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Thursday, October 19, 2023

Public meetings set on shelter's fate

By SCOTT SULLIVAN

STAFF WRITER

The nonprofit Wishbone Pet Rescue board apprised donors Oct. 12 it has agreed with Allegan County administrators to transition its 13-year management of the county animal shelter back into county hands.

(See related letter on Page A4).

As reported here last week, the two were at loggerheads how continue funding and running the 2293 33rd St. facility, part of the county's rural Dumont Lake complex north of Allegan city limits.

County commission chair Jim

Storey Sunday reported that body Thursday — the same day Commercial Record and Allegan County News stories came out about stalled negotiations approved up to \$100,000 for the new agreement that will shift the role of Wishbone from managing the county animal

shelter to promoting adoptions, providing spay and neutering surgeries, and recruiting volunteers to assist staff at the shelter.

Wishbone and county administrators jointly invite the public to townhall meetings discussing them:

- Tuesday, Oct. 24, at 6 p.m. in the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, 400 Culver St., Saugatuck; and/or

- Thursday, Oct. 26, at 6 p.m. at the Allegan High School, 1560 M-40, Allegan.

Admission will be free. All are welcome to attend.

Dr. Larry LaGattuta, surgeon & visionary, passes

By Gari Voss

Many members of the Allegan area mourn the passing of Dr. Laurence (Larry) LaGattuta on October 13, 2023. By the age of 93, Dr. LaGattuta experienced more than most could imagine. After his birth in Antwerp, Belgium on April 29, 1930, his American-born parents barely escaped the onslaught of World War II as they were able to catch one of the last boats to sail to the U.S.

Larry attended elementary school in New Jersey before the family headed to Mexico City. He had already decided that being a physician was his calling in life.

After spending time during the Korean War riding a desk in England with

the U.S. Army, LaGattuta completed his undergraduate studies at Rutgers University then graduated from the Boston University Medical School. He ended up at the Detroit Receiving Hospital as a surgical resident where he met his wife, Dorothy, and married in 1964.

But Dr. Larry LaGattuta's legacy truly begins in 1968 when the couple moved to Allegan, MI. He was a forward thinker and doer. What he and his colleagues were able to accomplish in this rural community is a story that should never be forgotten. The street signs "LaGattuta Lane," and "Schneider Blvd" demonstrate just a fraction of the lives of these visionaries.

When Dr. LaGattuta arrived in Allegan, Dr.

Harry Schneider was well ensconced in his medical practice at the Allegan Hospital. The two doctors envisioned a Medical Clinic where physicians could collaborate to provide primary care, family practice, obstetrics, child services, urgent care, and surgery to the residents of the Allegan area who had been having to travel to Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids or Holland for these services.

To attain the vision, the space needed to be provided for doctors' offices, and it was. Then doctors had to be attracted to the small-town environment. Talented physicians, nurses and support staff were brought into the fold.

In an interview with the Allegan County News, he often reiterated that the road to building the Alle-

gan Medical Clinic was difficult. Doctors know little about the finances of doctoring. There were mistakes that needed correcting, but with the assistance of extremely dedicated doctors, physician assistants, nurses and office staff, the ship was righted, and many success stories poured from patients and colleagues alike.

The establishment of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) was the frosting on the cake. No longer would emergencies and acute cases have to travel distances from home. Being the primary surgeon in the area, LaGattuta's beeper went off morning, afternoon, and night with equal response — Dr. LaGattuta scrubbing up and performing emergency surgeries of all types.

In his spare time, LaGattuta enjoyed building. Though trained as a physician, he was able to build their dream on Monroe Road by out thinking the swamp land along the Kalamazoo River. Though not a farmer, he learned to "farm" and raise chickens and beef cattle. Though not a contractor, he was able to restore Dorothy's grandfather's 1940 cabin near Traverse City on Bass Lake.

The Wednesday luncheons with colleagues from Allegan General, the trips with Dorothy and family to the cottage on Bass Lake, the quiet times in the woods or fishing became the loves of Larry's life after retirement.

The sadness and frustration of seeing the Allegan

Bat with rabies found in county

On Friday Allegan County Health Department officials revealed a confirmed case of rabies in a bat within the county.

No other details as to the precise location where this infected animal was located, when it was located, or whether there were any human victims that may have been bitten by this bat, were disclosed.

While this is the first such instance this year, it's the sixth detection of animal rabies found in a bat over the past four-plus years.

■ see LaGattuta, Page A12

Goose Festival a hit in Fennville



At top left: A giant goose makes its way down Main Street in Fennville on Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023, as part of the town's annual Goose Festival. The parade was moved from its traditional Saturday slot to Sunday due to heavy rain.

At bottom left: The crowd enjoys the Great Lakes Brass Band on Main Street in Fennville on Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023, as part of the town's annual Goose Festival. The parade was moved from its traditional Saturday slot to Sunday due to heavy rain.

At bottom right: Spectators wave American flags as the Fennville High School Marching Band heads down Main Street in Fennville on Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023, as part of the town's annual Goose Festival. The parade was moved from its traditional Saturday slot to Sunday due to heavy rain.



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