

ADVICE | AREA

ASK THE DOCS



DR. EVE GLAZIER

Early exposure to pets may offer kids protection from allergies

Dear Doctor: Neither of my sisters have pets, and all their kids have allergies. Could the fact that we have dogs, a horse and a barn cat be the reason that my kids aren't allergic to anything?

Dear Reader: How and why allergies develop are complex questions that have long been the subject of study. So many variables are at play, both genetic and environmental, that it's difficult to pinpoint why someone does develop an allergy and someone else does not.

That said, an emerging body of evidence suggests that early exposure to pets may indeed offer a measure of protection from developing an allergy. It's tied into what we're now learning about the importance of the gut microbiome, which is the array of microbes and microorganisms that coexist within our bodies. This insight offers new avenues of research and understanding that are both fascinating and intriguing.

Let's back up and talk about what, exactly, an allergy is.

An allergy develops when the immune system perceives a normally harmless substance as a threat and then mounts a vigorous defense against that substance. Dust mites, pollen, certain foods and pet dander are among the substances that the immune system may suddenly begin to target. The result of this hypersensitivity can manifest as itchiness, swelling, hives, wheezing, difficulty breathing, stomach upset and vomiting. Most allergies are manageable and are merely unpleasant or annoying. However, some allergic reactions can be so extreme that they are life-threatening.

The original idea behind the pets-are-good theory of allergy protection was that, through early exposure, individuals became desensitized to the presence of potential allergens. New research now suggests a connection between regular contact with animals and beneficial changes to the gut microbiome.

Some researchers believe that when a child is exposed to certain pet-associated microbes, the result is a beneficial effect on the development of his or her immune system. The theory is that the presence of animals adds a level of diversity to the microbes that the child encounters daily. The result is an immune system that's measurably less trigger-happy in the presence of potential allergens.

However, this exposure appears to be at its most effective before birth and during the first 12 or so months of life.

What's also interesting is that stool samples taken from children who grew up on a farm, and therefore came into regular contact with a variety of animals, had a broader diversity of microbiota than did samples from children living without pets. And it's not only contact with the animals themselves that scientists believe has benefits. The microscopic traces of soil that cling to the animals and get transferred to people, or that the animals bring into the home, contribute to an environment with a more robust and diverse array of useful microbes.

With research into the mysterious and fascinating microbiome still in its infancy, we can only imagine the revelations to come.

— Eve Glazier, M.D., MBA, is an internist and assistant professor of medicine at UCLA Health. Elizabeth Ko, M.D., is an internist and primary care physician at UCLA Health.

CIRCUIT COURT

Offenburg pleads no contest to larceny of firearms

By Corey Murray
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HILLSDALE — A 31-year-old Bryan, Ohio man pleaded no contest to larceny of firearms Monday afternoon in Hillsdale County Circuit Court.

Robert Carl Offenburg, a native of Hillsdale, wished to tender the no contest plea in lieu of a guilty plea as he had difficulty in remembering details of his activities on the evening of March 27 due to being under the influence of prescription narcotics.

Offenburg was arrest-



Offenburg

ed in the early morning hours of March 28 by the Hillsdale City Police Department after officers worked throughout the night investigating a home invasion and larceny of firearms on Bacon Street in the city.

According to a press release issued by HCPD Chief Scott Hephner, an extensive ground search was conducted by the HCPD with assistance of a Michigan State Police

K-9 team around 10 p.m. March 27.

This search covered an area of more than two blocks and resulted in four stolen firearms and other items being recovered, according to the release.

Offenburg was formally charged with home invasion, larceny from a building, three counts of larceny of firearms, and use of narcotics.

According to Hillsdale County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Rod Hassinger, Offenburg was visiting the homeowner on the evening of March 27. He later re-

turned to the address when the homeowner was not home, broke into the backdoor, and stole the firearms.

He then stashed the stolen firearms at Kekoose Park, just two blocks down the road, according to Hassinger.

Charges of home invasion, larceny from a building, and use of narcotics are to be dismissed when Offenburg is sentenced at 8:30 a.m. June 12.

He faces up to five years in prison for stealing the firearms and remains out on bond awaiting that hearing.

STATUE

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The finished product — life-sized and standing on a pedestal bearing a quote from Douglass' work — represents Douglass as a scholar with a book under his arm. Douglass's passion animates the statue's face.

After the unveiling, Washington and Lee University Professor of Politics, Lucas Morel, took to the podium to discuss Douglass' ideology and impact. He said that though Douglass, having been born into slavery, had great reason to hate the United States, he instead became the nation's most ardent defender, a student of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bible.

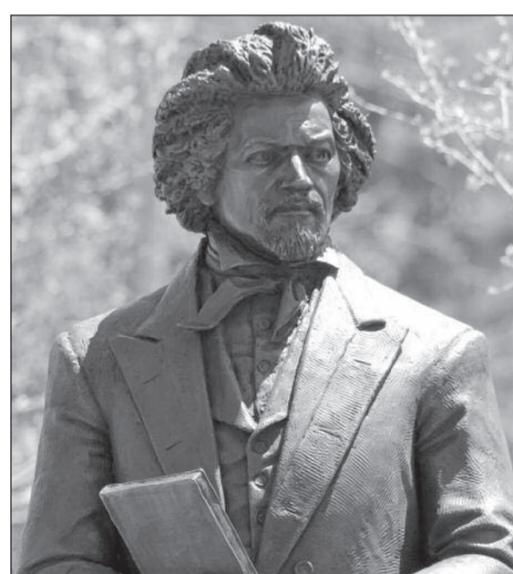
Arnn was next and noted that Douglass is

the ninth figure-sized statue to be displayed at the College, joining the ranks of Abraham Lincoln, Socrates, and Margaret Thatcher.

"All nine of them were chosen because they mean something to the campus," he said, noting that when Douglass visited Hillsdale, he "came to remind us what a college is, he didn't just come."

Arnn concluded by discussing the placement of the sculpture. The College's statue of Abraham Lincoln stands on the the opposite side of Kresge Plaza from Douglass. Between them stands a monument to the Hillsdale College students who fought and died in defense of freedom in the Civil War.

Arnn noted the soldier is positioned in Lincoln's line of sight as a reminder of the human



Sculptor Bruce Wolfe's statue of Frederick Douglass was unveiled Friday at Hillsdale College.

[ANDREW KING PHOTO]

cost of war. But Douglass now stands as a reminder of the greater price that the country would have paid for inaction, the human cost

of slavery.

After the conclusion of Arnn's speech, the college treated its guests to a reception with appetizers and champagne.

HBPU

From Page A1

Past location bills will be ignored and the customer's deposit will be based just on the Online Exchange risk score with the new proposed policy. No deposit will be required for a score of 10 percent or less. Those with a 10-25 percent risk would pay \$100, those from 25-50 percent, \$175, from 50-75 percent \$225 and those between 75-100 would be required to

pay \$400.

The current policy only returns the deposit when the customer disconnects.

Going forward the board recommended re-funding deposits to those policies with no late fees and penalties after 18 months.

Barber said the changes are comparable to other municipal plans.

"This looks like a more fair way," said Chairman Hill.

Board member Chris Sumnar questioned whether past deposits

were considered revenues or liabilities.

Barber was unsure how the old system handled deposits.

Vice Chair Batt said he had been a customer for 40 years and can't remember paying a deposit.

The suggested Barber collect as much information as possible and report back to the board.

"If we get a lot of people coming in, we will have to do some investigation, and see if what we've got, as far as liabilities," Batt told the board.

Stevens Brothers was awarded the contract to paint the inside and outside of the South Street water tower, which was last painted in 1997. Stevens Brothers' bid of \$266,400 was the lowest of seven bidders. Dixon Engineering will be hired as project manager and inspectors for \$23,500. The board budgeted \$330,000 for the project.

The work was in the 2017-18 budget, but was awarded earlier to save money.

FAMILIES

From Page A1

"This report seeks to draw attention to how much it really costs for families to make ends meet, both statewide and in each county, and how our state's current wages and services are not cutting it."

The federal poverty threshold determines who is counted as officially poor, but tells us little about whether a person or family is living in economic security, Rossman said.

"It does not reflect regional and local differences in the cost of living and is based on a model that, while adequate when first devised in 1965, is less reflective of today's economic realities," Rossman added.

The Basic Needs Income Level calculated in this report, Rossman said, is intended to help lawmakers and residents easily understand how much income a family needs in order to pay for all of its basic expenses. The Basic Needs Income Level can be used to measure the



Berry

economic security of Michigan's working families, assess the adequacy of worker wages and benefits, promote programs and policies that assist families in need, and be a benchmark by which to assess the quality of jobs being created in the state.

"With this localized data on how much it really costs for families to make ends meet, the Michigan League for Public Policy's report reframes the discussions around need, wage standards, public assistance and what it means to live in economic security," Rossman said.

The League is focused on ensuring all Michigan residents have economic security because simply lifting people out of poverty is not enough. In addition to showing that the poverty level alone is not an adequate measure of stability, this data also shows that the state's unemployment rate is not the only—or an adequate—benchmark for economic recovery.

"This data backs up what we've been saying the last few years as Michigan has recovered: the recovery is still not reaching everyone, many people are working in low-wage jobs and barely getting by, and the high costs of child care and health care are breaking people at all income levels," Jacobs said in the release. "There are a variety of policy changes lawmakers can make to help address this, including increasing the minimum wage, upholding healthcare and strengthening child care supports, passing a statewide earned sick leave law, and creating a fairer tax system that helps struggling workers as much as it does the wealthy."

Commenting on the report, Toby Berry, Chief Executive Officer at Community Action Agency, said the agency assesses needs and provides services in five main areas — education, community development, housing, economic self-sufficiency and health and nutrition.

Berry said the data in the report is reflective of what is seen in the CAA service area of Hillsdale,

Jackson, and Lenawee counties.

Key trends for the community include the loss of population, the loss of jobs, increases in poverty rates, and increases in factors that cause poverty such as growing inequalities in wages, low education levels for adults, and changes in household composition that impact household stability.

"Last year, of the over 10,000 families we served, 51 percent were employed and still sought assistance because they are unable to make ends meet with the wages they are earning," Berry said. "In responses to our Community Needs Assessment survey, while most of our customers surveyed had a bank account, the vast majority have less than \$100 in their account to utilize in case of emergencies. We would agree that the policy recommendations provided by the Michigan League for Public Policy would go a long way in helping Michigan families bridge the gap."

For additional information, go to www.mlpp.org/resources/making-ends-meet-in-michigan.

DEAR ABBY



JEANNE PHILLIPS

With parents gone, truth can be told about brothers' crimes

DEAR ABBY: I have known for a long time that once both of my parents were gone, I would cease contact with my brothers. My problem is how to explain it to other family members and friends. I don't want to go into the details about my reasons. I feel it would hurt my parents if the truth were out.

One aunt keeps asking why and insisting I should make amends. Abby, one brother went to jail for murder, and both of them are child molesters. Neither is a person I would want in my house. They have stolen from me, and there's no love lost between any of us.

I'm not good at lying and don't know what to say. Is there a way to ask them to stop asking about my brothers without telling them anything? I don't want to be rude.

— FAMILY DRAMA

DEAR FAMILY DRAMA:

You could tell these people the subject is closed, but they may not respect your wishes. Frankly, I can't understand why you feel it would hurt your two (dead) parents if the truth was told. They are beyond caring now, and if people knew what your brothers are capable of — murder, theft and child molesting — they might prefer to protect themselves by also distancing themselves. I know I certainly would.

DEAR ABBY: Recently, at a local doughnut shop, I created what I'm afraid was an awkward social situation as I was placing my order. Three military servicemen in uniform came in and stood in line behind me. As the cashier rang me up, after a few moments of mulling it over, I told them I was thankful for their service and politely asked, "May I please buy your coffee for you?"

I was shocked when one of them responded, "I'd rather you didn't. We make pretty good money, you know." He then proceeded to say he always tries to "avoid situations like this" because "a lot of service people take advantage of civilians who offer them things for free."

The other two seemed to share his sentiments, but agreed to let me pay. Each one shook my hand and thanked me before leaving, but I could see I had made them uncomfortable.

I truly am thankful for the services of those in uniform and never intended to offend them in any way. Next time, should I donate to a military support charity instead? I don't want to offend anyone again.

— OFFENSIVELY PATRIOT-IC?

DEAR PATRIOTIC: It is not rude to thank someone for the job he or she is doing. You did nothing wrong. Your offer was gracious and generous, and in no way an implication that those individuals couldn't afford to pay for their coffee. However, some people find it difficult to accept the "burden of gratitude," and the person who lectured you may have been one of them. Please recognize that and do not allow what one man said to change what you're doing.

— Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.