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Thursday, April 11, 2019



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Remembering Abused Children Karen Gleason, chairman of the Blue Day event for the Marion County Child Welfare Board, speaks to a gathering of local residents and officials in Otstott Park Friday prior to the symbolic release of blue balloons in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month. District Attorney Angela Smoak read a proclamation. Fr. David Puckett offered a prayer and MCCWB President Ann Turner thanked those there for attending.

80+ Dogs Rescued from Filthy Conditions in Marion County

By BOB PALMER
Jimplecute News Editor

The sickening odor of large amounts of dog feces hung heavy in the air behind what had once been the Island View Landing store as April Ratcliff described the dramatic rescue last week of more than 80 abandoned dogs.

The lack of animal control and an animal shelter in Marion County led to the large number of dogs roaming the community of mobile homes and small homes on the south shore of Lake O' The Pines, Ratcliff said.

"What do they want me to do," Sheriff David McKnight said Wednesday, admitting his office received calls about the problem. "We have no place to take the dogs."

A businessman identified as Todd Winn has purchased property around the Landing, hoping to redevelop the area. When the former owners left, squatters, in some cases, moved in. Winn has evicted those living on his property. The Jimplecute attempted to contact Winn for comment but calls were not returned prior to presstime.

Ratcliff stood in front of one mobile home where squatters stayed. She described it as a "meth house."

When tenants, both legal and illegal, left,

the dogs remained. Winn, according to Ratcliff and others, said he would have no choice but to shoot the strays.

A Facebook post about the problem quickly involved Ratcliff, who has participated in animal rescues in Henderson and Longview. With the Marion County rescue, Ratcliff has now placed over 300 dogs in either adoptive or foster homes.

"When I saw the picture, it made my heart sick," Ratcliff said. Ratcliff and her husband and a volunteer, Jack Harlin, arrived on the scene April 3.

"I was thinking we will just pick up dogs," Ratcliff said, "Jack handed me a flashlight. There were more dogs inside this trailer."

Ratcliff estimated the dogs had been locked inside without food or water for more than two days.

Ratcliff carried 25 dogs away that Wednesday. She had to work on Thursday, but more volunteers arrived and more dogs were picked up. Ratcliff came back on Sunday with a larger team.

Most of the dogs, including 28 puppies, were taken to Dallas DogRRR, a shelter for street dogs.

"A total of 84 animals have been taken in as of now from that property," Patti Dawson, president of Dallas DogRRR, said.

Dawson was also critical of the lack of resources in Marion County to deal with the problem.

"Animal control should be out there," Dawson said. "Having your animal shelter closed down is definitely a huge issue."

Ratcliff reported residents of the area were helpful as volunteers rounded up the dogs. She also noted how many residents would leave food out for the dogs, who continued to breed and produce more dogs.

Dawson found the dogs rescued from Marion County surprisingly tame.

"These are pretty socialized dogs," Dawson said. "They are dogs that had human contact. They are wagging their tails when you came in. Overall they were well



April Ratcliff discusses leading dog rescue effort.

socialized dogs."

Ratcliff said involving herself in the plight of these dogs seemed natural.

"To me it is normal to help," Ratcliff said. "Yes, it took my time. Yes, it took my Sunday. We did it all."

Ratcliff is under no illusions about what would happen if everyone did nothing.

"All these dogs would keep multiplying," Ratcliff said. "They would keep breeding." She did not want to consider what the property owner would be forced to do.

"He doesn't want the dogs out there, either," Ratcliff said.

The dogs now have a future.

Dawson said a shelter in Alaska has already contacted her about the puppies.

Ratcliff threw out an idea that seems to be working in some places.

"Here is something to get your mind rolling," Ratcliff said. "Instead of paying for animal control, Alaskan communities use their funds to pay for a vet to provide free spay and neuter services."

Ratcliff hopes to capture a few of the dogs still roaming Island View. It seems, however, the stench from dog owners and community failing to act in a responsible manner will linger for a while longer.

HOT Receipts Fall as Economy Improves

By BOB PALMER
Jimplecute News Editor

A dramatic \$10,000 decline in Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue to the City of Jefferson in the first quarter of 2019 cast a shadow on an otherwise encouraging economic picture.

Sales tax revenue for March to both city and county was up. Unemployment in the region is down.

HOT revenue comes from room occupancy taxes at local hotels as well as Bed and Breakfasts.

"I feel like the changes the Tourism Board has made will lead to positive results," Kari Alexander, Marion County Chamber of Commerce executive director said. "In December and January, things were in a state of change. I'm not surprised HOT revenue is down."

Alexander added that a new advertising program is just now kicking off. Jefferson Mayor Charles "Bubba" Haggard noted the closing of the Jefferson Hotel would have a negative impact on HOT revenue.

Although Jefferson showed a 69 percent sales tax revenue decline in the first quarter, the hiccup appeared due more to the state correcting an accounting error last year than a decrease in local sales.

March sales tax revenue for Jefferson was \$58,000, up 23 percent from March, 2018. Marion County received \$27,745 in March sales tax revenue, an 8.95 percent increase over last year.

"State sales tax revenue growth was again strong in March, as we saw increased collections in all major economic sectors, including retail trade, information services, oil and gas and restaurants," Glenn Hegar, Texas comptroller, said. "Much of the increase stemmed more from consumer spending rather than business spending."

Total state sales tax revenue for the three months ending in March 2019 was up 7.3 percent compared to the same period a year ago. Sales tax is the largest source of state funding for the state budget, accounting for 57 percent of all tax collections.

Data from the Texas Workforce Commission shows the statewide unemployment rate is 3.7 percent, with more than 17,000 jobs added in February.

In the Longview SMA, unemployment improved from 4.5 percent of the labor force in February of 2018 to 4 percent this year, despite the size of the labor force increasing by 600 workers.

Although Marion County is not in the Longview-Marshall MSA, its data may also indicate local trends.

Statewide mining and timber employment improved 19,000 jobs in the first quarter, or better than 8 percent growth. Manufacturing also improved by 32,000 jobs from February of 2018.



DIGGING DEEPER
The Marion-Cass Soil and Water Conservation District received a proclamation at Monday's meeting of the Marion County Commissioners Court that Soil and Water Stewardship Week will be April 28-May 5, 2019. The theme this year will be "Life in the Soil: Dig Deeper." Pictured are L-R are Fred Winters, Pearlee Wells, Cindy McNeely, Marion County Judge Leward LaFleur, and Robert Davidson.

Jefferson City Council and School Board Candidate Forum

Monday, April 15

5:45 P.M. - 7:45 P.M.

Jeffersonian Institute

120 East Austin

Presented by the Jeffersonian Institute, The Jefferson Jimplecute, and The Marion County Chamber of Commerce.

Come meet the candidates!

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120 North Vale St • Jefferson, TX 75657
PHONE 903.665.2462 FAX 903.705.4326
Editor@jimplecute1848.com



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