

Pet dilemma

Dogs targeted as kidnap victims

At least three Farmington area dogs have been stolen in the past week.

One of the dogs, a pedigree Scottish terrier, was returned to its owner after Detroit police found the animal wandering near Tiger Stadium last weekend. It was unharmed.

The dog was stolen from its residence in the Kendallwood Subdivision last Friday.

"I turned my back for five minutes to get his food from the garage, and when I turned around he was gone," said the owner, who wished to remain anonymous.

She remembers seeing two men in a pickup truck the day before the incident driving slowly down the street while she was exercising the dog.

At the time, she thought the two stopped in front of her house to look at a "for sale" sign on the lawn.

"This isn't the type of neighborhood with pickup trucks going down the street. The guys just looked out of place," she said.

Scottish terriers sell for \$350 to \$375 at local pet stores.

"I don't know if they're using them for dog fighting, taking them out of state to sell them, or using them in a laboratory drawing blood for fighters," she said.

THE SECOND DOGNAPPING occurred last Monday morning in the Chatham Hills Subdivision of Farmington.

Alaskan Malamute puppy and a Labr. dor-Shepherd mixed breed were stolen when "they were left alone for two minutes, according to owner Philip Winteringham.

"My wife takes the dogs with her to work - we own a small business," he said. "She left them out in the backyard for five minutes before leaving for work."

"She went back in the house for her coat and purse and when she returned, the dogs were gone."

Both animals wore collars with tags.

Winteringham thinks the culprit rangped the larger dog, which the couple has owned for seven years.

"The puppy wouldn't go to anyone," he said.

Purebred Alaskan Malamutes sell for between \$400 and \$450 at local pet shops.

The Winteringhams have searched their neighborhood, called animal shelters in Wayne and Oakland Counties and police, and put an ad in the newspaper.

"It's like losing part of the family," he said.

Farmington Police Lt. John Santomaro was unaware of any rash of local dognapings.

"We did find a pedigree Doberman stray wandering around last week," he said. "We'd like to find his owner. He has no collar or tags."

Tax levied on cemetery

By MARY GNIEWEK

Glen Eden Lutheran Church, a corporation representing 65 metropolitan area churches in the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods, has appealed a \$10,000 Farmington Hills tax assessment.

Glen Eden said it was assessed this year for property which had been tax exempt for 25 years because of it being a cemetery site.

Farmington Hills assessor Robert Roemer said the property in question - along Eight Mile, west of Farmington road - hasn't been used for burials. Because "nothing has been done toward that end," the property should be taxed, Roemer said.

A Glen Eden spokesman said the tax exempt status should be continued because the property is being held as a future burial ground.

The case will be decided by the Michigan Tax Tribunal, which has ordered Glen Eden to pay the assessment pending a determination by the tribunal.

The corporation owns a 170-acre cemetery - Glen Eden Lutheran Memorial Park - south of 8 Mile in Livonia and 80 acres in Farmington Hills. The Lutheran corporation plans to expand the cemetery across Eight Mile within the next 10 years, according to Carl Thomson, chairman of the Glen Eden board.

"It's part of the cemetery and it's been tax exempt for 25 years," Thomson said.

"We didn't think it was proper for the city to suddenly tax it, so we filed our petition with the tribunal to cancel the assessment."

The tax tribunal in Lansing calls for a petitioner challenging an assessment to pay it before the case is heard. If a judgement is made in favor of the petitioner, the assessment is refunded with interest.

Thomson said he received a five-page statement this fall detailing the petition for the denial of the tax exempt status.

Thomson said the major reason is because the property is not being used for burials. The chairman said Glen Eden hasn't "got to that point yet" but "is thinking" of putting a mausoleum on the property.

"(Expansion) depends on economic conditions and finances. Also, government veterans cemeteries which offer free burial services are cutting into our business a little bit," he said.

Three other petitions challenging Hills assessments have been filed with the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

Two of the three cases are pending while the third has been resolved.

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