

Operations Manager Outmaneuvers the Birds – Twice.

By R.W. Delaney, Business Writer

Picture an idyllic 30 acres of woods and water with two large low-rise structures occupying about half of the property. One of the buildings is a rehab hospital with 184 beds; the other is a hospice care center. Together, the two buildings encompass nearly 220,000 square feet.

This is St. Francis Health Care Centre in Green Springs, Ohio. It is a rural facility specializing in physical therapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy. St. Francis includes long-term care, acute care, skilled care and a nursing home facility. From the outside, this could just as easily be a corporate complex, a university campus, or an administrative center.

So far, so good.

Cry Foul, the Waterfowl.

Add to this tranquil setting the world's largest sulphur springs, which spout one million gallons of water per day, and which never freeze.

The springs are not only a scenic attraction, but also a major magnet for ducks and Canada geese. In fact, the environment is so pleasing to geese that they have

stopped their usual migration to the South. They now winter over in the warmth and abundance of the springs.

The number of the geese has compounded every year. “It has always been a problem,” says Duane Kimmet, Plant Operations Director and Safety Officer for St. Francis Health Care Centre, “and it has been getting worse in the last three or four years.” And the problem is year-round, he adds.

The springs and resulting pond are easily accessible, so people feed the geese. “This was unsanitary. We ordered signs,” Kimmet reports, “saying ‘Please don’t feed the geese.’” But people are only human.

Unsightly and Unhealthy.

“Ducks aren’t a bother,” Kimmet continues, “but geese are more aggressive, especially around our main building. And their droppings accumulate on our sidewalks, driveway and in the parking lot.” His crew was scraping off the mess once or twice a week, as it recurred week after week.

“The geese were causing unsightly and unsanitary conditions,” Kimmet summarizes – not a good combination anywhere, but especially gross around vulnerable patients in medical facilities. Kimmet was concerned for everyone’s safety when the geese population reached 100. “Visitors and staff were tracking the droppings throughout our main building,” he notes.

Herding the Geese.

Kimmet went on the Internet to see what the Division of Wildlife suggested. The website offered some scare tactics, Kimmet says, such as hanging balloons with big eyes or using miniature boats to chase the geese on water. “I rejected those,” Kimmet says. Much earlier in his career, Kimmet had been an animal trapper – recovering animals such as groundhogs in town and relocating them back into the wild. He knew animals, and he knew it would take more than scary eyes or a toy boat to deter the geese.

That’s when Kimmet remembered Bird-X, Inc., the Chicago-based pest control manufacturer and distributor.

By now, Kimmet knew the full consequences of the resident geese population, as he saw people dragging the droppings on their shoes into the facilities. He recognized the potential hazards posed by slippery surfaces and the increased possibility of disease and bacteria from the tracked-in bird poop. He even imagined the possibility of aggressive geese attacking a visitor, causing a person to stumble and fall or to flee in front of an oncoming car. A bad scene, to say the least.

He wasted no time. “Bird-X has a product that’s made from Concord grapes.” Called GooseChase™, it repels geese but doesn’t harm them, he says. It

is simply totally distasteful to them. He explains how his crew made a few passes across the area around our main facility with a hand pump sprayer. The geese stopped coming. “The geese now stay in an area that doesn’t cause problems for us – in fact some of them now reside at a property across the road – though I know I could get rid of them from anywhere I sprayed,” Kimmet says. The amount of droppings plummeted immediately. His clean-up costs plummeted substantially, too.

Since then, his crew has sprayed GooseChase™ on the grass two more times. It’s easy and it works. It’s a concentrate used in a 15-to-1 ratio with water. “It’s not tricky,” he says.

However, years earlier, Kimmet had another bird problem that GooseChase wouldn’t solve: Sparrows.

Birds Overhead.

Sparrows filled the trees in a courtyard where patients came outside to sit. “The sparrows were noisy and messy,” states Kimmet. There were several hundred of them. “In the evening, they squawked so loudly that you couldn’t carry on a

conversation. Their droppings were everywhere,” he recalls. It was not a tolerable situation for patients, staff or visitors.

“We applied an anti-roosting compound made by Bird-X,” he says. “You spray it right on the trees – ideally, after the leaves fall off in the autumn. It’s non-toxic, but it creates a sticky feeling on the birds’ feet.” Anti-roosting, indeed. “We sprayed it once and it lasted the whole year,” he says approvingly. “And it worked instantaneously from the very first night. The sparrows stopped roosting in those trees.”

Kimmet has been with St. Francis for 15 years. As operations manager, he gets an array of problems dumped in his lap every year. From all appearances, the problems with birds have been permanently solved, leaving him with extra time to tackle any number of other predicaments.

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