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Animal philanthropist to expand dog grooming business

BY JENNIFER SOPKO
For The Bulletin

When Alexandria "Sandy" Klochak moved to Ligonier in late 2011, she thought she left everything that she achieved, and the many furry friends she made, behind her after spending 27 years caring for animals in New Jersey.

However, only less than a year after reestablishing a successful mobile dog grooming business, Klochak happily finds it difficult to satisfy customer demands so much so that she plans to expand her business by adding a static pet supply store, self-serve dog bathing service and philanthropic artisan shop in Ligonier Borough.

According to Klochak, the shop and dog bathing service would fulfill a need in the borough for convenient access to pet supplies and grooming services.

"There's really only two groomers based right out of Ligonier. There's a lot of pets in Ligonier," Klochak said.

On Monday night the dedicated animal lover and entrepreneur presented the Ligonier Borough Planning Commission with her plan to open Sandy Paws Dog Wash and Pet Boutique at 108 N. Fairfield St. In addition to a pet supply store offering high-end yet affordable pet supplies for dogs, cats and small animals, Klochak plans to offer a self-serve washing station on the first floor of the two-story building on North Fairfield and eventually hire an on-site groomer or more.

Pet supply, self-serve dog bathing service

After a brief discussion of the plan, the planning commission unanimously approved a conditional use permit for Klochak to operate the washing station. Borough council will review the conditional use application at a pub-

lic hearing 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 8, prior to its next meeting.

Borough land use administrator Chick Ciccone said he issued an occupancy permit for the retail portion of the building but that a conditional use permit was also

needed because dog grooming is classified as a personal service under the zoning ordinance and only permitted as a conditional use.

As a certified dog groomer, and canine and feline massage

therapist, Klochak currently operates Sandy Paws mobile dog-grooming business through which she washes and grooms dogs at customer's homes, but her retail services are only a small part of the work she has done to help animals.

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Two receive Pomeroy awards



Photo by Jim Bates

William Snyder Jr., board member of Derry Area Historical Society, congratulates James Humphreys of Derry on receiving the John Pomeroy Award from the society. Snyder nominated Humphreys for the honor. Humphreys and Raymond A. Schott of Mechanicsburg were this year's recipients of the awards, given "for their outstanding contributions to the preservation of the history of the Derry area." The right photo shows Schott at work in Old Salem Cemetery, Derry Township, where he visits nearly every Saturday to identify every burial and grave in the oldest cemetery in the Derry area.



GL Drama Club in action



Ligonier Twp with attempt

BY SEAN MEYERS
Bulletin Staff Writer
Paul R. Sieminkewicz, 54, 1661 Piper Road, Ligonier Township, has been

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

...ious threats and harassment. He was taken to Westmoreland County Prison, and was released after posting bail set at \$25,000.

Animal

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Klochak's passion for rescuing and rehabilitating animals grew out of a concern for the many feral and abandoned animals she saw along the Jersey shore during the transient winter months after the summer crowds waned. After growing up in Johnstown, the 17-year old moved to New Jersey with her family when her father had to relocate for a job after the steel mill industry collapsed.

Her family began taking in and rehabilitating stray animals, particularly those with special needs, until their home grew to care for dozens upon dozens of animals. As a result, in 1989 Klochak and her family established Animal Relief Fund Inc. (ARF), a non-profit organization that rescues and rehabilitates animals, and provides medical treatment for those whose owners cannot afford it.

Financial aid is determined by a family's economic need based on the median income in the area, explained Klochak.

Over the years Klochak built the organization into a well-known nonprofit in New Jersey, participated in more than 20 fundraisers per year and also volunteered her grooming services at local shelters.

She is continuing her work with ARF in Ligonier Borough by also establishing a philanthropic shop on the second floor of the proposed pet salon where she will host local artisans with proceeds benefiting the fund.

Klochak said she already has 15 local vendors on board to sell their homemade arts, crafts, foods and pet gifts in the shop. The vendors' minimal consignment fee plus 10 percent of their revenue would go directly to ARF, as would a portion of sales from the first-floor pet supply shop and 100 percent of the revenue from the self-serve dog-washing station.

Klochak said the idea to expand her business came to her on a whim during the last several weeks and plans have been quickly falling into place, with the discovery of the North Fairfield Street rental, and the enthusiasm

of vendors from all around the community wanting to contribute to the nonprofit fund by selling their wares at her second-floor store.

"It really is a stretch of faith. I'm putting my last dime in the bucket to make it happen," she said.

In addition, she hopes to eventually offer children's programs and informational seminars at her shop in order to educate the community on animal care.

Klochak said that her involvement with ARF has brought her joy knowing how many people she's helped over the years by providing their animals with medical care that they otherwise could not afford.

"I think we all get in those places in life where sometimes an emergency surgery comes up that you just can't afford. You have to make really tough decisions," she said.

Klochak is no stranger to making tough decisions in her own life. Following a health crisis, Klochak reevaluated her priorities and decided to leave the corporate food and beverage industry to pursue her dream of working full-time with animals. By 2006 she had completed dog-grooming school, purchased a van and started a mobile successful dog-grooming business in New Jersey.

Five years later, she decided to move back to western Pennsylvania with her parents, where she eventually planned to retire at a summer cottage in Ligonier that she had purchased in 2005. She said it was hard to make the decision to leave her canine clients and the reputation she had established in New Jersey through ARF.

"I felt like I gave up everything I worked on since 1989," she confessed about her initial decision to relocate to Ligonier last December.

But ultimately, after seeing her business grow within the last 10 months and how quickly the community has embraced ARF, she said she felt like it is meant to be.

"It's like the shoe fit. It's like Cinderella and the shoe," she said.

Council

(Continued from Page 1)

that revenues the city sees from its partnership with Pango Mobile Parking — a pay-by-mobile-phone service introduced in Latrobe earlier this year — will likely reach a total of \$1,000 for the period from the service's start in June through the end of October.

He said the city is seeing a high demand for reserved parking passes, and that the city is carefully monitoring which types of passes are most popular so it can better accommodate motorists by adjusting the number of available reserved and non-reserved spaces in the city's parking system.

Graziani reported that the city expects to end with a surplus in its annual budget by the end of the year, meaning Latrobe should be able to add funds to its general fund balance. He said the city's administration currently is working on the 2013 budget.

The bid specifications for the new residential and commercial

garbage service contract — which currently are set to include handing over control of the operation of the city's transfer station to the selected hauler — have not yet been put out, as Graziani said he wants to be sure the city gets the franchise fee right. He previously explained that the city wants to charge a franchise fee in exchange for handing over operation of the transfer station to a hauler in order to make up for lost revenues and cover costs.

"I'm not putting the bid for the garbage contract out onto the street until I'm comfortable with the fee," he said, adding that tentatively he hopes to open bids in December and award the contract in January.

Regarding the city's newly redesigned website, Graziani said he is looking for feedback and hopes to move the project onto Phase 2, which will include adding more information to the site to make it more useful to visitors.

Employees, retirees see reduced health coverage

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — For many local governments, 2012 is an inflection point. New data show a brightening revenue outlook. But the cost of health insurance for employees and retirees is rising after a brief 2011 reprieve.

The report Health and OPEB Funding Strategies: 2012 National Survey of Local Governments explores how local units of government across the United States are working to make employee and retiree health care programs more sustainable. Now in its 5th year, the report by the non-profit Cobalt Community Research is the largest and most comprehensive look at what local governments are doing to address health costs and what they plan to do.

The report shows 7% fewer local units of government provide health coverage to their active employees than in 2011. Governments who do provide health coverage are paying a slightly smaller share of the premium.

deductible increases and toward premium sharing, a strong wellness push and continued work to roll out HSA- and HRA-type programs (Health Savings Accounts and Health Reimbursement Arrangements). Many local governments are reopening health care plans to renegotiate lower costs with the carrier/administrator.

More than 2,330 local units of government replied to the 2012 survey, the largest level of response since the study began 5 years ago. The results are by local government size, type, Census region and division.

The study was coordinated by Cobalt Community Research, a leading nonprofit research coalition based in Lansing, Michigan. The study was made possible through the support of the following organizations: Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting, the Employee Benefit Research Institute, the Government Finance Officers Association, Ice

Police: Baby abducted