

SPOTLIGHT: Galley hopes to build connections, longevity in community

Big Rapids public safety officer offers perspective gleaned from travel

BY TAYLOR FUSSMAN
Pioneer Senior Staff Writer

This article is part of Spotlight, a series designed to connect readers to the people serving their community. Participants will include public safety personnel, teachers and school administrators, volunteers and local government employees who are dedicated to helping their friends and neighbors.

BIG RAPIDS — From the time Big Rapids Department of Public Safety Officer Miguel Galley was a young boy growing up in Portales, New Mexico, he knew a job keeping people safe was the right path for him.

"I've always had an interest in law enforcement, and I had family in it as well," he said. "My biological father was a mounted patrol, and I just wanted to follow in those footsteps."

It was this thinking that shaped his career and life choices throughout the years to come.

In 1993, Galley joined the U.S. Air Force, an experience which saw him traveling overseas numerous times until he left the military in 2005.

"I was able to travel the world," he said. "It kind of gave me the idea that there's more out there — a world perspective. Sometimes we live in a bubble and we aren't used to other cultures, and I was able to experience that."

Galley brought this new world perspective with him as he continued on in his career serving others, taking his first local law enforcement position in 2006 in Clovis, New Mexico.

A couple years and position changes later, family ties called Galley several hundred miles northeast, to Michigan, where he began working as a secondary



Big Rapids Department of Public Safety Officer Miguel Galley said he hopes to continue to meet new people in the community and build longevity in his career. (Pioneer photo/Taylor Fussman)

STAY
LOCAL

SEE SPOTLIGHT 3A

Protecting your pets during the winter season

Michelle Kuz: 'People need to be proactive rather than reactive'

BY ALICIA JAIMES
Pioneer Staff Writer

MECOSTA, OSCEOLA, LAKE COUNTIES — As the new year brings new, colder temperatures, local animal shelters remind pet owners to not only bundle themselves up, but to think of their pets and how to keep them safe.

"(The cold) can be fatal to dogs and cats without shelter," Osceola County Animal Control Director Michelle Kuz said. "I always cringe every time the wind blows and it's cold and the temperatures are taking a dip south. I always wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning and worry about those that I don't know about that don't have the shelter — that nobody thought to call in."

As well as worrying for the animals who don't have a home during cold winter nights, Kuz reminds residents that a shelter too big or improperly heated can be just as harmful to their pet.

"We're finding a lot of our residents are using cedar chips and wood chips in place of straw to keep their animals warm, and they're not using a small enough area if they have to be kept outside," she said.

According to Kuz, outdoor pets should have a small enough shelter where they can use their own body heat to stay warm, but not small enough where the animal can't stand up and turn around.

"That animal has to have straw and that straw should be kept dry and should be checked regularly," Kuz said. "(The animals) deserve that much consideration."

To help educate the public on winter animal safety, Kuz said the center posts reminders and tips on their Facebook page, "Osceola County Animal Control."

"We encourage people (to contact us) if they have suspicions, they're not wasting animal control's time if they want a wellness check done," Kuz said. "People need to be proactive rather than reactive."

SEE PETS 2A

Manna Pantry receives donations

BY ALICIA JAIMES
Pioneer Staff Writer

BIG RAPIDS — Ferris State University basketball fans had the opportunity to give back during Thursday night's game to the local food pantry, Manna Pantry of Big Rapids.

"It wonderful to see our community donating to such a worthy cause," Manna Pantry Board Treasurer Dave Hamelund said. "We all are blessed to live in a community that has organizations such as Ferris athlete department that think of helping our neighbors who may need a helping hand while hosting a basketball game."

Advertised on the Ferris State Men's Basketball Facebook page, students K-12 were encouraged to bring in a canned good to be donated to the Manna Pantry. Those who donated had their ticket price reduced to \$1.

"We received 307 pounds of canned goods," Manna Pantry Executive Director Bonnie Clark said. "It was awesome."

As well as receiving donations from area residents, Clark was in awe as she saw students from outside of town come to the game with bags of food to donate.

"Ferris really did a great job of putting (the drive) on social media," she said.

"It's just wonderful. There aren't enough words to describe it."



Ferris State University mascot Brutus smiles at the 307 pounds of canned goods Manna Pantry of Big Rapids received during Thursday night's basketball game. (Courtesy photo)

New report shows Michigan is second-sickest state

Local officials note increase in flu-like illnesses early in the winter season

BY CATHERINE SWEENEY
Pioneer Staff Writer

MECOSTA, OSCEOLA COUNTIES — A new report recently has shown Michigan is the second-sickest state in the U.S.

According to Kinsa, 6.89% of the state population is experiencing flu-like symptoms, ranking Michigan second in illness after Georgia, where 7.78% of the population is experiencing flu-like symptoms.

Kinsa, a health technology company that uses smart thermometers to track sickness across the country, also reported national illness levels currently are at 5.05%. This shows an increase in national illness since last year, when only 2.67% of the national population showed signs of flu-like illness, Kinsa stated in a recent report.

In both Mecosta and Osceola counties, officials said they also were seeing an increased number of flu or ILI (influenza-like illness) patients.

Spectrum Health Big Rapids and Reed City Hospitals Communications Specialist Danielle Wells said a record-breaking number of

SEE SICK 2A

PETS

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Being proactive
Lake County Animal Control Officer Alyssa Chapman said the center receives an increase of welfare checks during the winter time, requesting officers come check out an animal which area residents believe may be in danger.
Chapman said she welcomes the opportunity to educate the public on how to keep their pets safe during the winter, and mentioned few tips outdoor pet owners should keep in mind.
“Your salt you use to ensure your ground is able to be walked on ... that can burn some animals’ paws,” she said. “When you go to the stores in your neighborhood, they’ll have ‘pet-safe salt, and that’s just to make sure they can walk on it without burning their feet.”
Chapman also encourages outdoor pet owners to never leave anti-freeze outdoors and to clean up any puddles which may be in the driveway, as the chemical can be extremely poisonous to animals.
“Avoiding outdoor weather is a big thing to avoid frostbite,” Chapman said, noting the importance of limited outdoor time during the winter.
Those who don’t have the opportunity to spend time



Mecosta County Animal Rescue Coalition Manager Cynthia Glazier encourages pet owners to research their animals so they know what type of breeds do well or don’t do well during the winter. (Pioneer photo/Alicia Jaimes)

indoors are ones who may try to find shelter elsewhere. Because of this, Chapman also reminds residents to check their engine compartment on their cars.
“(Stray cats) like to stay in a warm engine (during the winter),” she said.
Research your pets
While there are many things which can harm an outdoor animal, Mecosta County Animal Rescue Coalition (ARC) Manager Cynthia

Glazier wants to remind owners to not only research which harmful products to avoid, but to research their animal’s breed.
“Just like how different people react differently to the weather, different breeds of animals act differently according to the weather,” she said.
According to Glazier, owners of outdoor pets should research their animals and know what temperature is too

NUMBER TO CALL

- ARC of Mecosta County: 231-796-2683
- Osceola County Animal Control: 231-832-5790
- Lake County Animal Control: 231-745-3079

cold for them, as well as how to keep them healthy.
“You should know your dog’s limitations when it comes to cold weather. What’s too cold

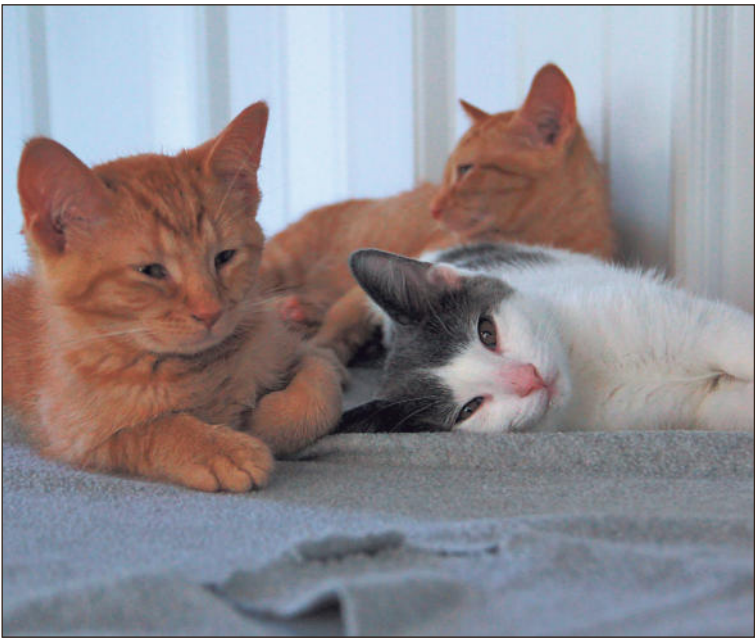
SIGNS OF FROSTBITE

- Discoloration of the affected area of skin (often pale, gray or bluish)
- Coldness and/or brittleness of the area when touched
- Pain when body part(s) are touched Swelling of the affected area(s)
- Blisters or skin ulcers
- Areas of blackened or dead skin

Source: anticruelty.org

for one breed isn’t for another,” Glazier said. “Dogs can get frostbite just like humans can. There’s frostbite warnings for humans — animals are just as susceptible. Sometimes more so, because they can’t put on protective clothing like we can.”
Glazier also encourages owners to keep a close eye on what their pet is eating, as well what products are heating their outdoor homes.

“If your animal is a strictly outdoor animal, you need to make sure it has fresh water, not ice,” she said. “Animals which are outdoor-only also need extra nutritious food because it takes more energy to keep warm.”
Glazier added if an animals cannot have a heated shelter, to use straw for the bedding, as it will help repel water, while keeping the animal warm. Glazier said to make sure to buy straw, not hay, because hay can hold moisture from the snow and rain and can become moldy.
“You really need to just know your own animal and know what its cold tolerance is, and then act accordingly,” Glazier said.
Those who are concerned their animal has frostbite or hypothermia are encouraged to seek medical professional help before acting.
“They should always, if they can, consult a veterinarian first, because with varying degrees of hypothermia or frostbite, you can do more harm than good,” Glazier said. “Recognizing the symptoms is not always easy, so it’s better to contact a medical professional.”
To learn more about how to keep pets safe during the winter, visit michiganhumane.org.



Osceola County Animal Control Director Michelle Kuz thinks of all the animals without a home during the winter. Featured are a few cats at the Mecosta County Animal Rescue Coalition who are safe during this winter. (Pioneer photo/Alicia Jaimes)

COLD WEATHER PET TIPS

- When temperatures plummet, pets should not be left outside for any length of time. Bring small or short-haired pets in when temperatures reach 15-20 degrees Fahrenheit. Larger breeds and thick-coated dogs may remain outside, with adequate shelter, to a temperature of zero.
 - Precipitation and wind chill should also be taken into account.
 - Cats should be kept indoors or at least brought into a warm, animal proofed garage during severe weather.
 - Roaming cats often seek the warmth of car engines, so be sure to knock on the car hood or honk the horn before starting your car to startle them and give them a chance to escape.
 - Increase the amount of food by 10-20 percent for dogs left outside during the winter months. The extra calories are needed to help an animal to stay warm.
 - Regular access to clean, unfrozen water is also critical. Check drinking water frequently – every few hours – to ensure that it is unfrozen.
 - If an animal is cold to the touch, or his paws and ears are pale, he may be suffering from frostbite. Move the animal to a warmer area and contact your veterinarian immediately.
- Source: michiganhumane.org

SICK

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people have shown up to their walk-in clinics this flu season.
“We can confirm we have seen increased illness visits for our walk-in clinics,” Wells said, adding that on Dec. 30, the Big Rapids clinic saw 89 patients while the Reed City clinic saw 62 patients.
Spectrum Health Big Rapids and Reed City Hospitals Infection Preventionist Amy Montross

also noted the increase in influenza and ILI patients in the area.
“In the last two weeks, we have seen a significant increase earlier this year than last year,” she said.
Montross explained flu patterns can be predicted by patterns in Australia, as flu season occurs in Australia before it hits the U.S.
This year, with Australia showing an increase in flu and ILI patients, Montross said it is no surprise we

are seeing such a large increase in illness across the state.
“The flu season in Australia usually spans from June to September and peaks in August. In 2019, there was an increase in flu activity March through May and the season peaked in June and July,” she said, noting this was an indicator that it also would hit earlier and more severely in the U.S.
During the last flu season, she said Spectrum Health saw illness increase in locals around February, but this flu season, it happened earlier than usual in December.
Montross said those who fear they have been in contact with someone

with the flu should watch for common symptoms, which include fever, cough, runny nose and body aches.
“It looks different for everyone,” she said. “For some people it’s mild, for some it’s more severe.”
While the flu virus is spreading much faster this year, Montross said there still is plenty of time for locals to get their flu vaccines.
Montross said anyone six months and older is eligible to receive the flu vaccine and it is safe for most people, including pregnant women.

However, she said those with severe egg allergies are recommended to speak with their doctor before receiving the vaccine, as it is egg-based.
While Montross said the best way to prevent flu symptoms is through receiving the vaccine, other ways to prevent the spreading of illness include practicing proper hand hygiene.
She said it is recommended for individuals to wash their hands for at least 15 seconds and use hand sanitizer regularly.

Additionally, people should be covering their mouths when coughing and making sure to wipe down surfaces that can become contaminated with germs.
Those experiencing flu-like symptoms or who are in need of a flu vaccination may visit Spectrum Health’s walk-in clinics, at Reed City and Big Rapids hospitals. They are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Reed City clinic also is open 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.



Local officials noted an increase in flu-like symptoms. To help prevent these, they suggest getting vaccinated, washing hands, covering mouths when coughing and more. (Pioneer file photo)

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