

Happy Holidays and Thank You to Our Supporters!

We want to share a heartwarming story of dedication and determination.

A frantic request came into NYSHA on Friday of Labor Day weekend – the worst time. “My cat Dina climbed onto the roof of a New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Senior Center and not even the fire department could do anything. Please help me. Please help her – she can’t get out.”

Vercita had rescued Dina once already. She had found her uncared for and harassed by children, and took her in. All was well until several days before that weekend, when she placed Dina in a harness for a stroll through her Brooklyn neighborhood. Near the Senior Center something startled Dina. She slipped her harness, scampered up a tree whose branches hung over the Senior Center, raced across an over-hanging limb – lost her footing, and tumbled into the chain link fence enclosure that encircled the HVAC unit on top of the building. Trapped.

Getting Dina out would not be a big a deal, right? Have the super go on the roof, enter the enclosure, and remove the cat. But then you would not be familiar with NYC Housing Authority bureaucracy. Nothing is simple or easy.



Dina was trapped in HVAC unit atop Senior Center.



Dina secured in humane trap after spending 10 days in an HVAC duct.

Four or five days went by with Dina trapped in her chain link prison. Though Vercita heard Dina, she could not see her. Senior Center managers did not believe Vercita and ignored her pleas for help – even worse, they laughed. She called the main Housing Authority office and left messages. Nothing. Hours, then days ticked by.

The fire department known for its kindness in rescuing animals did respond, but were denied access to the roof. The Housing Authority’s attitude was, “It’s only a cat.”

Day 6, Friday – Vercita contacted NYSHA. She was frantic, “I’m dying in silence of depression. My 4-year-old daughter can’t sleep.” She knew Dina would die if nothing were done.

A NYSHA Board member familiar with the area called the Senior Center late Friday and was told, “We have nothing to do with this.” She responded that there was a four year old who was despondent. The media would be notified.

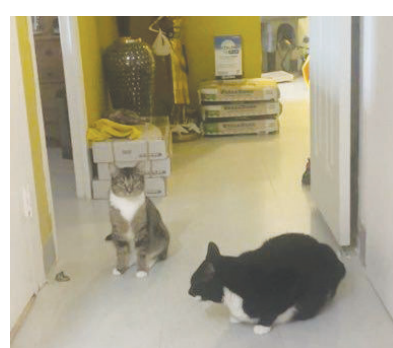
Day 7, Saturday – NYSHA called the Housing Authority, but it was Labor Day – the bureaucracy had come to a halt. Messages were left by NYSHA and its supporters, hoping some caring person might check the phones. No such luck. NYSHA called NYC media outlets ABC, PIX 11, etc. as this is the type of story that tugs at heart strings. They too seemed to have shut down. NYSHA reached out to a duck rescuer who, because he helped police in animal water rescues, had a contact on the NYPD, but the contact was off for the holiday.

Vercita, her husband, and child came by every day and flung wet food up and over the chain link fence hoping Dina might get it. As Dina did not come to the fence, they knew she was stuck somewhere. But where? Dina responded to Vercita’s calls with a meow ending in a screech. Fortunately, Vercita videotaped that plaintive vocalizing – proof Dina was trapped somewhere in the HVAC enclosure.

Day 8, Sunday – A joint effort was needed. PETA was contacted and joined the struggle, leaving messages for the Housing Authority and Senior Center and also putting out an alert. More people joined NYSHA’s efforts, calling the Housing Authority, leaving messages demanding Dina’s rescue.



Dina, safe at home now, rests under bed recovering from her traumatizing ordeal.



Dina enjoys being back home with her companion, Destiny.

Day 9, Monday – It became clear nothing would be done until Tuesday when the Housing Authority came back to life. Dina had been trapped for at least 9 days through some hot weather. Still meowing but more softly.

Day 10, Tuesday – Liberation! Pressured by the video of Dina’s meows ending in a screech, the Housing Authority finally summoned HVAC contractors. We all waited. And waited. Hours crawled by. All keeping virtual vigil with Vercita and her family. A local cat rescuer who came to assist also waited. A press person arrived. Finally – end of day – word went out. The contractors had dismantled the HVAC unit and retrieved Dina – dehydrated and starved – from the duct where she had been for at least 10 days. After having been placed in a cat trap to keep her secure, Dina gobbled food from an open can.

The huge effort had worked! Vercita and her family were joyous. After many long suffering days, they achieved the outcome they had hoped and prayed for.

Lesson learned? Words from a poster that were attributed to Winston Churchill came to mind: “Never. Never. Never Give Up!”

NYSHA receives calls and emails for help with various animal situations, and with its resources and contacts makes every effort to assist those individuals and animals.

But we couldn’t do it without you! Please continue to help us help the animals!

We wish you peace and love for the Holiday Season!

The Board, Staff, and Volunteers of NYSHA

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NYSHA