

County Administrator's Digest

December 9, 2011

Alan G. Vanderberg, County Administrator

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GOOD NEWS STORY FROM OTTAWA COUNTY CENTRAL DISPATCH (Tim Smith)

By **HEIDI FENTON**

The Holland Sentinel

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Holland —

Jordan Poulin had to look quite a ways up to make eye contact with a group of Holland police and firefighters Thursday, but she still reveled in their admiration.

The 4-year-old, barely waist-high, had her chance in the spotlight as she accepted an award from the West Michigan Character Council, a certificate from Ottawa County Central Dispatch and an assortment of fun gifts.

That's quite the load for a preschooler.

But what she accomplished just more than a month ago is something area public safety workers won't easily forget: a 911 call that saved her mother's life.

"It feels like something I should be watching when she's graduating high school when she is getting these awards," said her mom, Kelly LaMar, who recovered from a seizure after her daughter's call in early November. "It's kind of surreal



because she is so young, you know, it's like I can't really believe it."

Natalie Parsons couldn't believe it, at first, either, when she heard Poulin's small voice on the other end of the phone line Nov. 8.

With 10 years of emergency dispatch experience in Ottawa County, Parsons said she can't remember ever speaking with a young child in such a serious situation.

Poulin's mother had collapsed on their living room floor in a seizure with her 5-month-old brother nearby.

The young girl grabbed her mom's cell phone and called 911, at first telling Parsons she thought her mom had died. After calming down, she provided a house number that alerted authorities to her home in Holland's Candlelight Manor mobile home park.

"As soon as I was able to get her to talk to me. I realized the severity of the situation. It wasn't just a child playing with the phone," Parsons said. "Something just told me to stay on the line."

She came Thursday to watch the young girl accept her awards for the heroic act.

As the mother of a 3 1/2-year-old, Parsons said seeing Poulin face-to-face was emotional. She couldn't imagine her own child in such a serious situation.

LaMar is thankful her daughter reacted so quickly. She later listened to tapes of the young girl's call and understood why, at first, Poulin struggled to relay what her house looked like.

The young girl didn't know to walk all the way outside as Parsons asked her to do.

"I always tell her that she opens the main front door, but not the screen door. That's why she couldn't tell what color the house is," LaMar said.

LaMar doesn't recall anything about the experience, except being loaded into an ambulance.

Now, the two are inseparable. It'll take awhile before Poulin feels her mother is safe — she still worries a lot and sleeps on her floor often to stay close by — but LaMar is proud.

"Her and I have grown very close as mother and daughter, so I know she cares about me. We're best buds," she said.

And Poulin couldn't hide her excitement over the new awards, including a silver Senior Olympics medal Fred Winter won for the 100-meter dash. The 96-year-old Park Township man became the character council's oldest award recipient two years ago.

Poulin is now the youngest.

"I was just happy for myself," she said. "It makes me feel good. I'm proud."

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MICHELLE MARTIN NAMED OTTAWA DHS DIRECTOR

We were very pleased to learn last week that Michelle Martin has been named DHS Director for Ottawa County after she served as the "Interim" DHS Director for what seemed like a very long time. Michelle is doing outstanding work and we are excited that she officially got the job. Congrats!

GOLD LEADERSHIP 8TH GRADUATING CLASS (Laura Mousseau)

Department heads, elected officials, managers, and supervisors were present in the Ottawa County Boardroom on Tuesday, December 6, to support and recognize our latest group of GOLD Standard Leaders. This was the eighth group of graduates completing this extensive leadership development program. There are now 158 GOLD Standard Leaders in Ottawa County.

Participants and guests were welcomed by HR Director Marie Waalkes. County Administrator Al Vanderberg spoke on the county's ongoing commitment to the development of its employees. Denny Macha, who has worked extensively with our leadership program, provided a general overview of the process. Laura Mousseau, Training & Development Coordinator, shared information on the positive changes the program has had on the organization, as well as plans for continuing the learning. Three of our graduates (Ann Heerde, Sandy Castle, and Melanie Manion) addressed the group and shared their thoughts on the benefits they have gained from the training. Elizabeth Lange, a 2010 graduate, also addressed the group and shared what she and her department have been doing to continue the learning process.

The current group has been meeting regularly since September in 4-hour learning sessions and 1-hour small group discussions exploring topics such as understanding your leadership style, the essentials of leadership, handling conflict among team members, and providing ongoing feedback.

Receiving their GOLD Standard Leader Certificates were: Missy Anderson (CMH), Spencer Ballard (Public Health), Anna Bednarek (CMH), Andrew Brown (Circuit Court), Sandy Castle (CMH), Dan Foster (Fiscal Services), Ann Heerde (CMH), Curt Hegel (County Clerk), Elizabeth Holmberg (CMH), Thom Lattig (Juvenile Services), Matt Levandoski (Parks), Melanie Manion (Parks), Shannon McGoran (Fiscal Services), Ryan McLatcher (Fiscal Services), Christine Miller (Fiscal Services), Christopher Munley (Sheriff's Office), Barb Sychowski (CMH), Joni Troeger (CMH), Michele VanderSchel (CMH), Debbie Walker-Zattlin (CMH)

Congratulations to our Fall 2011 GOLD Standard Leaders!

NATIVE FOREST RESTORATION INITIATIVE AT OTTAWA COUNTY PARK'S RILEY TRAILS(Melanie Manion)

In keeping with its strong tradition of stewarding its lands, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission (OCPRC) is starting a Native Forest Restoration Initiative Project this fall at its Riley Trails Park in Park Township. In 2012 OCPRC will assess the health of the pine plantations at the park; thin the pines according to a forester's recommendation; and plant native trees.

From the 1930s through the 1960s land managers across Michigan planted red pines and other pine species to reclaim abandoned farmland and clear-cut forests. These areas were typically harsh lands prone to erosion and with infertile soils. Land managers planted pines to prevent soil erosion and create environmental conditions that would help native trees to grow. In addition, these plantations were a source of revenue.

Plantations, like any crop, are a cultivated landscape that needs management. The tree seedlings are planted close together with the intent of thinning them periodically. When this thinning does not occur, the trees grow too close together causing the trees to compete. As a result, non-managed plantations are prone to disease and windthrow. Many of the plantations, like Riley Trails, were never managed as originally intended.

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission appreciates the significant beauty of the pines at Riley Trails. We understand that this park is a popular destination for recreationists who enjoy the aesthetics of the plantation. However, we also recognize that is an unsustainable landscape.

After careful consideration, OCPRC has decided to begin transitioning the cultivated landscape of the plantations to a more sustainable, diverse native forest. As part of the process, we intend to harvest approximately a third of the pine trees to improve the health and vigor of the existing pine trees, while creating better conditions for the native trees in the understory. We will also be working with a local Eagle Scout to plant native trees and shrubs.

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission strives to be good stewards of its properties. We understand that people are invested in their park system. The Native Forest Restoration Initiative at Riley Trails will increase the value of this property by creating a sustainable landscape that is considerably better for wildlife.

For more information, please contact Melanie Manion, OCPRC's Natural Resources Management Supervisor at 616-739-4811 or mmanion@miottawa.org.

We invite people to learn more about this project at one of our Information Sessions listed below:

Public Meeting

Thursday, December 15, 2011 7 PM

Park Township Hall

52 152nd Avenue, Holland (off 152nd north of Ottawa Beach Road)

Informational Hike

Saturday, December 17, 2011 10 AM

Riley Trails Park

Meet at the entrance off Riley St., Holland between 166th and 160th

PRESS:

For additional information, please contact:

Melanie Manion, OCPRC Natural Resource Management Supervisor

616-738-4811 or mmanion@miottawa.org

MTA DINNER – RODNEY STOKES PRESENTATION

Leslie and I attended the MTA Annual Christmas Dinner last week at Terra Verde and as usual it was very nicely done though I had to eat my meal replacement pancakes instead of the outstanding dinner present. DNR Director Rodney Stokes was the speaker and did an outstanding job. We learned some very interesting statistics. Mr. Stokes praised the efforts of John Scholtz, Ottawa County Parks Director. Ottawa County has received the fourth highest total of grant funding through the Natural Resources Trust Fund Program, 65 grants for a total of \$30 million. Only Wayne County, Oakland County and Grand Traverse County, in that order, have received more. Director Stokes also informed the group that John was one of three experts brought in by the State prior to the hiring of the DNR Director to help guide the focus of the fund. John is very humble so it is completely within character that we would find out about this at a dinner from Director Stokes and not from John himself but we are certainly glad to an outstanding public servant like John working at Ottawa County!

