

A Christmas miracle: young Alton man recovers stolen car following media coverage

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON – A young Alton man received a holiday miracle Tuesday evening after his car was reported stolen from the parking lot across the street from Bossanova last Saturday.

Daniel Harris was going to seek some Christmas cheer at the Bossanova Christmas party following the theft of his 2009 Chevrolet Cobalt and the news insurance would not cover the vehicle. Heavy with the thought he would have to invest in a whole new ride, Harris was not expecting the news he received – his car had been found and recovered.

“Yeah, well, I went to my Christmas party, and bartender, Jay Sabo, was coming too,” Harris said in a Facebook message Wednesday. “ was on the corner of Belle Street and he saw it and called Chelsea Gratta, because they had been talking all day about the

Christmas party – trying to get everything in order – and he said, 'hey, I think I found Danny's car.' She instantly handed me the phone and Jay described it to me, and I asked the same questions – Were there scratches where I had said?"

He also asked if the keys had a Batman on them because the keys were left in the car. Harris said Sabo described the car as having been left in a hurry, adding the flashers were on and everything, like "they got scared to keep it or something."

Sabo then got into Harris's vehicle (after locking his own, of course), and drove it to him at the former Elijah P's building, which is now called Lovejoy's.

"Of course, that's when I called the cops and got it straight, and let them know that we found it," he said. "It was one of the best Christmas miracles! I can't thank everyone enough who had my back and all the support. You guys are awesome and I love you all, and thank you Jay!"

The Cobalt was stolen Saturday between 3-10 p.m. from the lot across from Bossanova near the Alton Visitors Center. Harris had accidentally left his keys in the vehicle when he went to it to check for cigarettes and his cellphone. Alton Police Chief Jason Simmons said the incident is not rare, especially this time of year.

"We've had six car thefts reported here since Halloween," Simmons said. "It's that time of year again, and we tell folks not to leave their keys in their car, or leave their cars running to warm them up in the morning without a remote start. We tell people not to leave their keys anywhere in their cars, because the same people who ransack them when they are left unlocked will steal them if they find those keys, so we tell folks not even to leave an extra set in the glove box."

Another vehicle with keys left inside of it was stolen from Maurice over the past weekend. That vehicle was also recovered, but the thieves are still believed to have the keys. They also put gas in the tank before abandoning it at the end of a dead end street.

Arrests have not been made in either of these cases, as both vehicles were found abandoned and intact. Simmons said people often take vehicles with keys in them for joy rides around town or to take into the City of St. Louis. In the case of Harris's car, Simmons said it had not been tracked by cameras on the Clark Bridge, causing him to assume it was still in town or the thieves took it to the city by way of Illinois Route 3, which does not have such cameras.

As for remote starters, Shane Fowler of Modified Auto Sound in East Alton said a system takes two to four hours to install at the cost of around \$300 for most vehicles. Some high-end vehicles, such as Mercedes-Benz, cost more due to extra equipment.

