

Ralph William Venema benefit

By Fan staff

Ralph is the third generation to grow up and live in the Fruitport community. Married to his wife, Marge, for over 40 years, he has quietly been serving the community with love and compassion. Ralph and Marge have three biological children and eight adopted children, along with 10 grandchildren. For over 15 years, they took in the hurting and needy children of Muskegon and Ot-tawa counties. Exact figures aren't known or important, but they are in excess of 100 children. Ralph and Marge believe every child deserves a chance to be all that they can be. And raising children out in the country on a farm gives them many of those opportunities.

Ralph has had an amazing work history that has given him the skills he needs to run the relief organiza-tion he is involved with today. He spent 20 years after high school working as a machinist, tool and die maker, mechanical engineer and supervisor. After that, he started Venema Construction Company and built custom homes around the Tri Cities. In 1998, Ralph left all of this behind and became the executive director of Concern Interna-tional, a Christian relief organization, starting and run-ning children's homes and orphanages around the world. Ralph has been involved in Kenya, Uganda, Cambodia, Romania and Mexico. With a very special soft spot for the children and staff at the Brazos de Amor (Arms of Love) orphanage in Agua Prieta, Mexico, Ralph has spent as much time there as his health will allow. He does all of this, striving to make the lives of hurting children worth getting up for each day by providing food, medical and spiritual care along with a loving example of what family life is all about.

In our own community, Ralph started an auto repair shop to help single parents and low income families bet-ter afford basic auto repairs and maintenance. His most recent venture was to become a licensed NRA instructor, teaching people how to use firearms safely, improve their

shooting skills, and how to be more aware of the world around themselves.

Ralph has recently been diagnosed with terminal stage 4 pancreatic and liver cancer. Ralph is amazing to talk with about this. He is totally at peace and tells every-one that his God has it all under control. He is hoping and praying for a miracle, but states, "I win, no matter what happens. If I'm given more time with my wife, children and friends, or if I'm taken home to Heaven, I win!" He has spent his entire adult life giving and caring for others. Ralph and Marge could really use our help at this time. Ralph is only able to work six to eight hours a week. Social Security disability won't offer any assistance until Janu-ary, 2014. The medical bills pertaining to his cancer are overwhelming with the limited insurance that he carries, and they still have the everyday mortgage, gas, electric and food bills. We have always been a community that helps care for each other. Let's see what we can do at this time for Ralph and Marge and their family.

On Tuesday, October 8, between 4:30 and 7:30 p.m., Jenny and the girls at Suzie's Village Inn are hosting a benefit fundraiser menu to assist Ralph and his family with some of the growing pile of bills related to Ralph's cancer. •

A Surprise open house will be held for Lillian (Buikema) Hackney for her 90th birthday on Saturday, Novem-ber 2, 2013, at Broad-way Baptist Church, 2892 Oak Lane, in Muskegon from 2 - 4 p.m. It is a Surprise! No gifts, please. Your presence will be a great gift to Lillian and her family.



The softer side of veterinary science

By Dr. E. Kirsten Peters

Modern veterinary science is a technically advanced field. Some animals receive not just x-rays, but sophis-ticated scans like MRIs. If you visit a large veterinary hospital you will find cats getting chemotherapy and dogs on the receiving end of complicated surgeries.

Naturally, a lot of the training vet students receive is focused on the "hard science" parts of what they will do as practicing veterinarians. But there's also a softer side to veterinary medicine, one that's increasingly being recognized where vet students are trained. Recently I learned about it from Dr. Kathy Ruby, a licensed coun-selor who works for the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University.

"I teach a class for vet students called, "Pet Loss and Human Bereavement" Ruby said. "Veterinary sci-ence training is great on the medical side. It's my job to concentrate on the other end of the leash."

In the old days, vets mostly dealt with livestock like cows and pigs. These so-called large animals didn't inspire close bonds with their human owners. But now many of us deeply care about the smaller animals that live in our houses. Our cats don't just live in the barn catching mice, but spend their days in our homes. Dogs are not banished to the backyard, but sleep at the foot of our beds or even between the sheets.

"In some ways we now have what you could call inter-species families," Ruby said. "That's wonderful, but it also makes for great challenges when our pets reach the end of their lives."

It's a simple fact that we generally outlive the animals in our homes. That means we are often quite

involved in an animal's decline. And at the end we may face decisions including euthanasia.

"In 'people medicine' we still see death as a failure," Ruby said. "With animals we often choose a good death at a particular time."

In 1999 Ruby founded a free hotline that gives people a place to call when they are grieving for their animals. The hotline can be reached toll free at 866-266-8635. About 25 vet students each semester staff the hotline, taking calls from across the country and sometimes even around the world. Each student works the telephone bank for four sessions.

"The first time they are on the hotline, the students are scared," Ruby said. "But they work past that once they have some experience talking with callers."

The hotline, which is funded by a grant from Purina, is available Monday through Thursday from 7 to 9 p.m. Pacific Time, and on Saturdays from 1 to 3 p.m. Pacific Time. Messages can be left at other times.

We also receive emails at plhl@vetmed.wsu.edu, Ruby said. "We sometimes get them sent to us at 1 a.m. from people wondering if their grief is normal or if they are going crazy."

The technical side of veterinary medicine is enor-mously complex. But the human side also matters, and it's impressive the way some veterinary colleges are preparing their students.

Dr. E. Kirsten Peters, a native of the rural Northwest, was trained as a geologist at Princeton and Harvard. This column is a service of the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences at Washington State Univer-sity. •

Infections spread by tick bites

by Dr. E. Kirsten Peters

When my dog and I walk along the Snake River during the warm seasons of the year, we can both come home with a tick or two. I'm used to feeling those little legs on my skin or scalp, and picking off the critters. If I'm lucky, I get to them before they attach and start suck-ing my blood. Because I've been doing this all my life, I don't get stressed out about ticks, but I do know they can carry certain diseases.

Recently the *Shots* web site of National Public Radio reported that scientists have made an advance about an unusual illness that befell two farmers in Missouri in 2009. The men came down with bad fevers, nausea and diarrhea. They were sick enough they sought medical attention and it was discovered the platelet counts in their blood had dropped significantly.

At first, they were treated with antibiotics for some type of bacterial infection. But the treatments didn't help. A doctor at Heartland Regional Medical Center in Missouri then sent samples of the farmers' blood to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When the samples were analyzed, medical researchers turned up a new virus, not one previously known to science. They named it the Heartland virus.

Happily, the sick men ultimately got better; their bodies beating back the infection that had made them so ill. But the question remained — how were they exposed to the virus? The basic clues were that the two men worked outdoors, were in the same state, and had **Fruitport Area News • October 2013 • Page 29**

been bitten by ticks before coming down sick.

Federal researchers have now figured out how the virus was transmitted to the men. In 2012 they collected some 50,000 ticks (what a job!), including taking some ticks off dogs and horses at the farms of the men who had become ill. Analyzing the ticks, they have found the Heartland virus.

"It's the first time anyone has found (the virus) in the wild, in the environment," said researcher Harry Savage to *Shots*. "It means the virus is yet another tick-borne disease in the U.S."

The Heartland virus has so far been detected in only one kind of tick, a species called the lone star tick. (The bug isn't named for Texas, but for a little white dot that adults carry on their backs.) And only the juvenile ticks called nymphs have been shown to carry the virus. About 1 in 500 of the nymphs has the virus.

"If you were looking for Lyme in Connecticut, there would be more ticks infected," Savage said. "But for a virus, (1 in 500) is a substantial number."

The lone star tick is found in the lower Midwest, the Southeast, and along the coast of New York and New England. The Heartland virus gives people living in those regions another reason to check themselves when they come in from the outdoors during the warm seasons of the year.

Happy tick hunting, everyone!
Dr. E. Kirsten Peters, a native of the rural Northwest, was trained as a geologist at Princeton and Harvard. This column is a service of the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences at Washington State University. •



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**September 26
Thursday**

**THE PATH
OF WISDOM**

**READ:
Psalm 38:1-15**

**In You, O LORD, I hope;
You will hear, O Lord
my God.
—Psalm 38:15**

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 1-2
■ Galatians 5

Albert Einstein was heard to say, "Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former." Sadly, it does seem that far too often there is no limit to the foolishness we get ourselves into—or the damage we create by our foolishness and the choices it fosters.

It was in such a season of regret that David poured out his struggle and complaint to God in Psalm 38. As he recounted his own failings, as well as the painful consequences he was enduring because of those failings, the shepherd-king made an insightful comment: "My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness" (v.5). Although the psalmist does not give us the details of those choices or of his worsening wounds, one thing is clear—David recognized his own foolishness as their root cause.

The answer for such destructive foolishness is to embrace the wisdom of God. Proverbs 9:10 reminds us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Only by allowing God to transform us can we overcome the foolish decisions that cause so much trouble. With His loving guidance, we can follow the pathway of godly wisdom. —Bill Crowder

*Loving Father, forgive me for the seemingly
limitless capacity I have to be foolish. Teach me
in Your wisdom, so that my life might be pleasing
to You and a blessing to others around me.*

**God's wisdom is given to those
who humbly ask Him for it.**
*(Taken from Our Daily Bread published by Radio
Bible Class @ rbc.org. Mailed free.)*