

Dog's owner disputes account of shooting

The owner of a mixed-breed dog disputes police reports that state she asked officers to shoot the animal.

A Farmington Hills officer shot the dog three times after it snarled and tried to attack his colleague on Tulane Street April 14. Police first tried to capture the dog but were unsuccessful.

That's when the dog lunged toward the officer who attempted to keep the animal at bay with a nightstick, police reports said. At that point, the report states the owner yelled for the officer to shoot the dog.

"I said, 'He's out of control. Do what you have to do to catch him,'" said Jill Byrd, the dog's owner. "I thought they had a police unit with netting or something. I had no idea that's how they'd react. Not a one."

"I would never say, 'Shoot my dog.' I loved the dog. He was my pet."

Officers handled the matter appropriately, a police official said. Whether the woman asked police officers to shoot the dog is irrelevant, Commander Dennis Rochford said.

"The dog did attack a policeman," Rochford said. "That (whether the woman asked officers to shoot the dog) is not even an issue as far as I'm concerned."

"If the officer said she said it ... I don't know why he would put it into a report. A lot of times things are said that people don't remember saying."

Police normally don't respond to loose dog complaints. This incident is different, Rochford said.

"The reason we responded to this is because they said it was a vicious dog and it was attacking people," Rochford said.

"We have a responsibility to do something. There was no other way to handle this."

When police arrived, several people were on their front porches pointing sticks at the gray black shepherd mix named Wolf. Witnesses told officers the animal had been attacking other dogs and had tried to bite children playing the area.

A Whittington Street man said

the dog hit his daughter a few days earlier.

The dog didn't have its shots or a license, Byrd said. A post-mortem rabies test was negative, police said.

Byrd contacted the Humane Society earlier, first saying she couldn't catch the animal. Police fared no better, opening the door on the patrol vehicle in an attempt to lure the dog inside. The animal responded by snarling and trying to snap at an officer holding a baton.

Another officer shot the dog in the center mass. The animal growled and ran around the corner. When officers found him, he ran back toward his home where he was shot a second and third time.

"I stayed in the house and cried," Byrd said. "My kids were upset and they saw it."

Byrd doesn't dispute neighbors who told police the dog often ran loose and tried to attack other animals. She said family members didn't close the door all the way, leading the dog to run out.

As for its viciousness, she speculates the dog was protecting her other dog, a female that was in heat.

"If you had someone chasing you down with billy clubs, nightsticks and flashlights, you'd probably be mean, too," Byrd said.

Coincidentally, the parents of the girl bitten April 11 were driving near Tulane and saw the police and the dead dog. They identified it to the officers as the one that matched the description.

The girl's friends, who were with her when she encountered the animal, confirmed the dog shot was the one who had bitten her. The girl's mother is relieved the dog tested negative for rabies.

"If my husband and I didn't go down that street, the officers wouldn't have known that was the dog that bit my daughter," said Laura Reynolds.

"I feel bad about the dog being shot. We love animals, but the dog didn't belong running loose in the neighborhood."

Tall tales: At right, Wooddale principal Lasenia Jones watches as Hilary Cohen (drum) and Sandy Ryder (mash) entertain kindergartners. Below, Wild Swan Theater Company's Ryder, Cohen and Lisa Warren display their props that bring folklore to life.



Folklore with no boundaries

Group spins worldly yarns

International folk tales took center stage Monday at Wooddale Elementary School during the Wild Swan Theater presentation, "Tales of Tricks and Trouble."

Represented were Japan, Poland, China and Africa, with the theater group performing folk tales from each.

The presentation was accentuated with sound effects by numerous percussion instruments and flutes. According to Wooddale Principal Lasenia Jones, story tellers brought the tales to life with intriguing animation and beautifully crafted props. "The legends and the story morals will be long lasting in the minds of our students."

The assembly was brought to Wooddale by the Farmington district school's PTA and was supported by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the Michigan Humanities Council in its partnership role as administrator of the Touring Arts Program.



PHOTOS BY PATRICK CHAPMAN

Weight Watchers CEO eats light, packs on inspirational message

BY DAVE VARGA
STAFF WRITER

When Florine Mark gets up every morning, she looks in the mirror and offers a pep talk.

Mark, president and chairwoman of The WW Group Inc. in Farmington Hills, told visitors at the Citizen of the Year/Community Prayer Breakfast on Wednesday that this self-portrait has been a habit of hers for years.

"Good morning Florine," she said she tells herself. "Today is going to be a good one, and you can do anything you want if you want to do it hard enough, just for today."

The successful mother of five, stepmother of two and grandmother of 18 has built a career around losing weight - having shed and kept off 50 pounds for 30 years - and teaching others the secret.



Florine Mark

It all started with her visit to a Weight Watchers program in New York. When it worked for her, she brought the program back with her to Detroit. She began by directing customers to her first meeting by posting a "Lose Weight" sign in a candy store window. "Can you imagine how nervy I was?" she said.

Eventually the company succeeded and grew. Now, her WW Group, Inc. is the largest franchise of Weight Watchers International, covering 10 states plus Ontario and Mexico.

After her husband died a dozen years back, Mark said she met a local doctor on a tennis court and later married him. But after they were married, she tried to give her little speech to herself by only mouthing the words; it didn't work.

She found it had to be done out loud. After her husband asked about the talking going on in the bathroom every morning, she explained her pep talk and he even began doing it. "It really works," she told the audience. "Try it."

At Wednesday's breakfast,

Mark ate nothing from the breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, potatoes, bagels, danish and fresh fruit offered at the Glen Oaks Country Club. Instead, she only sipped a bottled water she brought and splashed the audience with uplifting slogans.

"You can do what you want to do if you believe in yourself," she said. "Just don't ask yourself to do something that you can't be successful in."

The other success story from the morning was the emotional story of this year's Citizen of the Year "Uncle" Jack Curd, who got choked up during his acceptance speech where he thanked Holly and Mark Owen (of Colonial Car Wash) and the band family, Cathy Webb and her family, officials from the Farmington school district, the Farmington Community Library staff, the chamber, both cities, area veterans and, of course, the kids.

He also cited his wife, "Barney" and close friends in the audience. Then, he lifted two fingers in a "V," saying: "Peace, good luck, God bless."

NBD donates books to Gill Elementary

In December, NBD Bank employees in Michigan donated more than 3,000 used and new books to 16 Michigan elementary and middle schools.

Gill Elementary School in Farmington Hills will be one of the schools chosen to receive a variety of fiction and nonfiction books.

Employee cash contributions of more than \$5,000 and matching contributions from the bank were also used to supplement the schools' library collections.

Where's the beef?
Weight Watchers and the

National Cattlemen's Beef Association & Beef Board present "Healthy Entertaining With Beef" at 6 p.m. Monday, May 11, at the Farmington Weight Watchers Center, 30078 Grand River Ave.

A demonstration of healthy ways to prepare beef dishes will feature "Beef and Vegetable Skillet." Call 1-800-851-6000.

Help for adult children

Davis Counseling Center and Genger, Spivack and Associates will sponsor two, six-session groups for adult children of addicted and/or dysfunctional families. Sessions will be from 10 a.m. to noon starting Tuesday, May 5, or 6:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 6, at Davis Counseling Center in Farmington Hills. Participation is limited and preregistration is required. The cost is \$200 for the series.

Call 553-8550.

Locals help in hunt

Many local businesses participated in the Jaycees annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 4. The hunt was made possible through donations from Target, Schroeter's Flowers and Gifts, Burger King in downtown Farmington, McDonald's at Orchard Lake and Grand River in Farmington Hills and Big Boy in Farmington.

AAA honors

Gerald Trechic of Farmington, John Fischer of Farmington Hills and David Skown of Farmington have been named to the President's Council at AAA Michigan.

The council is made up of the company's top-performing sales agents.

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