Local pet store owner making a difference, one child at a time

Last month, Oakland County Commissioner Shelley Goodman Taub presented Mike Palmer a proclamation for his contributions to Birmingham Youth Assistance, as well as the community. Palmer is the owner of Premier Pet Supply in Beverly Hills. (Photo provided)

BEVERLY HILLS — While Premier Pet Supply offers a slew of necessities for local residents, what they provide to the community as a whole stretches far beyond the bowl.

With a recent notable recognition and the upcoming grand opening of their second location, Mike Palmer and his team at Premier Pet Supply have a lot to be proud of these days.

As an owner of one of the highest-volume, independently owned pet stores in the Midwest, Palmer now has another accomplishment under his belt.

Last month, Oakland County Commissioner Shelley Goodman Taub presented Palmer a proclamation to for his contributions to Birmingham Youth Assistance, as well as the community. The announcement was made during Birmingham Youth Assistance’s 34th annual Kids’ Dog Show at Berkshire Middle School.

“Mike Palmer has been such an amazing supporter of BYA that we recognized him as Birmingham Youth Assistance Champion of the Year,” said Christine Gannon, chairperson of BYA. “(Palmer) has been
involved with the Kids’ Dog Show for at least 15 years. He supports the event with generous financial and in-kind contributions, and also dedicates many hours of his personal time helping to organize the event. The Kids’ Dog Show could never have become such a popular and successful event for the community without (Palmer’s) over-and-above support.”

BYA is a partnership of the Oakland County Circuit Court Family Division, the Birmingham School District, the city of Birmingham, and the villages of Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms and Franklin.

In addition to professional counseling of referred youth and families, BYA offers community and school initiatives such as parenting education programs, camp scholarships, youth mentoring and school programs that help prevent juvenile delinquency.

All of the BYA programs and family events are offered through the coordination of a group of passionate volunteers, with Palmer being one of them.

“It was really nice to be acknowledged,” said Palmer, who was pleasantly blindsided by the announcement. “It was such a fantastic feeling. Everything I do, I don’t do it to be acknowledged, that’s never the reason. I just want to take care of people. It’s a no-brainer to be involved.

“What (the store does) isn’t difficult. We stay active in the community, and they give back. I truly feel all the successes we have is a testament to the community we’re in.”

And the community in reference will soon expand its reach. Palmer is pleased to announce they will open a second Premier Pet Supply location this summer at the corner of Rochester and Auburn roads in Rochester Hills, and Palmer is ecstatic about the arrival.

“We’re really excited to be in the community, and being so close to the Michigan Humane Society and the Leader Dogs for the Blind — both of which we do a lot of work with — we’ve really found the right location,” Palmer said, explaining that the new store will also offer the hometown feel of the Beverly Hills location. “We don’t want to be a big chain store; we’re still an owner-operated business. We will never compromise our level of service.”

Palmer said he’s also looking forward to delving into the culture of Rochester Hills, including doing presentations at local schools.

“There’s still a lot I need to learn about the community, but I’m excited. The presentations are an opportunity to talk with the kids and impress upon them that a lot of work comes with owning pets. If we can inform the kids and educate people, it may result in less animals being surrendered at shelters,” he said.

Palmer also offers children the opportunity to practice what he preaches with a little hands-on experience with four-legged friends.

By teaming with Birmingham Public Schools, the store now employs two autistic part-time employees and offers a program that invites children ages 8-12 to work in the store.

“We give the kids tasks like cleaning cages, filling food dishes, playing with the animals, and they get to wear a Premier Pet Supply shirt. They really take pride in it, and it makes me happy knowing they’ll always remember Premier Pet Supply as being their first job,” he said, explaining that experience in a retail environment also helps children establish a work ethic and develop social skills. “It’s my small way of shaping and molding them into a great, hardworking employee.”

Palmer’s program currently has a yearlong waiting list.
Alongside the work he does with children, Palmer also pays attention to friends of the furry kind. Premier hosts weekly pet adoptions for several local rescue groups, and in the past decade has helped facilitate the adoption of over 3,000 cats and dogs.

In 2010, he partnered with a 9-year old who wanted to help families that could not afford to feed their pets. Together, they created the Birmingham Pet Pantry, which has to date collected over 20,000 pounds of food for distribution through Gleaners Community Food Bank and the Michigan Animal Care Network.

And, in 2012, Palmer was recognized by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson as one of his “Elite 40 Under 40.”

Yet, amidst the whirlwind of positive recognition, Palmer remains humble and fails to see his behavior as extraordinary.

“I just don’t think of it that way; that’s not the way I was raised,” he said. “I believe a person’s character is based on what they’re doing when no one is looking.”

Premier Pet Supply is located at 31215 Southfield Road, just north of 13 Mile Road, in Beverly Hills. For more information, visit www.premierpetsupply.com. For more information on Birmingham Youth Assistance, visit www.birminghamyouthassistance.org.