Coverage page, with over 3500 shares," says Steve Currie, Administrator for The Code 1 page. "People love their pets and want to help. First Responders realize victims love their pets and we try our best to help locate and assist with their care during an emergency. This is one of the reasons we have pet oxygen masks on our trucks."

Matthew and Nina were back at the accident scene within a few hours trying once again to find Millie. They soon received an early morning call from a woman they had never met before.

Nicole Pearson-Nearing, known as Nikki Marie in the animal rescue world, had notifications coming in about Millie in the early hours and she went right into action. She called Nina and headed to the scene.

Nikki is a Lost Animal Recovery Technician and has been involved in close to 400 rescues. She realizes what she must initially tell family members is hard to hear. "Everyone back off and clear the scene," leaves the loving family thinking "no way we are leaving, we are going to look for our dog." In fact, leaving is the best chance the dog might be found quickly.

"The worst thing you can do is chase the dog, especially with flashlights and calling its name," says Nikki. "The area needs to be kept quiet, with the scent of the person known to the dog left in a safe place."

Steve Currie, also a dog lover, came back to the scene in the morning with his own drones and quietly flew the area. He and Matt were sure they saw Millie on the monitor, but Nina, Matt's wife was unable to find her.

Nikki encouraged the family to stay out of the area. Later that evening, Nina and Matt helped her set up motion sensor cameras along with a scented and baited trap. "Traps need to be constantly monitored and re-scented. Both a bear and a fox were caught on camera approaching the trap throughout the night," says Nikki, who uses a technique she calls "smoking them out", to lure the dog out of hiding but this can also bring around other critters. "I knew the pup wasn't far, but it would only show itself once it was hungry or thirsty, so we had to keep

the site quiet and have patience." A mother bear and her cubs had recently been seen in the area adding to the risks of searching.

Nina says Nikki explained everything in a way they could easily understand, and they took turns sitting in the ditch watching the crash scene, hoping Millie would wander out. Nikki always took their calls and assured them she was not leaving until Millie was found.

At 9am, the morning of the second day, Nina and Matt were going door to door and getting ready to put up posters when their phone rang with the good news Millie was in a back yard only two minutes away.

"I was trying to prepare for what Nikki had said about Millie might not recognizing us but as soon as I got down on the ground, she ran right into my arms," says a very happy Nina.

There are a few things Nikki recommends people can do to help protect their pets in the event of a car accident. "Everyone who owns a pet should have a GPS collar and the animal should be secured in the car with a pet approved seat belt. A kennel is suitable for a small 4-5lb animal but the kennel itself must be secured to the seat."

Nikki really wants to educate people, including First Responders on what to do if pet goes missing following a tragic accident. "I know everyone means well and the first instinct is to go immediately searching for the lost animal, but they are traumatized. A chemical in their brain sends them into flight mode, where they will not even know their own people. Everything looks like a predator to them. The best thing to do is use luring tactics- sit calmly, do not call their name, but gently sing a song. Leave an article of clothing close to the crash site and eventually set up cameras and a live trap. Dogs will always be on the move at first light or early evening." It was early morning

when Millie was located.

It is important to alert people in the neighborhood and ask them to report sightings of the lost pet, but they should not approach. This can be done on social media and putting up posters with a phone number. There is a popular site on Facebook with over 45,000 followers, "Nova Scotia Lost Dog Network" administrated by Janet Chemin. Missing dog info is usually posted here, and Nikki is often notified to pick up the case.

Nikki, is a full time nurse, originally from New Victoria, Cape Breton and has been living in Beaverbank since 1996. She got into searching for lost animals due to growing up on a farm and her family's love for animals. In 2018, she took a course on Animal Recovery in memory of her sister Debbie Lee, who had tragically passed away. "I just now carry her torch high and will continue to do so. It is my passion as I know when I'm out there, my sister is right beside me in spirit," says Nikki.

The costs of gas, food and hotel rooms can add up quickly but Nikki does it all on her own tab. "There is no charge and all I ask of the pet owner is "what did you learn?" and hopefully they will pay it forward." Any donations she has received are put towards helping someone who may not have the means to support looking for their pet including printing posters or baiting traps.

Millie will certainly be one pampered pooch! She has been checked over by a Vet and despite a slight limp and a little scratch on her head, she is fine. Nina and Matt amazingly walked away with only a couple bruises, too.

Matt, Nina and their three girls would like to give a huge thank you to all the First Responders and to all those who helped get the word out about Millie. "There was such a huge outpouring of support, it was unbelievable," says Nina. "We are forever grateful for everything



The truck rolled several times down and sustained serious damage. It was a miracle neither the human occupants nor the young pup were injured in this accident. (submitted)



First Responders were on scene immediately after the accident. (Steve Currie Photo)



Nina sitting in the ditch watching the crash site, hoping Millie would come back. (Steve Currie Photo)

Nikki did for us and to Steve Currie, for all his assistance. A very special thank you to Ashley for getting Millie back to us."

The turn on Hwy 104 where this accident occurred has been plagued by other accidents in

the past. It is now being referred to as "Millie's Mile". The family has been in communication with NS Premier Tim Houson regarding the placement of a guardrail at the scene to increase the level of safety.



Joyous moment! Millie is finally reunited with her family. (submitted)



Miss Millie is very happy to be back home with her loving family. (submitted)

## Collaborative Family Practice Clinic Opens

Continued from page 1

sources. Patients will also have options to book appointments at either location.

The clinic, here in Masstown, currently has one nurse practitioner and soon a physician will join. While the clinic in Bass River has two nurse practitioners. They will both have a pharmacist and social worker that will rotate between locations. This collaborative team approach means patients from both clinics will have access to an array of healthcare providers.

A new clinic in Masstown and expanded access to care in Bass River are just some of the many ways we are improving primary care for Nova Scotians.



The Collaborative Family Practice Clinic opened in Masstown on September 8th. Pictured above are (L-R): Ashley Blackie- Family Practice Nurse (Masstown); Sally Pratt- Admin (Masstown Collaborative Practice); Lenora Brace- Nurse Practitioner (Masstown); Kristi Withrow- Nurse Practitioner (Bass River), Tom Taggart, MLA; Erika Baird- Nurse Practitioner (Bass River & Masstown) and Jennifer Welton- Admin Team Lead (Bass River, Masstown & Primary Care Clinic-Truro). Missing from photo- Emily McCallum- Admin (Bass River). (Submitted)

**WE ARE OPEN FOR BUSINESS**

AVG. CloudCare™

Is a virus driving you crazy?  
Bring it to us for CPR - \$83 + HST

Need antivirus Software?  
AVG Antivirus - \$50 + HST for two years

www.failSAFE-computer.com

10 Dominion Street  
**893-2171**  
askus@failSAFE-computer.com  
*Proudly Educating our Customers in Plain English*

- COMPUTER & LAPTOP SALES
- WIRELESS/ROUTER SECURITY
- VIRUS & SPYWARE REMOVAL
- CABLES & ACCESSORIES
- OPEN: Mon.-Fri. 8:30-5:30  
Saturday 9:00-1:00

Live Right

1114 Highway 2, Five Islands Nova Scotia

Pet Supplies

Open every day from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

We have Lifetime, Fromm, Canadian Naturals, Pulsar, & Oven Baked. All with the same Frequent Buyer Program as the big chain stores. Bring us their FB card & we will carry it on to your free bag. We have feed for Chickens, geese/ducks, goats, hogs & rabbits. We have oats, barley, beet pulp, alfalfa/timothy cubes & Corn. And a large variety of Bird seeds & feeders

Call 902-613-9898 to check stock levels.