

TRUE STORIES

MASSACHUSETTS COMPANY SETTLES DOG- LEASING ALLEGATIONS

A California-based finance company has agreed to pay more than \$900,000 to settle allegations that it was illegally leasing dogs in Massachusetts, the state attorney general's office said.

As part of the agreement entered in Suffolk Superior Court on Wednesday, Monterey Financial Services LLC will stop collecting on active leases, cancel about \$700,000 in outstanding consumer debt on 211 dog leases — about \$3,300 owed per lease — and transfer full ownership of the dogs to Massachusetts residents, authorities said.

The company will also provide \$175,000 in restitution to consumers and pay \$50,000 to the state.

Leasing dogs is illegal in Massachusetts and can often be an expensive way to own a pet because of high finance charges, according to the attorney general.

Authorities had alleged that the Oceanside, California, firm violated Massachusetts consumer protection laws by purchasing and collecting on leases for dogs and engaged in illegal practices to collect outstanding balances on those leases.

Monterey in a statement Thursday said it stood by its record of “high levels of performance for our clients, low consumer complaint ratios, and a deep-rooted dedication to customer service.”

TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET

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Telluride Daily Planet is owned and operated by
Telluride Local Media, LLC
P.O. Box 2315, Telluride, Colorado 81435.
Phone: 970-728-9788
Online edition: www.tellurideneews.com

Telluride Daily Planet (Incorporating the
Telluride Times/Times-Journal, 1898-1998) (USPS
5373-60) (ISSN 1085-1704) is published by
Telluride Local Media, LLC in Telluride, Colorado
81435. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Telluride
Daily Planet, P.O. Box 2315, Telluride, Colorado 81435.
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The View

Celebrating Earth Day

In the 1970s, the United States passed a slew of acts in the interest of protecting clean water, clean air, endangered species and our forests in creating the Environmental Protection Agency and establishing the first Earth Day.

A lot has changed from the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, to today. Climate science, renewable energy technologies and electric vehicles are significantly more advanced. Al Gore released “An Inconvenient Truth,” and the young activist Greta Thunberg sparked an ongoing, global environmental movement. On the other hand, the global population has increased by over 4 billion people, and our world is still heavily dependent on fossil fuels.

This is why Earth Day is so important. It provides the opportunity to reflect on our connection with nature and the impact of our daily decisions and personal goals. It is easy to look at the science and feel afraid, overwhelmed or helpless (or all the above). My hope in writing this is that you feel heard, encouraged and more knowledgeable about the actions local government is taking to address climate change and empowered to act.

You may have heard that climate change will have severe effects on mountain towns, particularly ski towns. Colorado is already experiencing these impacts. As outdoor recreation and tourism are major economic drivers, tackling climate change is a priority for our local, regional and state governments. In my role as the environmental efficiencies and grant coordinator for the Town of Mountain Village, I'd like to summarize key steps the town is taking to address our environmental impact.

The Town of Mountain Village has a goal of being carbon neutral by 2050 and zero waste by 2030. If you live in Mountain Village, the following initiatives and incentive programs are available to you to help meet these goals, reduce your carbon footprint and conserve natural resources.

Solar Energy Incentive Program: Mountain Village partnered with San Miguel County in 2022 to expand solar co-op membership to all county residents. The co-op is accepting new members through May 1. If you are thinking about installing solar on your property, sign up today to learn more.

Solid waste diversion: Plastic packaging and film recycling is available outside of Town Hall. The Village Court Apartments Pilot Composting Program is a

one-year, pilot composting program that will soon be introduced to VCA residents this summer in partnership with Dirty Sturdy's Mountain Compost. The Single-Use Plastics Reduction Ordinance, in collaboration with the Green Team, town staff will propose to ban single-use plastic bags and Styrofoam takeout containers and implement a bag fee. A Community Clean Up Day this summer will be announced soon.

Wildfire mitigation: The Wildfire Mitigation Defensible Space and Cedar Shake Incentive programs are currently open. When used together, a building's survival rate increases to about 99 percent when threatened by wildfire.

Smart Irrigation Controls Program: This year, free irrigation assessments will be available thanks to a grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

While Mountain Village continues to make great strides, we cannot do it alone. At a recent sustainability symposium, environmentalist and author Paul Hawken discussed the importance of communicating with each other, stating that we need to “do this with respect and understanding, and not blame.” We can always be doing more, as there is always more to do. Sustainability is a journey that we are all on together. While some are further along in this journey, we need to continue to support and educate each other in a productive manner.

If you're looking for community connection this Earth Day, the Wilkinson Public Library is hosting an Earth Day Extravaganza. Consider getting a group together to pick up trash in your neighborhood or picking up trash along your walk or hike. Watch a documentary or show on a topic of your choice. Teach your kids the proper way to recycle or about the local wildlife. The possibilities are endless.

This Earth Day, I urge you to reflect on what matters most to you and how your connection with nature ties into that. Reflect on your daily choices, why you make those choices and consider that one's choices are due to individual circumstances. Take time to go outside and observe your surroundings. Dr. Heidi Steltzer said that “Earth is magical ... the mountains are magical.” Hawken stated, “Regeneration to me is about falling in love with the world.”

I hope that this Earth Day you reconnect with nature, find the magic in it and fall in love with it.

LAUREN KIERN
MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

Editor's Note:

The View is a space in the *Telluride Daily Planet* for local voices on local matters. We're always looking for more opinions and more voices in our pages, so if you've got something to say we'd love to hear it. Guest opinions should be about 750 words long and, as always, not contain any personal attacks. Please include picture and a tagline, with general information about the author. This is your space — use it. Questions? Manuscripts? E-mail: Editor@telluridedailyplanet.com

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