

Pick up your poo

BY NICOLE MINIER

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COLUMBIA CITY — Columbia City officials are calling for pet owners to take more responsibility for animal feces on public property.

"I took a walk and it is ridiculous how much people are not picking up after themselves," Columbia City Mayor Ryan Daniel said at last week's council meeting. "Any responsible dog owner should be walking with a bag in their pocket. Period."

There's even a city ordinance against it.

"It's very clear that it's the owner's responsibility to pick up after their animal."

Daniel said he's received complains about animal feces at the parks and downtown areas, such as the Thomas Marshall Plaza alley park.

"Note to residents — pick up after your dogs," he said.

Columbia City Parks Director Mark Green said the parks department will be installing two "doggie stations" at the parks — making it easier for pet owners to clean up after their animals. The stations come at a cost of \$500 per station.

The parks department has other updates on the way, including an update to the bathroom facilities at Morsches Park — which should lead to the elimination of portable bathrooms that are currently located outside the concession stand.

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Whitko art student Morgan Dyck's colored pencil piece, "Peaking at the Pandemic," received national recognition.

Whitko student receives national recognition

BY NICOLE MINIER

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SOUTH WHITLEY — A Whitko High School student has been named one of the top artists in the nation.

Morgan Dyck earned a National GOLD Medal in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards of 2020.

She has been identified by panels of creative professionals as the most talented young artists and writers in the nation.

This year, more than 80,000 students submitted nearly 230,000 works of art and writing. Only 2,000 works received a National Medal, which places Dyck within the top 1% of all submissions.

Dyck's colored pencil piece, "Peaking at the Pandemic" will be published in the Online Galleries at artandwriting.org in June.

Her name will also be listed in the Yearbook 2021, a companion publication to The Best Teen Art and

The Best Teen Writing anthologies which feature a selection of work by National Medalists.

"Winning a national award is an impressive acknowledgement to our art program and reflects our students pursuit for excellence," said Whitko Art teacher, Daniel Malicki.

The Whitko High School Art Department has won 44 National Awards to date.

Earlier in the year, Whitko Jr./Sr. High School students continued their tradition of success, winning 11 Scholastic Awards; five Gold Keys (National Finalist), one Silver Key and 10 Honorable Mentions (Outstanding Regional Awards).

For highlights, Dyck received three scholastic art awards total; one gold key and two Honorable Mentions. The five gold key winners' art pieces will now proceed to National Adjudication in New York City.

City police conducting school bus safety patrols

KPC NEWS SERVICE

COLUMBIA CITY — Columbia City's Police Department is ramping up enforcement this spring to protect students going to and from school.

Over the next couple of months, officers will be positioned along bus stops and routes watching for stop-arm violations and unsafe driving behavior.

The overtime patrols are funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration through the state's Stop Arm Violation Enforcement (SAVE) program, which was developed by the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute in 2019.

"Disregarding a school bus stop arm is a very dangerous and serious offense," said Gary Parret, with the Columbia City Police Department. "We want students to arrive to school and return home safely, which is why we're asking all motorists to drive cautiously around buses or face the consequences."

The department joins more than 200 around the state for

the spring enforcement campaign, designed to encourage motorists to stop for school buses. High-visibility patrols will be conducted in the morning and afternoon along routes identified by local bus drivers and school transportation officials.

While officers will be focusing on stop-arm violations, they will also be on the lookout for any unsafe driving behavior such as speeding and distracted driving.

"We still have far too many people speeding and not paying attention to the road," said Devon McDonald, ICJI executive director. "One glance at your phone is all it takes to cause a tragedy."

"Children are unpredictable, so it's important to stay alert and be prepared to stop at all times."

In Indiana, it's against the law for motorists to pass a bus that's stopped and has its red lights flashing and stop-arm extended.

This applies to all roads, with one exception. Motorists

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Indiana opens vaccine to anyone 16 or older

BY STEVE GARBACZ

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Indiana officials took a moment March 24 to recognize that 1 million Hoosiers have now become fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

It's a big step, but state leaders recognize there's still a lot of work ahead.

"We're on the cusp of another major milestone here in Indiana, that means we're going to celebrate vaccinating our 1 millionth Hoosier, fully," Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb said. "We are not just on the road to recovery, we're onward and upward."

As has been the case for the last few months, more updates and announcements about vaccine distribution were the main focus of the most recent statewide COVID-19 press conference.

Holcomb scooped himself, to some respect, after giving a statewide address on Tuesday — the one-year anniversary of Indiana's stay-at-home order being announced on March 23, 2020 — during which he announced that as of March 31, vaccines will be opened up to any Hoosiers age 16 and above.

That change will open up vaccines to most of the state's population, although Indiana State Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box noted that clinical trials in younger people are still ongoing and, if that goes well, it could lead to authorization of vaccines to children age 12 and older.

Children younger than 12, however, might not be authorized for vaccines for many more months, Box said.

The good news is that children have seen relatively minor impacts from COVID-19 as compared to older people.

The vast majority of young people have minor or no symptoms from COVID-19 and deaths among people younger than 18 are exceptionally rare.

"It's unrealistic to think that children under the age of 12 will be eligible for vaccine for some time," Box said.

Because of that, it's important for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings all to get vaccinated in order to provide protection to those younger children in their household, Box

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