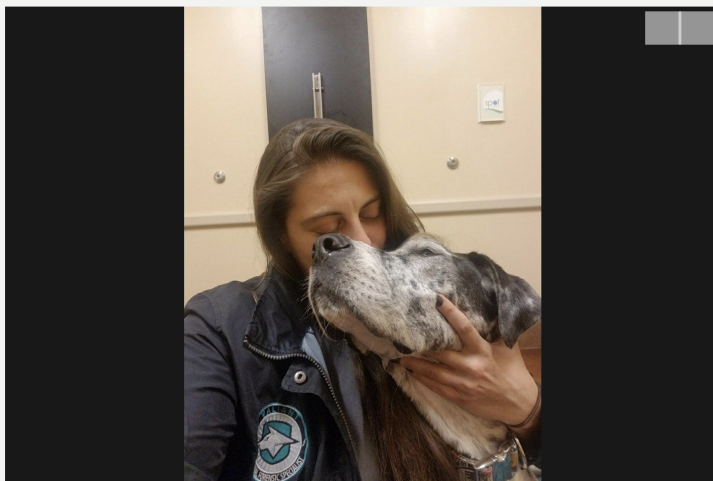


TOP STORY

Animal forensics investigator provides a useful tool to law enforcement

BY STEPHANIE BARNA SBARNA@POSTANDCOURIER.COM
JUL 23, 2018 UPDATED 3 HRS AGO (1)



Michelle Reid (with Rico) is the only animal forensics specialist in South Carolina and works with law enforcement across the state. Provided

SUBSCRIBE FOR \$2.98 / WEEK



Sickly goats with matted hair. Ungelded mules. More than 100 sick dogs and puppies suffering in a puppy mill. Malnourished horses. The cases that Michelle Reid of Valiant Animal Rescue and Relief investigates range from inhumane treatment to downright cruelty.

Sovereign
STILL

Luxury New Construction
on James Island

CLICK HERE TO
LEARN MORE

NEW LEAF
HOLDINGS

Caitlyn the pit bull made national headlines when she was found in Charleston with her blackened tongue sticking out of her duct-taped muzzle, but Reid said while Caitlyn's case was horrible, it doesn't come close to the cruelty she's seen.

"I've worked the largest cockfighting case in South Carolina, which is still an open investigation, dog-fighting cases, bestiality, torture, strangulation," she said. "Sometimes it's difficult. My focus when I'm on a scene is doing the best job I can to give those animals a voice. It's not until I get off that it hits me, but I do enjoy getting those animals out of the situation, and I enjoy making (the perpetrators) go to jail and be held accountable."



Jeremy was thrown over a fence into a vacant lot. His case is still under investigation. Provided

A few weeks ago, she scooped up a small pit bull after a report that a Sumter County man threw a dog over a fence into a vacant lot.

Reid, the only animal forensics specialist in the state who consults with multiple

SCE&G Residential Electric Customers:

\$1.7 billion
in nuclear
debt paid
off.

Dominion
Energy

MOST POPULAR

ARTICLES

Residents asking feds to investigate Charleston for failure to protect against flood risks

Charleston green card officers told to keep doing their jobs amid national immigration anxiety

South Carolina, Clemson going head-to-head for prized defensive lineman

Did you hear that loud boom along the SC coast? Here's what it likely was.

Clemson responds to viral video of Christian Wilkins lap dancing at Ladies Clinic

Conductor in fatal SC train crash said safety declined under CSX turnaround plan

The man behind South Carolina Memes stumbled into some viral hits

Two loaded guns discovered at Charleston airport Monday

South Carolina Gamecocks need young defensive backs to grow up quickly

Ron and Natalie Daise, famous for 'Gullah Gullah Island,' keep up the storytelling

SCE&G Residential Electric Customers:

Dominion Energy
has a plan.

Find out more

Dominion
Energy

law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, was called in to work the case. When she found the dog, Jeremy, he was in terrible shape.

“He was skin and bones, just emaciated. He was weak and had a large wound on his back that was full of maggots,” she said. “He was in awful shape. I’ve never seen so many maggots on one animal before.”

He was taken to an emergency vet in Mount Pleasant for his wound to be cleaned. He needed multiple transfusions and surgery. His case is graphically documented on the [Valiant’s Facebook page](#) as a way to show people what Reid deals with on a daily basis.

Once animals are stabilized, Valiant places them in foster care where they can be rehabilitated and prepared for adoption.

Reid is the Valiant’s only employee, but she has a close-knit group of volunteers and foster homes that help her once the animals are rescued. She also relies on private donors to fund her work once the animals are taken.

Without someone with Reid’s expertise in handling abuse cases, Lt. Freddie Bradshaw of the Sumter Police Department’s Organized Crime and Vice Control Unit said law enforcement would be at a loss. “Our forensics people would not be able to (process these cruelty cases).”

Another Sumter Police Department detective Sgt. Joe Lane said he’s watched her use equipment that could find dead dogs that were buried.

“Normally, we run into dogs that have been abused when we have served drug warrants,” he said. “Valiant has brought their expertise and were able to help us in ways we did not have the expertise or the equipment to do.”

Reid has slowly built her business and trained extensively. “Everything from forensic training to working with the Miami-Dade medical examiner, I’ve done a lot of training, and I work strictly with law enforcement.”

She not only processes animal crime scenes but also examines evidence in a working lab where it can be stored. “We maintain a chain of custody,” she said. “It’s under lock and key with 24-hour surveillance and the lab has cold storage.”

In Sumter County, Bradshaw said he had Reid provide a synopsis of her credentials and expertise and presented it to the judge before she even processed a crime scene, “so when we got to warrants, he’d know who we were dealing with.”

One high-profile abuse case that Reid worked was Brick’s in Williamsburg County in 2016. The pit bull’s owner had cut the dog’s ears off and posted pictures of him on Facebook. Reid says the crime scene had been cleaned along with the scissors used. “I found blood on the inside of the scissors and also fingerprints,” she said. “I used luminol to make the blood show up. And then I presented my findings to the sheriff.”

That offender was prosecuted for ill treatment of animals and was sentenced to five years, a victory for Reid, who, despite the toll that working with abused animals can take, loves her work because she can help animals.

“I’ve always felt that it’s important for people be held accountable for cruelty to animals and children,” she said. “Because if people are able to hurt an animal, they are able to hurt people.”

In June, a 70-year-old woman in Florence County named Donna Keller Lee was indicted on 39 counts of ill treatment of animals after Valiant helped rescue 133 dogs that were in bad shape, infested with parasites, mange, and bacterial infections. Some of the dogs were pregnant.

“The Donna Lee case was a large-scale commercial breeder case,” Reid said. “I removed the animals, and I did all the animal documentation. We got a direct indictment, which is amazing and unheard of. She was originally selling them online and at the flea market, where there’s no oversight. We’re trying to get flea markets to stop selling animals period.”

As the only animal forensics specialist in the state, Reid spends her days driving from one end of the state to the other and said her organization relies on donations to help pay the vet bills, which are astronomical.

“I don’t have time to run to the news every time we save an animal,” she said. “It’s difficult to look at your budget, and you can potentially save over 200 animals or



PREV



NEXT

you can hire a marketer. I'm going to help the animals.”

Sign up for our daily newsletter

Get the best of The Post and Courier, handpicked and delivered to your inbox every morning.

* Email

By submitting this form, you are consenting to receive marketing emails from: The Post and Courier, 134 Columbus Street, Charleston, SC, 29403, US, <https://www.postandcourier.com>. You can revoke your consent to receive emails at any time by using the [SafeUnsubscribe®](#) link, found at the bottom of every email. **Emails are serviced by Constant Contact.**

Sign Up!

Follow Stephanie Barna on Twitter @stefbarna.



TAGS **MICHELLE REID** **FREDDIE BRADSHAW** **SUMTER POLICE DEPARTMENT'S ORGANIZED CRIME AND VICE CONTROL UNIT**
ANIMAL FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR **DONNA KELLER LEE** **ANIMAL FORENSICS SPECIALIST** **VALIANT ANIMAL RESCUE**

Stephanie Barna



[★ FOLLOW STEPHANIE BARNA](#)

Similar stories from The Post and Courier

<p>Shark fishing in South Carolina allows an up-close</p>	<p>sponsored content</p> <p>South Carolina's Past: Concept of New Restaurant in</p>	<p>Animal advocates question city's presence at conference</p>
---	---	--

This Week's Circulars

<p>Hover for Circular</p>	<p>Hover for Circular</p>	<p>Hover for Circular</p>
---------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------

Powered by

0 Comments

Sort by [Oldest](#)



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

SCE&G Residential Electric Customers:		
--	--	--

SITE LINKS

- About
- Staff
- Mobile Apps
- Newsletters
- Become a member
- Place an Ad
- Advertising Rates
- Editorial
- Classifieds
- RSS Feed

RELATED PROPERTIES

- Aiken Standard - Aiken, SC
- Georgetown Times - Georgetown, SC
- South Strand News - Pawleys Island & Murrells Inlet, SC
- The Gazette - Goose Creek, SC
- The News - Kingstree, SC
- The Berkeley Independent - Moncks Corner, SC
- Moultrie News - Mount Pleasant, SC
- The Star - North Augusta, SC
- Journal Scene - Summerville, SC
- Free Times - Columbia, SC
- Evening Post Books - Charleston, SC

The Post and Courier

FOUNDED 1802 WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

CONTACT INFORMATION

Post and Courier
134 Columbus Street
Charleston, SC 29403

Phone: 843-577-7111

News tips/online questions:
webteam@postandcourier.com

Delivery/subscription questions:
subserve@postandcourier.com

FOLLOW US

