



June 10, 2015

For additional information contact:

Lisa LaPlante at (616) 632-7182 or Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov

National Attention to “Tiger Capture” to end with “Adoption” by Child from Florida

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Animal Shelter received a bizarre call for help on May 28, 2015. The caller saw a tiger laying in the driveway of a home in the city of Grand Rapids. Animal Control Officer’s (ACO) Supervisor Joe Dainelis and ACO Rachel Jensen responded to the report. Upon their arrival, the noted that the tiger appeared real from what they could see from the street. On closer inspection, they discovered that it was a life-sized stuffed animal.

ACO’s Dainelis and Jensen got a good laugh from it, and decided to pose for a couple of quick pictures. The posting on the IC Pawz at the Kent County Animal Shelter Facebook page was shared and eventually viewed by tens of thousands, and the story ended up in local media. Associated Press sent the story to newsrooms nationwide, and ABC World News Tonight with David Muir ran the story as well. Even with all of the media attention, no one came forward to claim the Tiger.

Last week, Samantha Atkins of Florida saw the story on Facebook, when her daughter noticed the Tiger. She contacted the Kent County Animal Shelter. Her message read, in part:

“My husband passed away last year, and he had a stuffed tiger that looked identical to that, sitting in the same position. My then 5 year old daughter, Faith, decided she wanted to keep (something) of her daddy’s. Well, I bought a used couch after relocating and the couch was infested with bed bugs. We had to get everything professionally treated, and sadly, the tiger didn’t make it through the bed bug treatments. I have promised my daughter that I will find another one, but have not been successful in doing so. I would find a way to pay whatever the asking price is for it to give my little girl a piece of her daddy back.”

“I read the email and my heart sank,” said Joe Dainelis. “I have a young daughter and can’t imagine how hard it was on Faith to lose her Daddy. I knew we needed to get that Tiger to Florida.” Joe washed the Tiger, then contacted the Animal Emergency Hospital to get help sewing up a few rough spots (see attached photos). “AEH did a fantastic job getting the Tiger ready for this big trip!” Dainelis added. Dainelis surprised Samantha and Faith via Skype, letting them know that the Shelter Staff decided to give her the tiger on June 9.

###

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

700 FULLER AVE. NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503