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MDC Welcomes New Conservation Agent - Ben Stratton

SEPTEMBER 08TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Cape Girardeau, Missouri - There's a new face of conservation in Cape Girardeau County. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports Ben Stratton is the new conservation agent for the county.

"Ben is a natural fit since he's from the county and knows it well," said Russell Duckworth, MDC Protection District Supervisor. "He's got a great reputation throughout our region and we continue to expect great things out of him."

Stratton graduated from the Conservation Agent Training Academy in Jefferson City in 2009 before working as the Mississippi County conservation agent for six years. He is a Cape Girardeau native and an alumnus of both Cape Central High School and Southeast Missouri State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in biology with an emphasis in wildlife management. His minor was criminal justice.

For Stratton, the complexities of being a conservation agent are a positive aspect of the job.

"I like not knowing what I'll be doing from one day to the next," he said. "The job transitions with the seasons, so one day I'll be working with dove hunters, another day we may do swift water rescue or teach hunter education."

He also said the law enforcement role of a conservation agent is rewarding.

“I enjoy making a solid case against a perpetrator that’s stealing the wildlife resources from other Missouri citizens,” he said. “It’s my portion of protecting our resources for future generations.”

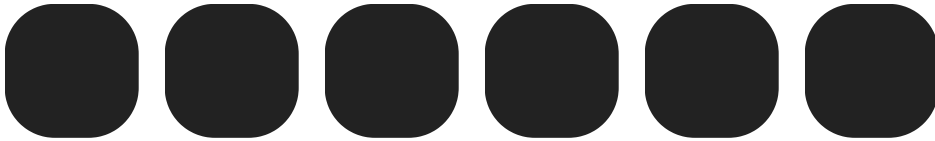
Stratton said being a conservation agent has given him exciting new opportunities that he never expected, including teaching people about conservation and sharing his love of the outdoors.

Stratton can be reached at (573)450-1763 or Ben.Stratton@mdc.mo.gov. For more information about conservation agents in Missouri, go online to mdc.mo.gov.

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Local Students Awarded Healthcare Scholarships

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Local Students Awarded Healthcare Scholarships

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - Saint Francis Foundation and the Saint Francis Medical Center Auxiliary awarded healthcare scholarships to 23 local students on July 31. Each student received \$2,000 in scholarships toward a degree in a healthcare-related profession.

The Saint Francis Healthcare Scholarship Program was created in 1980. The program is funded by Saint Francis Foundation and the Saint Francis Auxiliary. Since its inception, the program has provided more than \$533,000 in education scholarships to college students in an effort to encourage participation in professional healthcare careers. Scholarship recipients must have completed at least one year in an accredited healthcare program, maintain a minimum of 3.0 GPA and complete the application and essay requirements by the scheduled deadline. They must also reside within Saint Francis Medical Center's service area, as defined in the application.

The 2015 Saint Francis Healthcare Scholarship Program Recipients are:

Austin Cook, Chaffee – Joseph and Harriette Hunter McCrate Scholarship

Alexis Engelhart, Jackson – Lee George and Katherine Jane Cochran Memorial Scholarship

Emily Greenley, Thebes, Ill. – Saint Francis Foundation Scholarship

Rachel Hearnes, Charleston – Clara D. Newnam Memorial Scholarship

Megan Hecht, Jackson – Lucy Ellen Towse Memorial Scholarship

Kody Hindman, Cape Girardeau – Carrie Suedekum Memorial Scholarship

Madison Huckstep, Scott City – Susan E. Hinkebein Memorial Scholarship

Hannah Hunter, Jackson – Ken Hayden Memorial Nursing Scholarship
Amanda Lappe, Oak Ridge – Earl Jr. and Lori Wills Memorial Scholarship
Kristy Lohman, Chester, Ill. – Mamie Hall Memorial Scholarship
Elizabeth Leimer, Gordonville – Bess Estes Healthcare Scholarship
Sarah McCrate, Jackson – Raymond A. and Lillian K. Ritter Scholarship
Kaitlin McGrath, Cape Girardeau – Saint Francis Auxiliary Healthcare Scholarship
Jordan Myer, Jackson – Evalyn and S. David Nunley Scholarship
Caleb Newcomer, Jackson – Huttegger-Scherer Memorial Scholarship
Taylor Powers, Anna, Ill. – Bernadean Campbell Memorial Scholarship
Olivia Renner, Jackson – Saint Francis Auxiliary Physician Honor Scholarship
Ethan Seyer, Oak Ridge – Mark F. Scully Nursing Scholarship
Tripti Shakya, Cape Girardeau – Christen Joyel Aufdenberg Memorial Scholarship
Emma Steffens, Jackson – Saint Francis Auxiliary 125th Anniversary Scholarship
Cody Van de Ven, Leopold – Raymond A. and Lillian K. Ritter Scholarship
Emily Welker, Cape Girardeau – Sisters of Saint Francis Nursing Scholarship
Melissa Wyatt, Jackson – Edythe M. Davis Scholarship

The members of the 2015 scholarship committee include: B.J. Bowman; Nicole Chance; Thelma Irwin, Cheryl Mothes, Lisa Newcomer and Lori Wills.

For more information about the Saint Francis Foundation and Auxiliary Healthcare Scholarship Program, call 573-331-5790.

Saint Francis Foundation is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization that supports Saint Francis Medical Center by strengthening the institution overall and reaffirming its mission of supporting the community and the people it serves. Formally organized in 1976, its mission reflects the Medical Center's priorities

through fundraising efforts that support the community. The Foundation sponsors several annual events, including golf tournaments, and philanthropic activities such as annual appeals, memorials, endowment funds, planned giving, grants and major gifts. Through the generosity of the community, staff and volunteers, the Foundation accepts contributions each year to purchase state-of-the-art equipment, provide patient and employee assistance, create new programs that help patients in the region, and improve facilities at the Medical Center.

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RapidPass Now Available for Blood Donors

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Dexter, Missouri - American Red Cross blood and platelet donors can now help save lives in less time by using the new Red Cross RapidPass online health history system.

RapidPass streamlines the donation experience by allowing donors to complete pre-donation reading and health history questions online from the convenience of a computer at home or work. It became available to donors locally on July 27 and is expected to reduce the time donors with a RapidPass spend at blood drives by up to 15 minutes.

“When people come to donate, they are giving more than blood or platelets – they are also generously giving their time,” said Todd Wagner, director of donor recruitment, Missouri-Illinois Blood Services Region. “RapidPass is a simple, convenient way for Red Cross donors to make the most of their time while helping save lives.”

To get a RapidPass on the day of a blood donation, donors should visit redcrossblood.org/rapidpass, complete all of the questions, then print their RapidPass or show it on a mobile device when they come to donate.

Though an appointment isn't needed to use RapidPass, donors are encouraged to make an appointment by using the Blood Donor App, visiting redcrossblood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS to further expedite their donation.

How to donate blood

All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age (16 with parental consent in some states), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

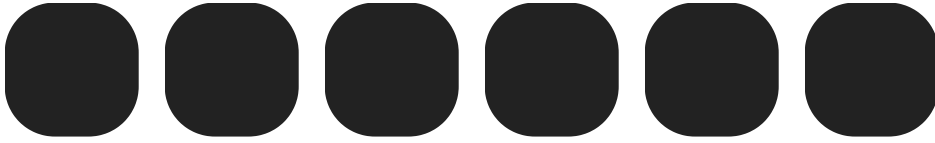
About the American Red Cross

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit redcross.org or visit us on Twitter at @RedCross.

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Cape Nature Center Snake Gives Virgin Births

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Cape Nature Center Snake Gives Virgin Births

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center reports a resident female Yellow-bellied watersnake at the center is likely reproducing without contribution from a male. Intern Kyle Morton, who cares for the snakes at the center, didn't know what he was looking at when he went to clean the snake cage one morning.

"I thought, 'what joker put tomatoes in here for the snake'," Morton said.

It wasn't tomatoes, though; as Morton examined the round, soft, egg-like structures, he realized they were freshly laid membranes from the female snake.

"She had acted normal other than not eating for several weeks," Morton said. "So it definitely took me by surprise."

Morton reported his find to one of the naturalists at the center, who verified what it was. The snake did the same thing last summer, giving birth to two now healthy year-old watersnakes. Naturalist Jordi Brostoski found the membranes last summer, when it first

happened.

“At first I thought the snake had regurgitated something until I looked at it closer,” Brostoski said. “That’s when I realized what had happened and then the hatchling snakes surprised me by slithering under the bedding in the cage.”

According to Jeff Briggler, MDC herpetologist, although it’s not heard of often, virgin births can be common in some species, through a process called parthenogenesis.

Parthenogenesis is a type of asexual reproduction in which offspring develops from unfertilized eggs. It occurs in many insect orders, most commonly with bees, wasps and stick insects and is also found in some species of fish, amphibians, birds and reptiles, but not in mammals.

“There are many types of parthenogenesis in which I will not go into great detail,” Briggler said. “In layman’s terms, parthenogenesis is a mode of asexual reproduction in which the offspring (babies) are produced by females without genetic contribution of a male.”

Briggler said parthenogenesis seems to occur in both captive and wild situations and it doesn’t seem to impact the health of the female snake. Additionally, this species of snake has not been documented as participants in parthenogenesis.

“For many years, it was believed that such birth in captivity was due to sperm storage,” Briggler explained. “However, genetics is proving a different story.”

This snake has been a resident at the nature center for nearly eight years, which is likely too long of a time for this to be a result of sperm storage.

Briggler said parthenogenesis is a common occurrence in many lizard species. Published accounts of this form of reproduction in snakes have included the Brahminy blind snake, Timber rattlesnake, Copperheads, Cottonmouths, Burmese python, Rainbow boa, Common boa, Green anaconda, several gartersnake species, Aruba island rattlesnake and Afarura filesnake. As more genetic work is conducted, Briggler believes it may turn out that parthenogenesis is more widespread than scientists have thought in the past.

One interesting result of the process is that in the majority of the species that participate in parthenogenesis, the offspring produced are all male, Briggler said.

“There is always a high proportion of infertile eggs due to chromosome combination, but a few can be successful and hatch if the mother has a dissimilar sex chromosome (ZW) compared to the male with copies of the ZZ chromosome,” he said.

In this case, the female ZW chromosome will produce egg cell with ZZ and WW via meiosis. The ZZ combination can form a male embryo cell that can begin to divide and produce a snake. The WW chromosome is not viable.

The Yellow-bellied watersnake’s offspring didn’t survive this year, possibly due to the combination of chromosomes. However, last year’s two young ones are thriving and serving as educational reptiles for the Cape Nature Center.

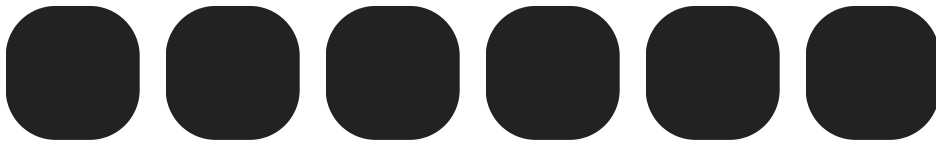
The Cape Nature Center is located inside Cape Girardeau's North County Park, just east of Interstate 55 (Exit 99) and Kingshighway (State Highway 61). More information about the center can be found at mdc.mo.gov/CapeNatureCenter.

Photo by Candice Davis.

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Monday is Labor Day!

SEPTEMBER 07TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Monday is Labor Day!

It's Monday! Monday's are most people's least favorite day of the week, so what better way to spend it than to have it off of work!

Today we celebrate Labor Day. We add an extra day to our weekend to celebrate the labor movement, which gave to us better working conditions and fair treatment from our employers and the government. Labor Day is also associated by some as the end of summer, before the school year starts.

CELEBRATE

Labor Day is often spent as a vacation weekend by many families. Most campgrounds on this weekend are packed full. As you celebrate this day, consider and appreciate your hard work and how it has added to the well-being and prosperity of our country and use #NationalLaborDay to post on social media.

HISTORY

Labor Day was celebrated for the first time in New York City in 1882.

It was originally celebrated on September 5th, but was moved to the first Monday in September in 1884. Labor Day started out as a state holiday, getting voted in by individual states, but gained popularity and was voted a national holiday by the U.S. Congress in 1894.

What are you doing to celebrate National Labor Day? Post your photos and #NationalLaborDay!

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