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Commissioners have say on elevated road

By Michael Hinman
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Pasco County Commissioners are being asked to give an early blessing to a proposed elevated road project along the State Road 54/56 corridor ... and they just might do it.

A nonbinding resolution about the unsolicited proposal was part of the commission's Tuesday meeting, which took place before The Laker/Lutz News press deadline. The goal was to help Florida Department of Transportation officials get a clear look at where commissioners stand on

the project that could exceed \$2 billion. That is, even though the commission's approval is not necessary for it to move forward.

"What DOT wants to know is if we're still onboard doing this thing," said Richard Gehring, the county's planning and development administrator. "The DOT and the county have a lot of partnering history in putting this together and working on it. And basically, we already have \$1 million out there in the corridor with detailed studies we've done there."

International Infrastructure Partners Inc. brought the idea of building a 33-mile ele-

vated road — similar to what was constructed over the Lee Roy Selmon Expressway in Hillsborough County — earlier this year. It would be primarily a private venture, with IIP earning long-term profits through tolls.

FDOT had originally set a deadline of last October to receive competing proposals on such a project, but delayed it just ahead of the deadline until Dec. 9 after IIP asked for more time.

Part of that reason was because the Urban Land Institute, the independent growth and development analytical group

See ROAD, page 16



Jeff Wilson never pictured himself as a novelist, but he has actually discovered that, for him, writing a novel is easier than writing a short story. (Photo by B.C. Manion)

Novel 'The Donors' draws on diverse experiences

By B.C. Manion
bcmalion@cnewspubs.com

Jeff Wilson never pictured himself as a novelist.

An avid reader and writer for his entire life, the New Tampa man viewed himself as a short story writer. As someone who has pursued many different career paths in life, Wilson honestly didn't think he had the attention span to develop an idea into a full-length novel.

He knows now — as he launches into his sixth novel — that, for him, writing a book is actually easier than writing a short story. A novel gives him more time and space to develop the characters he creates, he explained.

Recently, his novel "The Donors" received a Gold Medal in the Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror category in the Military Writers Society of America's Book Awards. His 246-page book fuses elements of horror, medical suspense and the supernatural.

The award is especially meaningful because it comes from authors who have an appreciation for the sacrifices and dedica-

See NOVEL, page 16

Charlie Daniels makes local fundraising stop

By Michael Hinman
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Charlie Daniels may play a mean fiddle, but how is he with a shotgun?

The Grand Ole Opry legend is making his annual trip back to the Tampa Bay area, once again to raise money for The Angelus — a group home in Hudson. But this time, his fundraising tour is going to include Land O' Lakes.

The Charlie Daniels Sporting Clay Shootout is scheduled for Dec. 7 at Tampa Bay Sporting Clays, 10514 Ehren Cutoff. It will not only include Daniels, but some of his other celebrity friends like the stars of Discovery's "The Deadliest Catch," as well as R.J. Molinere Jr., and Jay Paul Molinere

from "Swamp People" on History.

And a former Tampa Bay Buccaneer player or two could show up as well.

"It's just going to be a lot of fun," said Tammy Williams, who has helped organize events like this for The Angelus for more years than she cares to share. "All of this is for an amazing cause, as we can use every dollar we raise this weekend."

The residential facility set on 17 wooded acres in Pasco County was designed for the severely handicapped — all 32 of its residents are wheelchair-bound. It has five group homes, a day program, a wood shop, a pool, miniature horses, and even a rustic log cabin

See DANIELS, page 16



Charlie Daniels holds hands with one of the residents of The Angelus during a Sunday service at Charlie's Lodge, a volunteer-built cabin on the facility's Hudson campus, named in his honor. (Photo courtesy of The Angelus)

Saint Anthony School builds on optimism

By B.C. Manion
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There was a time, not many years ago, when the future appeared uncertain for Saint Anthony School in San Antonio.

Attendance had dwindled to 153, and there was talk of shutting down the elementary school.

"At that point, when the enrollment was really low, a group of parents rolled up their sleeves and went to work in every way they could (to) get the word out about the school," said Will Plazewski, whose son represents the fourth generation of his family to attend Saint Anthony. "It was amazing that even though the school has been here for 129 years, how many people in East Pasco County had no idea that it existed."

Parents spread the word, and a 15-second commercial at the Cobb Grove 16 in Wesley Chapel also helped attract students, he said.

Sister Alice Ottapurackal, the school's principal, attributes the turnaround to a higher power.

"The enrollment went up — God's special blessing," she said. "Truly, I believe, it's the power of prayer."

Now, enrollment stands at 213, and prospects for future growth are so bright that ground was broken on Nov. 17 for a new building. The new structure will accommodate 270 students.

Instead of lamenting the closure of a school that enjoys a rich heritage, Saint Anthony School is now celebrating a new chapter in its history. About 200 people turned out for the groundbreaking festivities, Plazewski said.

Construction on the new 17,905-square-foot building is expected to begin Dec. 1,



This school building, erected in 1922, will remain and a new school building will be built behind it. The old building will continue to house some of the school's functions. (Photo by B.C. Manion)

and be ready for use by next fall. The new three-story brick structure will be situated on a space now occupied by five portable classrooms.

Even with the new building, the school will continue to emphasize academic excellence while teaching the Catholic faith, the principal said.

"All day long, we are teaching them about Jesus," Ottapurackal said. "It is so important, especially nowadays, when you don't see a lot of support in society about faith."

Helping children form their faith is fundamental, the principal said.

"Once you have God in you, the other things will come," Ottapurackal said. "Our focus is on whole child education, not only intellectual, but spiritual, moral, social, (and) emotional aspects of the children."

Teachers know their students well, the principal added.

"Our teachers are well-connected with them because of the family atmosphere we have here," she said.

Saint Anthony School serves kindergarten through eighth grade. Tuition is \$4,375 for practicing Catholics and \$5,075 for others. Since 2000, the school has produced 14 valedictorians and salutatorians at



Sister Alice Ottapurackal is the principal of Saint Anthony School. She is optimistic about its future growth. (Photo by B.C. Manion)

area high schools, Plazewski said.

Parents who are interested in pursuing a Catholic education for their children should not be discouraged by the tuition, Ottapurackal said. Assistance is available in various forms.

"Catholic education should be for any group of people, whether they are rich or poor, regardless of race," the principal added.

Unlike previous buildings that were constructed on the school campus, this one will be an additional building, not a replacement. The existing brick structure, built in 1922, will remain and will be used for some school functions.

The new building will be the fourth in the school's history. The current building replaced a two-story structure built in 1899. The original building was a 12-by-24-foot structure constructed in November 1884.

Not only is Saint Anthony School the oldest parochial school in the diocese, it's also one of the oldest Catholic schools in Florida, Plazewski said.

"It is by far the oldest school in Pasco County of any kind," he said. "The only thing that's close to it is Saint Leo University."

San Antonio was founded in 1882 as a Catholic colony. The following year, a widowed woman named Cecilia Morse moved into the community with her six children.

When she inquired about the school, she was told it could wait until there were more settlers, Plazewski said. Morse reportedly responded that the "minds of the children now here, can't wait."

With that, the widow began teaching 14 children, including six of her own, in her kitchen.

Today, Saint Anthony School draws students from San Antonio, Dade City, Zephyrhills, Brooksville, Land O' Lakes, New Tampa and other communities.

And, its new building sends a clear signal that the school intends to be there for many years to come.



These children help break ground for a new school building to house Saint Anthony School. The new facility will be able to accommodate 270 students. (Photo courtesy of Saint Anthony School)

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Contempo students r eady to dance for Rockettes

By Michael Hinman
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The Rockettes have high-kicked their way on dance stages around the world since 1925. And for the first time in seven years, they'll bring their famous precision dance moves to Tampa's Straz Center.

Before they take the stage Dec. 27 and Dec. 28, however, they'll have an opening act filled with faces many should recognize: a team from Contempo School of Dance on State Road 54 in Lutz.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance for us to dance," said school founder Lani Gunn.

The team had just five weeks to learn their routine, which lasts a little more than 2 minutes and 30 seconds, using music provided by The Rockettes. It will involve 32 dancers in all, who will not only take the stage to tease The Rockettes' performance — but they will have front row seats for the main attraction as well.

Most, if not all, of the students performing that holiday weekend will watch The Rockettes for the first time. And that includes Gunn.

"I have their DVD. I've just never seen them in person," she said.

The school caught the attention of the New York City Dance Alliance, a dance convention group founded in 1993, through its success at various competitions. The alliance will earn a portion of the ticket proceeds for its scholarship fund to help get dancers into school by anyone who purchases their ticket with the promotional code "NYCDA9."

The teams get just one hour a week to practice together, but they're also spending a few good hours each week practicing on their own at home.

"The steps that they are learning, they have learned over the years," Gunn said. "It's not like they can just learn it in five practices."



Contempo School of Dance instructor Kathleen Beach runs the dancers through the routine planned for their Rockettes performance on Dec. 27 and Dec. 28. Joining her are Omar Brito, Madison Blocher, Sydney Bruen, Caleigh Hayes and Kelsey Bogнар. (Photos by Michael Hinman)

Which means for all the dancers, this was a performance years in the making. Erika Hanzelka has danced at Contempo since 2007.

"My friend just told me to start coming here, and I loved it so much, I started to take more and more classes every year," the 11-year-old said.

Other members of her team have been dancing even longer, like Whitney Herd, 12, who started at Contempo when she was 2 years old as part of the studios' "Mommy and Me" program.

"I always find myself doing tap dances around my house," Herd said. "With dance, you can express your emotions and kind of



Parents gather around a monitor to see the Contempo dance team put all their routines together for what they have planned for the Rockettes on Dec. 27 and Dec. 28.

let go. And (Contempo) is a place where you can dance and have fun."

Dancers just get addicted to it, Gunn said.

"When they are 3, they go once a week," she said. "And then after that, they want to try some other form, and some other one



Lani Gunn knew when she was a high school student in Maryland that she wanted to open her own dance studio. Contempo School of Dance has been in operation for 19 years, and now has 700 students and 10 instructors.

after that. Many of these kids take between 8 to 10 classes a week."

The Rockettes are performing as part of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular running from Dec. 12 through Dec. 29 at the center's Carol Morsani Hall. This is the highest-profile venue yet for Gunn's studio, which has operated in Lutz for the last 19 years.

"We do competitions, and dance at Busch Gardens and Disney, but never at that big stage at the Straz," Gunn said.

For more information on The Rockettes show, visit StrazCenter.org.

To learn more about Contempo, visit ContempoDance.com.

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Acts of kindness abound, and not only at the holidays

By B.C. Manion

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It's that time of year again when efforts begin revving up to provide holiday meals and gifts for those who need help, and lots of groups and individuals are stepping up to help out.

But the season of giving expands far beyond the holidays in The Laker/Lutz News coverage area.

On any given day, the newspaper receives emails detailing the good works being done. Requests pour in, too, seeking help to put the word out for a wide array of charity events.

The communications are telling. They paint a picture of a community that cares.

Here's a look at just a few of the dozens of charitable acts performed in recent months, by young and old residents of Central Pasco, East Pasco and Northern Hillsborough counties.

In response to Typhoon Haiyan that killed thousands in the Philippines and rendered others without food or shelter, the Rev. Federico Aguir of Wesley Chapel had a charity benefit on Nov. 24 at Atonement Lutheran Church. The concert was free, but donations were collected for the Pacific Typhoon Response Fund of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

The Zephyrhills Historical Association also had a recent fundraiser at Ruby Tuesday in Zephyrhills. The restaurant donated 20 percent of diner proceeds for the fundraiser to support the Rosemary Trotman Scholarship Fund. The scholarship goes to a qualified Zephyrhills High School graduate.

Other examples of the community's giving nature abound.

Nearly 600 hikers turned out for Hike for Hospice, on Nov. 10 at the Land O' Lakes campus of Rasmussen College on State Road 54. The event raised more than \$56,000 to support programs at Hospice Houses and bereavement centers from Gulfside Regional Hospice, as well as to help patients and their families facing life-limiting illnesses in Pasco County, according to a news release.

The GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club routinely stages events to raise money, which in turn, benefits groups ranging from scout troops, to domestic violence survivors, to the homeless.

Woman's club members Joan Collins and Pat Serio recently delivered a truckload of infant and toddler clothing to Alpha House of Tampa. It helps homeless pregnant women and mothers with young children by providing a safe place to live and equip-



Noah Schultz gets a look under the tire of a 1998 Honda Prelude that he's helping to repair for Matt Feldhouse.



Jack Buttafuoco, 9, took it upon himself to conduct a summer food drive to help stock the shelves of a food pantry. (File photos)



In this age of tweets and texts, Gloria Dale uses an old-fashioned way to send holiday cheer to veterans and troops. She writes each of her greeting cards by hand.

ping women with tools to become self-sufficient.

Throughout the year, Gloria Dale, another woman's club member, signs cards that are shipped during the holidays to military personnel overseas, and delivered to residents at local nursing homes.

Other groups also work all year long to show their support for the troops.

Support the Troops in Wesley Chapel ships boxes including microwaves, refrigerators, televisions, snack foods, coffee and other items to military personnel overseas. The Lutz Patriots sends care packages, including snacks, personal hygiene supplies and other items to the troops, too.

Patricia Murphy of Land O' Lakes enlists local businesses and volunteer groups to help her organization, Books for Troops. The books are distributed to military personnel and at local nursing homes.

Members of the men's group at Grow Life Church in Wesley Chapel performed a personal act of support for a member of the military. They decided to restore a 1998 Honda Prelude owned by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Matt Feldhouse while he was deployed in Kyrgyzstan.

The car broke down before Feldhouse went overseas. While he was gone, the men's church group rallied local businesses and others to help support the project and made the needed repairs.

They surprised Feldhouse at an event at The Shops at Wiregrass, a popular venue for many community events, which often are coupled with fundraising efforts for local charities.

For instance, this year The Shops will host a new event called The Wiregrass Wobble Turkey Trot, with proceeds from the Thanksgiving morning race going to Feeding America Tampa Bay and local charities through New Tampa Rotary Foundation and the New Tampa YMCA.

Local chambers of commerce also commit acts of kindness, often sponsoring student of the month celebrations and scholarships and getting involved in cleanups and other community projects.

The Lutz Civic Association drums up support for community organizations through its annual race for Lutz Guv'na. This year's candidates raised \$12,596, which was distributed to support various community organizations.

The race for honorary mayor in Wesley Chapel also raises funds, which are used to support the Wesley Chapel Chamber of Commerce and local causes.

Some networking groups also get into the act.

The Christian Business Connection, a Central Pasco group, hands out a number of checks each year. Recently, the group donated \$250 to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay, using funds from the networking group's membership dues.

Women-n-Charge, a women's networking group, presents an annual fundraising tea to raise money to support two \$1,000 grants to help women advance their business goals. This year's fundraiser went so well the group raised extra money, so they also contributed \$1,000 to A Woman's Place, a ministry devoted to providing free help to

women facing unplanned pregnancies.

Bigger organizations get involved, too.

For example, Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point recently kicked off its "Connected in Times of Need" campaign. This four-week effort is aimed at raising money to provide emergency funds to help Hospital Corporation of America employees and their families when they face extreme financial hardships. Those difficulties can arise from a natural disaster, an extended illness or another kind of tragedy.

More than \$15 million has gone to help more than 14,000 employees and their families since the fund was established in 2005, according to a hospital news release.

Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel also is involved in various community events. In August, for instance, it sponsored a seminar to help educate parents, coaches and athletes about the dangers of concussions, and steps to reduce the risks of concussion injuries.

The list of charitable acts through The Laker/Lutz News' coverage area goes on and on. Perhaps it is best represented, however, by Jack Buttafuoco, 9, who took it upon himself to conduct a summer food drive to help fight hunger locally.

The Seven Oaks resident collected canned foods, pasta, peanut butter and other items from friends, family and neighbors to help stock the pantry at Feeding America Tampa Bay-Suncoast Branch. He even pitched in \$26 of his allowance.

Buttafuoco said he decided to do the food drive because it makes him feel sad when he thinks of others who are hungry.

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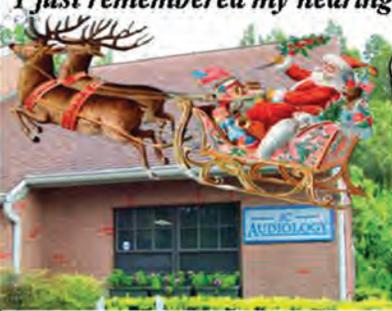
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Mike Head packs grocery bags for clients of Christian Social Services. (Photo by Sherri Lonon)

Food pantry 'blessed' to provide for those in need

By Sherri Lonon
The Laker/Lutz News Correspondent

The big red building on Land O' Lakes Boulevard might not fetch more than a casual glance from some passersby, but many who step through the doors say it's a place where blessings are granted regularly.

The nonprofit food pantry located just south of Ehren Cutoff has been helping feed area families in need since 1987. Although not always situated in its current 5514 Land O' Lakes Blvd., home, the agency has grown through the years to meet the needs of the community.

Holding true to its Christian roots, the pantry has very few rules for those who receive assistance. Individuals or families in need just need to stop by during regular hours to receive emergency food staples. Help is given on an honor system, explained Jacquie Petet, the agency's executive director.

While tons of food goes out of the agency's doors each month to hundreds of families in need, Petet said the community always steps up to make sure the food doesn't run out.

"We are blessed," she said, noting that 12 area churches and their congregations assist in keeping the pantry's shelves stocked. Area residents also lend a hand by donating non-perishable food items, money and extras, such as presents for children during the holidays and backpacks at back-to-school time.

Christian Social Services also is partially self-supporting thanks to an onsite thrift store that's open to the public.

Even though support for the mission is strong, Petet said additional help is always welcomed and needed. The last few years especially have been difficult with the economy down and donations to regular food drives, such as the postal carriers' Stamp Out

Hunger drive, down with it.

Before the economy turned a few years ago, the postal drive brought enough food into the pantry to handle demand for months. That's no longer the case, Petet said.

"The last few years, it's been substantially down," she said.

There are many ways area residents can help out, said Llorah Utt, a longtime volunteer at Christian Social Services. Not only can they donate food, money or even items for the thrift store, but volunteers are always needed as well.

"We always welcome people that want to volunteer," Utt said.

Christian Social Services operates its pantry and community thrift store with the help of three full-time employees — including Petet — and two part-time workers. About 20 volunteers fill in the gaps to make sure shelves are stocked, items are sorted, and bags of food are prepared for those in need.

"Our volunteers are a hundred times better than most people's employees," Petet said.

Employee Mike Head said the agency has been a godsend to his family and he's been "blessed" to help others in return. Head began working at Christian Social Services several years ago after he was laid off from a full-time cable installer job.

While Mike now works at the agency, his wife Bobbi and two children, Bianka, 8, and Bryan, 10, are often at his side volunteering to help other families facing difficult times.

"It's nice to be able to instill that," Head said of giving back.

Christian Social Services' pantry and thrift store are open Tuesdays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, visit CSS-HelpingHands.org, or call (813) 995-0088.



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BUSINESS DIGEST

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Sponsors sought for barbecue event

The Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce is still seeking sponsors for January's Pigz in Z'Hills BBQ & Blues event, which raises money for local youth leadership and education programs.

The event itself takes place at the Zephyrhills Municipal Airport, 39450 South Ave., in Zephyrhills, Jan. 18 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. It includes food, music, a car and motorcycle show, a business expo, and more.

For more information on how to sponsor by Dec. 5, call the chamber at (813) 782-1913.

Ryland Tampa named Builder of the Year

The Tampa Bay Builders Association recently honored the Tampa division of Ryland Homes with its Homebuilder of the Year award.

The award is based on sales and marketing practices, as well as year-round civic, community and charitable work. The winner is selected from the TBBA's membership.

Ryland Homes in Tampa currently builds new homes in 15 communities around Tampa Bay.

Wesley Chapel chiropractor partners with Gainesville MC

Gainesville Medical Centers is now working with Cypress Creek Chiropractic &

Wellness in Wesley Chapel, adding the local venue to other locations around the state.

The medical centers test for Florida's top 60 environmental allergens, as well as up to 300 items, including food, chemicals, pesticides and medicines. They also offer immunotherapy, which helps desensitize patients from environmental allergens.

For more information, call (386) 283-4991, or (352) 505-9355.

Grand opening for Suncoast Schools

Suncoast Schools Federal Credit Union recently hosted its grand opening of what it's describing as an environmentally friendly branch at 32745 Eiland Blvd., in Zephyrhills.

It is the second branch to focus on being environmentally friendly, including light-emitting diode lighting throughout, high-efficiency windows and insulation, geothermal air-conditioning and heating, and 40-kilowatt solar power panels to offset electricity.

The Zephyrhills branch also is expected to use half the electricity of other branches, and the exterior is outfitted with drought-resistant landscaping with drip irrigation where possible.

This is the credit union's second branch in East Pasco County, joining the one at 12510 U.S. 301 in Dade City.

Women-n-Charge meets in December

Women-n-Charge will meet Dec. 6 beginning at 11:30 a.m. at the Pebble Creek Country Club, 10550 Regents Park Drive in Tampa.

The meeting includes lunch, a feature speaker, and networking.

Cost is \$15 for members in advance, and \$18 for guests and any member not buying in advance.

Register at www.Women-n-Charge.com. For more information, call (813) 600-9848, or email info@women-n-charge.com.

KNOW luncheon in Dade City

The Knowledgeable Network of Women from the Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce will host its next KNOW luncheon Dec. 4 beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Guest speaker is Joy Hampton, district legislative assistant to Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel.

The luncheon will take place at Scotland Yard Golf & Country Club, 8900 Wire Road, in Dade City. Cost is \$15 for members, and \$20 for guests.

For more information, call (813) 782-1913, or email the chamber at news@zephyrhillschamber.org.

East Pasco Networking Group

The East Pasco Networking Group has scheduled several speakers for the coming months. The group meets every other week at the Village Inn at 5214 Gall Blvd., in Zephyrhills. Networking begins at 8 a.m., with the meeting starting at 8:30 a.m.

Here's the group's slate of upcoming speakers:

- Dec. 10: Rev. Scott-Eric Lindner, pastor of Atonement Lutheran Church in Wesley Chapel
- Jan. 14: Christopher Payne, managing partner of Ryder Payne Capital Inc.
- Jan. 28: Carol Johns, president and chief executive of GIM Associates LLC
- Feb. 11: Cheryl Pollock, business development director for Premier Community HealthCare Group Inc.
- Feb. 25: Regina Etheridge, retired IRS revenue officer

Christmas celebration at East-West Animal Hospital

East-West Animal Hospital, 1524 Land O' Lakes Blvd., in Lutz, will host its Christmas celebration Dec. 14 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The hospital's mascot, Barley the Opossum, will pose for photos as "Barley Claus."

A calendar and T-shirts featuring Barley will be sold to help local animal rescue or-

ganizations. There also will be food and giveaways.

Barley was the only survivor of a car accident when he was just two weeks old. A former employee of the animal hospital rescued him, and tube-fed him until he could eat on his own.

For more information on the event, visit EastWestAnimalHospital.com, or call (813) 948-6534.

Donations earn spa time

The Planet Beat Contempo Spas in New Tampa, Seven Oaks and Westchase are celebrating the holidays by offering "12 Days of Spa" certificates to anyone who donates a toy valued at more than \$10, or canned goods for families in need for Christmas.

Current members will receive a free lotion sample or spa service for their donation.

The "12 Days of Spa" certificate is valued at more than \$129, and entitles the bearer to 12 consecutive days of spa services through Jan. 31. The certificates are transferable.

For more information, call (813) 971-9337, or (813) 991-4433.

Dealership helps soldiers for the holidays

Parks Ford, 28739 State Road 54 in Wesley Chapel, recently wrapped up its Support the Troops drive, which collected items for the military between October and November at the dealership.

Once the drive was over, a Parks Ford team delivered all the items collected, volunteered to help pack boxes, and donated \$2,500. The funds help the group with its biggest challenge — paying for shipment of donated items overseas. This particular donation will allow Support the Troops to send up to 70 boxes to military personnel this holiday season.

For more information on how to support the troops during the holiday season, visit OurTroopsOnline.com.

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Company shares secrets behind festive Christmas lights

By B.C. Manion
bcmansion@cnewspubs.com

Every year, sometime around July, Melissa Christensen will start fielding inquiries from businesses seeking estimates on decking out their businesses with holiday lights.

The Lutz woman, who calls herself "The Christmas Light Girl," works with a crew of up to eight guys, all who have holiday light installations down to a science. The company consists of Christensen, her fiancé Jarrett Lane, his relatives and a friend. They're busy each year from early November through mid-December.

Christensen can quote jobs ranging from small homes to mansions, from the St. Pete Museum of Fine Arts to Bartow Ford — anywhere around the Tampa Bay area, including Pasco, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties.



Jarrett Lane strings lights atop a home in Odessa. His fiancée, Melissa Christensen of Lutz, is the woman behind The Christmas Light Girl, a holiday lights installation company. (Photo by B.C. Manion)



A look at the handiwork of The Christmas Light Girl at a house in Odessa. (Photo courtesy of The Christmas Light Girl)

Over the years, the installers have learned the tricks of the trade. When planning a lighting display, for example, it's important to think about the scale of the job, Christensen said. A big tree, for instance, requires more lights, decorations and extension cords.

When figuring out how many lights are needed for a roofline, it's important to keep in mind the various setbacks on the roof, she said.

It's also essential to have enough extension cords and timers for each job. It's easy to underestimate the number of timers that are needed to achieve the desired effect, she said.

At a house the company decks out each year in Odessa, for instance, the job requires nine timers.

While some people use multicolored lights, others prefer clear ones. One winning look involves clear lights, combined with splashes of color for effect, Christensen said.

Her company uses that approach on palm trees. It wraps the trunks in clear lights and then uses a green band of lights at the top of trunk, just below the fronds.

The average tree requires 150 feet to 200 feet of lights. Trying to deck out the fronds can get a bit pricey, Christensen explained.

"Fronds tend to get expensive because you usually have to have a lift. So, the green band on top is a good alternative to getting your color on your palms," she said.

It's a good idea to shop around for lights because prices can vary widely, Christensen said. Decorating trees can go anywhere from \$50 to \$250, depending on the type and size of tree.

Commercial light strands are available at places like Lowe's and Home Depot, but also can be purchased online. The strands are typically 132 feet for incandescent lights, and 67 feet for light-emitting diodes.

"LEDs are just a spot of light," Christensen said. "They do not glow or illuminate. If you really want illumination, then you need to stick with the incandescents."

However, the LEDs do have one big advantage: They last longer.

It's also important to expect lights to fail. "It's usually one of two things: Either you're missing a bulb, or the squirrel chewed through the wire," she said. To help spot out-



Melissa Christensen holds a ball of holiday lights, which is easier to wrap around trees. (Photo by B.C. Manion)

ages, Christensen's company uses "stay lits." If a light goes out, she loses half of the strand, which helps her identify the problem spot.

To help prevent failures, she recommends taping over extension cord plugs to keep water from seeping in. She also said it's advisable to alert landscaping crews, so they turn off the sprinklers and avoid running equipment over cords.

It's also a good idea to tape down any cords that are running across walkways, to prevent a tripping hazard.

For those decorating a tree, Christensen does offer a tip: Roll the strand of lights into a ball. Then unroll it as the tree is wrapped the tree.

"It saves a lot of time. It makes it a lot more manageable," she said. "It allows you to keep your lines tight. It makes it easier than trying to pull the wire through each time you go around."

Installing lights keeps the company busy for about six solid weeks, Christensen said, but she enjoys the work.

She also delights in seeing a finished job. "Lights are awesome," she said.




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For Women

This big light of mine



Chabad at Wiregrass celebrated the fifth night of Hanukkah on Sunday with a menorah lighting at The Shops at Wiregrass. Nearly 200 people turned out for the annual event, complete with potato latkes, applesauce and jelly doughnuts. (Photos by Michael Hinman)



Dreidels and gelt are common staples of traditional Hanukkah celebrations. Giving gold coins, or gelt, is a tradition dating back to the 17th century. But in modern times, this gold is really a foil with some tasty chocolate inside.



Stephanie Parnes, 6, of New Tampa, colors her own menorah during the Hanukkah celebration Sunday at The Shops at Wiregrass. Her family is a regular at the event.



Alex Zicchino, 9, of Lutz, stacks blocks in a Tumbling Towers game that was part of the kids' fun at The Shops of Wiregrass Hanukkah celebration. The event Sunday was presented by the Jewish congregation Chabad at Wiregrass.

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Local hospital foundation cooks its way to \$70,000

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Nearly \$70,000 was raised last week for the Florida Hospital Zephyrhills Foundation during its annual gala and golf tournament at Saddlebrook Resort.

The money will be used for the construction of the new Brain and Spine Institute at the Zephyrhills campus of the hospital.

The event featured 15 "celebrity" chefs that included, among others, Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco, Zephyrhills City Councilman Lance Smith, businessman Kevin Bahr, and State Sen. Wilton Simpson, R-Trilby. Judges included Linda Hauff, Vonnie Mikkelsen and Pasco County Clerk Paula O'Neil.

Chefs prepared a signature food item of their choice, and were judged both by the female judges as well as the audience. Winners included:

- Todd Batchelor's prime rib sandwiches won best appetizer from both the judges and the audience.
- Wilton Simpson's Italian white bean soup was the best side dish from the judges.
- David West's mixed vegetable casserole was the best side dish as chosen by the audience.
- Ronald Oakley's beef tenderloin not only won best main dish by both the judges and the audience, but was the overall people's choice.
- Kevin Bahr's crème brulee was best dessert by both the judges and the audience.
- LeRoy Hauff's beef summer sausage was the best overall judge's choice.
- Jack Rhoden and Chris Drews won for best presentation.
- Dr. Raul Olivera received the most tips.

"I've never seen such a group of people laugh so hard and have so much fun," said Carolyn Sentelik, executive director of the Florida Hospital Zephyrhills Foundation, in a



Ron Oakley, who won both the judge's and people's choice categories for his main dish of beef tenderloin, shows off his 2012 and 2013 trophies from the 'Men Who Cook' competition to benefit Florida Hospital Zephyrhills Foundation. (Photo courtesy of Michelle Oswald-Bianchet)

release. "We are grateful for the support from all of the chefs. I realize the amount of time, work and expense that goes into it for them, and it is truly appreciated."

The next day, the Foundation hosted its 24th annual golf tournament at Saddlebrook. Winners there included the team of Kevin Bahr, David Bahr, Chris Black and Frede Bender in first place; Glen Greenfelder, Goeun Lee, Fran Reidy and Mike Madagan in second place; Kerry Ryman, Kyle Ryman, Nelson Ryman and Darrell Humphries in third place.

The new Brain and Spine Institute at the hospital will provide neurological care, including the only Agency for Health Care Administration-certified comprehensive stroke center in Pasco County. The Foundation has pledged to raise \$2 million to support what it has deemed to be a critical project.

Florida Hospital Zephyrhills is a 139-bed regional medical center that is a member of one of the state's largest health care providers, the Florida Hospital network of Adventist Health System.



Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE



PROFESSIONAL RACING comes to local UPS store

by Mike Matthew
special to The Laker / Lutz News

Carl Lunderstadt and his wife Robin Bonanno, owners of The UPS Store at 23110 State Road 54, at Collier Parkway, are taking their store to a whole new level of customer service and support. They have owned the store since Oct. 5th.

"The first week we took over the store we saw a woman struggling to carry a bunch of packages into the store," says Carl. "We ran right out and helped her. Now we tell our customers to be sure and ask us for help. We're happy to come to the car and help them."

Robin is a professional race car driver, and Carl is her crew chief. Robin brings personality and enthusiasm to a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Robin has now dedicated her racing career to racing for a national children's charity called The Dream Factory. Sponsors are welcome.

Robin is also a sought-after motivational speaker for local business and charitable organizations. She's particularly proud of her work with children experiencing behavioral problems which focuses on trying to keep them out of juvenile reform institutions.

Robin has a business background. She's owned a fish and tackle manufacturing company, was a business manager for Anchor Glass, and managed a national pest control company. She's also a licensed pilot, musician, race car driver, racing instructor, and a professional ski instructor.

Robin and Carl admit to having a lot of hobbies. They're avid hikers and outdoor enthusiasts, and restore antique cars in their spare time. "Life is an adventure," says Robin. "We want to have a good time with everything we do."

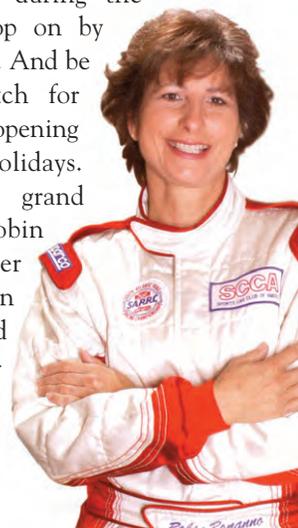
Over the years, Carl has owned a dozen different companies. He was president of a Florida mining operation, co-founder of regional bank, chairman of the Florida Economic Development Commission, president of a family crisis center, co-founder of a biblically-based graphic novel company (Kingstone Media Group), and is the recipient of a number of community service awards.

Carl is also Robin's racing crew chief, a racing instructor, and a professional ski instructor. Together they bring a great deal of professional expertise and commitment to the UPS Store.

This UPS store also does printing. "We want to be known as a printer that does shipping," says Carl. "We're looking to become a printing hub for all of the local businesses. Our store is newly expanded so we have the room and the equipment."

The store also has office supplies and stationery. "We also provide notary services and fax services at very reasonable prices," says Robin. "Our biggest selling item is postage stamps. Customers pay a little more for the stamps but they save on gas and time driving to the post office. It's a convenience thing."

Carl and Robin will be serving coffee and cookies during the holidays. Stop on by and say hello. And be sure to watch for their grand opening after the holidays. During the grand opening, Robin will have her race car on display and will be signing autographs.



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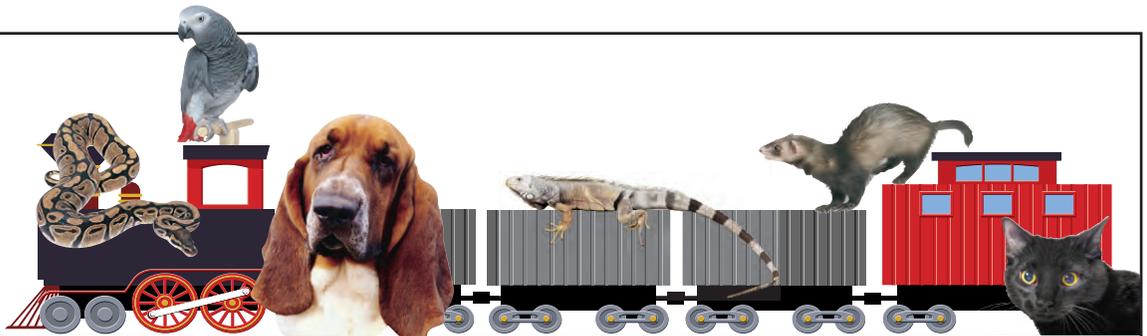
Sophie, a 6-month-old Yorkshire terrier girl, is bringing so much joy and love to her owners' daily life. She loves going for her walks with lots of stopping and sniffing. She gets very excited when her owners' two granddaughters come over, and the three girls have a great time playing together. She never tires of playing fetch. Sophie loves cuddles and gives lots of wet kisses, especially in the morning after waking up. She occupies such a big part in her owners' lives, they couldn't imagine being without her any more. Proud owners are Bernard and Uschi Kessler from Wesley Chapel.

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Your Community Calendar • Submit 2 weeks in advance to: whathappening@cnewspubs.com • All listings free of charge

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY MIXER

Habitat for Humanity's annual holiday open house and Christmas mixer is Dec. 5 at 6 p.m., at the Habitat ReStore, 15029 U.S. 301 in Dade City. The event includes raffles, refreshments and holiday cheer. Guests donating a gift card of \$10 or more, to be distributed to a Habitat family, will receive an entry into a raffle. Gift card is not required to attend. For information, call (352) 523-2020.

ART ALIVE 2013

The Pasco Arts Council will present Art Alive 2013, a demonstration extravaganza, from Dec. 5 through Dec. 7 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., each day, at 5744 Moog Road in Holiday. Visitors will be able to observe artists demonstrate their styles and techniques in their medium of expertise, including a potter's wheel, drawing with charcoal, and more. There will be artists on-hand to talk about and sell their crafts. For information, call (727) 845-7322, or visit PascoArt.org.

FLORIDA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

The annual Florida Strawberry Festival in Plant City is slated for Feb. 27 through March 9. The festival theme is "Florida's Best Family Recipe." Advance tickets go on sale at 8 a.m. on Dec. 5. Guests can visit FLStrawberryFestival.com, and click on "buy tickets online."

'ALICE IN WONDERLAND JR.'

Student actors from the Community School of Arts will perform Disney's "Alice in Wonderland Jr." at Corbett Preparatory School, 12015 Orange Grove Drive in Tampa, on Dec. 6 at 6 p.m., Dec. 7 and Dec. 8 at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., and Dec. 9 at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10. For information, call (813) 961-3087.

NEW CHRISTMAS MUSICAL

Venue Theatre, 9125 U.S. 19 in Hudson, will present a new Christmas musical, "The Last Room," from Dec. 6 through Dec. 22. The show is an interpretation of the nativity of Jesus as seen through the eyes of the innkeeper. Friday and Saturday performances are at 8 p.m., and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20. Group rates are available. For reservations, call (727) 822-6194, or email venueactorstudio@gmail.com.

TREE LIGHTING AT CURTIS HIXON

Tampa's annual tree-lighting ceremony will take place on Dec. 6 at Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park, 600 N. Ashley Drive in Tampa. Festivities begin at 6 p.m., with sounds from Late Night Brass. There also will be a Christmas market, and a free showing of the movie "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation."

GREYHOUND DOGS

Greyhound Rescue and Adoptions of Tampa Bay will have a meet and greet with greyhounds and their adoptive or foster parents on Dec. 7 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Wesley Chapel Petco, 1231 Bruce B. Downs Blvd. For information, call (813) 971-4732, or visit Great-Greyhound.org.

GREEN AFTER DARK

The Odessa Organic Farmers Market will host its monthly Green After Dark event on Dec. 7 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., at 8701 Gunn Highway. The event includes live music, food truck and vendors. Participants should bring their own chairs. Parking is available in the shopping plazas near the market. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. For information, visit GoingGreenTampa.com.

GERMAN, POLISH CLUBS HOST BAZAAR

The German American and Polish American clubs will host a Christmas Bazaar, or Christkindelmarkt, on Dec. 7 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., at the Polish American Club, 4616 Darlington Road in Holiday. The event

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



Mahlet Eyobel of Land O' Lakes

HAVE YOU WRITTEN TO SANTA YET?

The sixth annual Traditions on the Green from the Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce, The Heritage Park Foundation, and the Tampa Bay Times, will take place Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Land O' Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. The event will feature a free pancake breakfast with Santa beginning at 9 a.m., hosted by the Wesley Chapel Noon Rotary. Kids activities include games, crafts, puppet shows, face painting, and even Letters to Santa, sponsored by The Laker/Lutz News. For more information, call (813) 298-7363, or (813) 996-3011.

features ethnic food, arts and crafts, a variety of vendors, and Mr. and Mrs. Claus from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. For information, call (727) 857-3931, or visit GermanAmericanClub-NPR.org.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Tims Memorial Presbyterian Church, 601 Sunset Lane in Lutz, will host its annual Blue Christmas Time of Remembrance service on Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. This is a casual, café-style service for those who have suffered loss through death, divorce, unemployment, and those who find the holidays stressful or sad. There will be a candle lighting in memory of loved ones. Guests can bring a picture or memento to share. For information, call (813) 949-1239.

ANIMAL SERVICES YARD SALE

Pasco County Animal Services will host a yard sale on Dec. 7 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., in front of the adoption center, 19640 Dogpatch Lane in Land O' Lakes. Proceeds will benefit Phil Runnels Feline Fund for cat enrichment and medical needs. Donations will be accepted through Dec. 6. For information, call (813) 929-1212.

CAGE FIGHTING IN NEW PORT RICHEY

MMA Unleashed invades New Port Richey on Dec. 7 at the Cor-Fitness Center, 4900 U.S. 19, with bell time at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. There will be 10 mixed-martial arts bouts, a meet and greet with the History channel's Swamp People, vendors, and more. General admission is \$25. Tickets are available online at xselive.com, or at Cor-Fitness Center.

DANCE FOR SHRINERS' CHILDREN

Broadway Dancesations, 1408 N. Dale Mabry Highway, Suite 106, in Lutz, is hosting its Dance-A-Thon on Dec. 7 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., to benefit Shriners Hospitals for Children. Dancers will compete in 30 different dances within a three-hour period. Prizes will be given for most creative costume, unique ideas, best attitude, and more. There will be an after-party with food and awards from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. For information, call Shelly Acevedo at (813) 406-4894.

PHOTOS WITH SANTA

Goin' Postal and Hut no. 8 in Zephyrhills will sponsor free photos with Santa on Dec. 7 from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m., during Main Street Zephyrhills' Festival of Lights. Santa will appear in the parade at 6 p.m., and will see children before and after the parade. Children can also pose for photos with Elsa the Snow Queen from the new movie "Frozen."

POST OFFICE TOY DRIVE

The annual letter carriers' post office toy drive will be Dec. 7. Pasco residents may leave a new unwrapped toy next to their mailbox for the letter carrier to pick up for Toys for Tots. For information, call Bob Loring at (352) 588-4230.

CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK

The Founders Garden Club will host Christmas in the Park at San Antonio City Park on Dec. 8 at 7 p.m. The event includes music by the Huron Family, and warm cider, cookies, and coffee provided by Cup of Organic. There will be a drawing for theme baskets and a dish garden. For information, call (352) 588-3631, or email 2pheasants@gmail.com.

CLASSIC CHRISTMAS MOVIES

Tampa Theatre, 711 N. Franklin St., in downtown Tampa, will show the movie "Miracle on 34th Street" on Dec. 8 at 3 p.m., and "White Christmas" on Dec. 15 at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$10. For information or tickets, call (813) 274-8981, or visit TampaTheatre.org.

LADIES' CHRISTMAS TEA

Water's Edge Community Church, 30200 Overpass Road in Wesley Chapel, will host a ladies Christmas tea on Dec. 14 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Guests can enjoy food and fellowship. For information and to RSVP by Dec. 9, call Patty Fitzpatrick at (813) 528-8565.

R&B SUPERSTARS AT USF

The University of South Florida Sun Dome will host rhythm and blues superstars Ginuwine, Joe, and Tank on Dec. 12 at 8 p.m., as part of the R&Beat Holiday Jam. Tickets start at \$45 and can be purchased by calling (800) 745-3000, by visiting the Sun Dome box office, or online at TicketMaster.com.

PARENTS NIGHT OUT

The Savanna Church Ministry Center, 3807 Maryweather Lane, Suite 101, in Wesley Chapel, will host a parents night out on Dec. 13 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Children can enjoy pizza, songs, a Christmas movie, crafts, and games, while parents enjoy a night out, or finish up Christmas shopping. The evening is for children from the age of 2 to those in fifth grade. Cost is \$5 per child. For information, call Joe Jackson at (813) 907-5511, or visit SavannaChurch.com.

AARP HOSTS LUNCHEON

The Land O' Lakes AARP Chapter 4764 will host its holiday luncheon on Dec. 13 at 10:30 a.m. at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 20735 Leonard Road in Lutz. The luncheon

meeting will include the installation of new officers, board members and committee chairpersons. There will be a Secret Santa exchange. The cost is \$15 for current chapter members and their guests, and former chapter members. Anyone age 50 or older can attend and become a 2014 member for an extra \$10. For reservations, call (813) 996-1361, or email pebross@verizon.net.

IDLEWILD CHRISTMAS PRESENTATION

Exciting Idlewild Baptist Church, 18333 Exciting Idlewild Blvd., in Lutz, will present the performance "Christmas Child" from Dec. 13 through Dec. 15. Shows are 7 p.m. each day, and one matinee at 4 p.m., on Dec. 14. Tickets start at \$8, and are available online at Idlewild.org. The program is not recommended for children younger than 5. For wheelchair and companion seating, call (813) 264-1515, ext. 207.

'JOY STORY' AT HERITAGE

Heritage Church, 1854 Oak Grove Blvd., in Lutz, will present "Joy Story," a Christmas musical, on Dec. 14 at 7 p.m., and on Dec. 15 at 10 a.m. This is a free family event. For information, call (813) 909-4080, or visit YesHeritage.com.

FIREWORKS, SANTA AT AVALON

The Avalon Park West community center, 5227 Autumn Ridge Drive in Wesley Chapel, will host Avalon Aglow on Dec. 14 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Guests can take pictures with Santa, enjoy food from local vendors, and listen to local music. There will be a bounce park. This free event includes a fireworks display at 8 p.m.

CONTEMPORARY JAZZ CONCERT

The Center for the Performing Arts at Wesley Chapel, 30651 Wells Road, will present Eric Darius, a contemporary jazz artist, on Dec. 15 at 7:30 p.m. Darius is a jazz saxophonist and composer. Tickets are \$15 for seniors and students, and \$20 for general seating. For information and tickets, call (813) 794-8772, or visit CFAWesleyChapel.com.

TAMPA BAY COIN CLUB

The Tampa Bay Coin Club meets the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., at the Land O' Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. The meetings include an auction, raffle, door prizes, guest speaker, free appraisals, and an opportunity to trade with other collectors. For information, visit TampaBayCoinClub.org.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Storehouse Bible Study Group meets at the Senior Center, Wisteria Loop in Land O' Lakes, every Thursday at 7 p.m., except the second Thursday of the month. Pastor Dan Brockman leads the group, and refreshments are served. For information, call (813) 235-9239.

HELP FIGHT HUNGER IN THE COMMUNITY

The Laker/Lutz News is joining the ongoing fight to help feed community members in need through a food drive. We have a collection box in our office for our readers to drop off donations for Feeding America Tampa Bay-Suncoast Branch in Land O' Lakes, just one of the more than 200 food banks in the Feeding America network. The most needed items are: Canned meats (tuna, chicken, ham, sausage), canned fruits and vegetables, canned and boxed meals (soup, chili, stew, macaroni & cheese), pasta and rice, and peanut butter. No glass please. Pop-top items preferred. No donation is too big or small. We appreciate our readers' efforts in helping in this mission. The Laker/Lutz News office is in the Copperstone Executive Suites, 3632 U.S. 41, Suite 102, in Land O' Lakes.



Early Christmas for shut-ins

Rosie Heim, left, president of the GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club, joins Aniko Solomonson, Homestead Senior Care's Michele Bonneville and Ciel Birkett to show off hand-decorated Christmas gift bags that will be filled and delivered to shut-in seniors. (Photo courtesy of Patricia Serio)



Clothes for infants, toddlers

Joan Collins, right, the domestic violence chair of the GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club, joined Patricia Serio, left, in delivering a truckload of donated infant and toddler clothing to Alpha House of Tampa, which services local women and children in need. Their mission is to help homeless pregnant women and mothers with young children by providing a safe place to live, and tools to become self-sufficient parents. (Photo courtesy of Patricia Serio)

Vertige Café

That French Place at Wilderness Commons

Chef Caroline tells everyone, "If you have trouble remembering or pronouncing the name Vertige Café, just imagine "that French place at Wilderness Commons."

Caroline, born and raised in France, worked at the **Four Seasons Hotel George V** in Paris, France before immigrating to the Washington, D.C area, where she managed the Café at the world famous **Watergate Hotel**.

Caroline recently moved to Tampa with her husband, a celebrated Chef, who accepted a position as Executive Chef, with a new restaurant in the bay area.

Caroline said, "I fell in love with the unique atmosphere of the Café, and knew immediately, this was the new home for my Café creations, and my family."

Caroline, who starts baking at 3:00 am, has added fresh baked breads and pastries as well as a variety of croissant and spinach wrap specialty sandwiches, and a quiche of the day to the menu.

"But it's not just about the food" Caroline tells us. "Our weekly community events will be fun for all ages."

"Our Youth Cooking Class last Saturday, featured the boys vs. the girls, and was enjoyed by the parents, as well as the children."

Sunday December 8th Santa will be at the Cafe for family pictures and Holiday cheer.

Saturday the 14th the Café will host an Adoption and Fundraiser for The Lost Angles Animal Rescue.

Please be sure to donate an item to the **Vertige Café Toy Drive for Michelle's Kids, Putting Big Smiles on Little Faces, now thru Christmas Eve.**



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You can also download and print this form from our website at www.LakerLutzNews.com

Deadline extended to Dec. 18th

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Age _____ Grade _____ School _____

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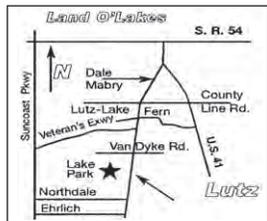
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Food addicts program

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Wesley Chapel, 33420 State Road 54, is hosting the program Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous on Thursdays from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. This is a 12-step program for men and women of all ages. There is no fee and no weigh-ins.

For information, visit FoodAddicts.org.

Bayonet Point a safe hospital

The Leapfrog Group, an independent national nonprofit run by employers and other large health benefits purchasers, has again awarded Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point with its "A" Safe Hospital Score.

The score is derived from Leapfrog's key questions and publicly reported data, allowing for the comparison of hospital safety performance.

A blue ribbon panel of the nation's top patient safety experts provides guidance to Leapfrog, which calculates the safety score using publicly available data on patient injuries, medical and medication errors, and infections. Hospitals can receive an A, B, C, D or F letter grade, based on the best to worst scores, respectively.

Diabetes seminar

Morton Plant North Bay Hospital, 6600 Madison St., in New Port Richey, will host a free health seminar, "Ask Your Nurse Educator: Diabetes," on Dec. 5 at 10 a.m. A certified diabetes educator/registered nurse

will answer questions about diabetes.

To register, call (727) 953-6877.

Communication deficits

The Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, will host its Chatterboxes support group on Dec. 5 from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The group assists individuals suffering from communication deficits as a result of a cerebral vascular accident or other neurological disorder. Caregivers and spouses are invited.

For information, call (727) 834-4946.

Lecture on headaches

Access Health Care in Spring Hill, 5350 Spring Hill Drive, will host the lecture, "Headaches: Why They Happen, What Can You Do to Help Alleviate the Pain," on Dec. 5 at 5:15 p.m. Guest speaker is Dr. Maria Scunziano-Singh.

For information, call (352) 688-8116.

Pregnancy center Banquet of Life

Saint Leo University, 33701 State Road 52 in St. Leo, will host its Banquet of Life and silent auction, benefitting Foundations of Life Pregnancy Center-Pasco, on Dec. 7 at 6 p.m. Guest speaker is Gus Lloyd, morning host of "Seize the Day" on Sirius XM Radio's The Catholic Channel. Individual and table sponsorships are available.

For information, email Angie Herrera at aherrera@ccdosp.org, or visit the website at FoundationsOfLife.org.

Infant care program

The Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, is offering an infant care class beginning Dec. 9 at 6 p.m. The course is two classes, on consecutive Mondays. The class will provide parents with the knowledge and skills to make their transition into parenting smooth and comfortable. The cost is \$40.

For information and reservations, call (727) 834-5630.

Millennium Sertoma Club

The Millennium Sertoma Club, which assists people with speech-language and hearing disorders, meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m., at Elsa's Mexican Restaurant, 18450 U.S. 41 in Lutz.

Both men and women are encouraged to bring their children, who in turn become honorary members and participate in meetings and service activities.

To learn more, visit the website at MillenniumSertomaClub.org.

MS support group

The Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, is offering a monthly support group for those afflicted with multiple sclerosis, their family members and caregivers. The next meeting is on Dec. 10 from noon to 2 p.m.

For information and to RSVP, call (727) 372-1568.

Knee replacement seminar

Oak Hill Hospital, 275 Della Court in Spring Hill, will host Dr. Fady Zeidan on Dec. 10 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. on the topic "Considering Knee Replacement Surgery? Know Your Surgical Options: Replace or Resurface." Zeidan is an orthopedic surgeon.

Admission is free. A complimentary meal will be served. Seating is limited.

For information and reservations, call (352) 597-6333.

PAN hosts guest author

The Pasco Aging Network will meet on Dec. 11 from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., at Bear Creek and Royal Oak Nursing Center, 8041 State Road 52 in Hudson. Guest speaker is author and storyteller Jerry Cowling. A free breakfast will be served.

To RSVP, visit PascoAgingNetwork.org.

Free hearing aid batteries

The Sertoma Speech & Hearing Foundation of Florida will have a free battery giveaway on Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to noon at its New Port Richey office, 4443 Rowan Road.

The most common sizes of 10, 13, 312, and 675 will be available, while supplies last.

For information, call (727) 834-5479.

—Health notes are run for free on a space-available basis. Please send all information at least two weeks before an event to news@cnewspubs.com.

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East Pasco students to have more educational options

By B.C. Manion
bcmansion@cnewspsubs.com

Students on the county's east side will have a broader range of educational options beginning next school year as Pasco County Schools initiates Cambridge education programs at Pasco Middle and Pasco High schools.

The programs, which are known for their academic rigor, will be housed at those two schools, but will also be open through school choice to students from Zephyrhills and Wesley Chapel high schools, and also to students from Centennial, Stewart and Weightman middle schools.

Students who successfully pass the examinations attached to the Cambridge program can earn up to 45 college credits at Florida public universities. Those achieving the Cambridge diploma will qualify for the highest award available in the state's Bright Futures Scholarship program.

Pasco educators believe that students who complete the Cambridge course of study will be better prepared to succeed in college.

The University of Cambridge launched the program more than 150 years ago, beginning with 370 candidates in seven British cities. Now it has more than 8 million diploma candidates in more than 160 countries.

A large crowd of parents and students attended a recent information session at Pasco Middle to find out more about the programs. "We wanted to bring a rigorous program

to these kids in the east side of the county," Pasco Schools superintendent Kurt Browning said. "This is an established program."

Students have the opportunity to earn college credits that will result in substantial savings in tuition costs, but they'll have to apply themselves to make that happen, Browning said.

"They're going to have to work. They're going to have to work hard," he said.

Another information session about the Cambridge option is scheduled for Dec. 5 at 6 p.m., in the media center at Wesley Chapel High, 30651 Wells Road in Wesley Chapel.

The program, known formally as Cambridge International Examinations, offers the opportunity to earn an Advanced International Certificate of Education. It is offered through the University of Cambridge International Examinations, a division of the Cambridge, England, school.

The program seeks to develop learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged.

To apply for the Pasco programs, students must:

- Have a score of Level 3 or above on reading and math on the Florida



An international program that offers students the opportunity to earn college credits is being introduced at Pasco Middle and Pasco High schools next year. A large crowd of parents and students turned out to find out more about the program at a recent information meeting. (Photo by B.C. Manion)

To learn more about the Cambridge program, contact:

Jenny Borders at Pasco Middle School:
jborders@pasco.k12.fl.us

Mignon Edwards at Pasco High School:
mjedward@pasco.k12.fl.us

like the district's International Baccalaureate program offered at Land O' Lakes and Gulf high schools, but offers students more flexibility, district officials said. The program requires students to pass six exams to receive a diploma. Three of those exams must be in each of the program's study areas, but the student gets to choose the other three.

In the IB program, five of the six required exams must be taken in specific study areas.

Because of its flexibility, students should have no problem taking electives and participating in extracurricular activities, such as band, officials said.

Students are also able to get college credits for single courses, if they pass the exams, even if they do not take enough of the courses to get a diploma.

The program will begin next year, with students entering sixth grade through 10th grade eligible to take part. The district will provide transportation to students in participating schools.

District officials said they're going to wait until the applications are in before determining how large the programs will be.

Comprehensive Assessment Test.

- Submit two teacher recommendations.
- Have an unweighted grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- Complete a 300- to 500-word essay.

The application deadline is Jan. 31.

Pasco Middle will house the Lower Secondary Program, which is designed to prepare students to continue onto Cambridge course work at Pasco High.

"We were very impressed with the Cambridge schools that we went to go see," Kim Anderson, principal at Pasco Middle, told the audience at the recent information session. "The students that we saw in these programs were outstanding. They were thinking, at times, far above some of the adults in the room."

The program offers academic rigor, much

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ROAD, from page 1

that is studying the future of Pasco County, had reportedly advised against the project.

Yet, ULI's recommendation may have been a bit premature, Gehring said.

"They raised the question, wondering if we've exhausted all alternatives, and they raised a bunch of study issues," Gehring said. "But what they didn't know is that we already had two-and-a-half years of efforts already underway."

ULI leans toward the development design structure of "New Urbanism," Gehring

said, which emphasizes pedestrians and de-emphasizes vehicle traffic. But what IIP has proposed is much different — allowing the corridor to maintain localized traffic while providing viable options for those trying to traverse the region.

"They said that some communities were taking down their elevated roads, but those were specialized circumstances," Gehring said. "They were one-, two- or three-mile sections in downtowns that were built years and years and years ago. This is nothing like that."

Whether the elevated road is the way FDOT and the county goes or not is not

going to change the fact that something has to be done to move traffic, Gehring said. Intersections like U.S. 41 and State Road 54 already see 100,000 vehicles each day, and that's only going to grow.

"At some point, 140,000 or 150,000 cars per day are going to need to be in that corridor, and that's going to be both a blessing and a curse," Gehring said.

Commissioner Pat Mulieri, who has been a proponent of the elevated road, told The Laker/Lutz News last week she planned to support the resolution. By passing it, FDOT and other agencies will get the support it needs for more studies that would define

the concept's revenue potential costs, environmental impacts, explore more possible private-public partnerships, and seek out more public input.

Although IIP has not provided any cost projections for the project, using the Lee Roy Selmon Expressway elevated road as a model from 2004, construction could cost more than \$70 million per mile. That would put the total price tag well over \$2.3 billion.

The question is no longer if to build something like this elevated road, but when.

"If someone out there has another way to solve this, we would be very glad to listen," he said.

NOVEL, from page 1

tion that the men and women in the military demonstrate through their service, Wilson said. That's even more meaningful for him after two tours of duty in Iraq, with the U.S. Marines and with the Joint Special Operations Task Force.

Wilson's writing draws on his diverse life experiences. He has worked as an actor, a firefighter, a paramedic, a diving instructor and a vascular surgeon.

He was in the Navy from 1998 until 2012 and was deployed to Iraq in 2005 with the 2nd Marine expeditionary force as part of a forward surgical team supporting combat operations in Western Iraq.

After that, he was recruited to Naval Special Warfare, where he made multiple deployments as part of a Joint Special Operations Task Force. He transitioned to the reserves in 2008 and remained a reserve until leaving the Navy four years later.

Wilson's other published books are "The Traiteur's Ring" and "Fade to Black." The publisher is Journalstone Publishing of San Francisco, an independent book publisher that specializes in the science fiction, fantasy and horror genres.

Wilson now hopes a major publishing house will pick up his work.

His agent, Talcott Notch Literary Services president Gina Panettieri, is now shopping his book, "Julian's Numbers," to publishers.

Meanwhile, Wilson continues to write. He recently wrapped up his fifth book, "War Torn." Unlike Wilson's other books, "War Torn," has no supernatural element.

"It's about a young man and a young woman and the effects that war has on them," Wilson said. "He's a member of the National Guard. They're in their mid-20s. She's very active in her church. He and his best friend are in this guard unit that's deployed to Afghanistan."

The soldier becomes passionate about religion, through the influence of his best

friend who becomes his spiritual mentor. When his friend is subsequently killed in front of him, he begins to question everything, Wilson said.

The book recounts the soldier's journey back from war.

Now, Wilson is working on his sixth book, a collaborative project with another author, Brian Andrews.

Wilson said much of what he has learned about writing has come through trial and error and from being a voracious reader. He doesn't map out his books in advance.

As he finishes one chapter, he includes brief descriptions at the bottom summarizing elements of future chapters. The more the book progresses, the more future chapter summaries Wilson will include.

"I generally don't know how the book ends until maybe the last 50 pages," he said.

Wilson doesn't devote full time to writing. He works part-time in medicine and also does contract work for the U.S. Department of Defense.

He typically writes five days a week, for a couple hours at a stretch. He said he's found that his writing is more effective when he works in concentrated bursts.

He does that to discipline himself. If he's at home and his kids — Jack, Emma and Connor — are there, he would rather spend time with them than work on his writing, Wilson said. He is married to Wendy, an adjunct faculty member at the University of Tampa.

Wilson isn't the only one who enjoys writing. His son Connor told him one day that he would like to write a story. Wilson said he encouraged him to do so, and much to his surprise, his son wrote a 45-page book, which was picked up by a publisher in Chicago.

Since then, Connor, now 13, has made appearances with his book, "A Giant Pencil," and has even made joint book signings with his dad.

For more information about Jeffrey Wilson, visit www.jeffreywilsonfiction.com. To learn more about Connor Wilson, visit www.thegiantpencil.com

DANIELS, from page 1

known as "Charlie's Lodge" after Daniels himself.

"Everyone has a different story," Williams said. "We have quite a few whose parents are just too old to take care of them anymore, and others who just need specialized care they couldn't get anywhere else."

The facility has operated on some government subsidies, but that has dwindled over the years to where private donations are more crucial than ever. And while the number of residents might seem low, it takes up to 80 employees to keep The Angelus functioning, providing much-needed around-the-clock care.

"While the state is cutting your money, they are continually raising their standards on what you have to do as a facility," Williams said. "We have no problem giving our residents the best care, but all of it costs money."

If you go

WHAT: Team Farrell presents the Charlie Daniels Sporting Clay Shootout

WHO: The Angelus of Hudson

WHEN: Dec. 7, beginning at 8 a.m.

WHERE: Tampa Bay Sporting Clays, 10514 Ehren Cutoff, Land O' Lakes

INFO: Tammy Williams, (727) 243-8293

Daniels, who is probably best known for his songs like "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," first learned about The Angelus 23 years ago. He was asked to help raise a little bit of money for the facility, and he just never stopped.

Skip Schaer had the same problem. He owns Schaer Development of Central Florida Inc., a site development company located on Hunt Road, just off State Road 54 in Land O' Lakes. It started with his son volunteering for the organization more than 16

years ago, and the next thing he knew, Schaer himself had become involved — working his way right up into the organization's board of directors.

While it was always nice to know Daniels would make the trip to Florida to help The Angelus each year, it wasn't until Schaer saw him in action during a Sunday service on one of his visits that he truly understood the singer's devotion to the organization.

"He brought some of the celebrities with him, and everyone was waiting for him at Charlie's Lodge," Schaer said. "He walked in the door, and without saying a word to anybody, he went to each one of the kids to speak with them. They would take his face into their hands, and he would just continue, one after another, talking with every single one of them."

Charlie's Lodge was built in 1999 with the help of more than 600 volunteers, and

has been a quiet refuge for residents and employees alike at The Angelus.

Although the Charlie Daniels event originated in Pasco County, in recent years it has moved south to the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Tampa. That's where Daniels and others will perform Saturday night.

But with The Angelus and the weekend fundraiser roots in Pasco, Schaer looked for an opportunity to bring it back. And shooting clays in Land O' Lakes seemed like the perfect opportunity.

"We are hoping that we have a lot of local folks who will come out and support us here in their own backyard," Schaer said. "Charlie and everyone else will be there, and they are all very hands-on. They never have a problem posing for pictures or signing autographs."

But shooting slots are already filling up, even at \$150 for an individual or \$600 for a four-person team.

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Thousands expected at arts and crafts festival at Lake Park

By B.C. Manion
bcmanion@cnewspubs.com

Every year, for the past three decades, the Lutz Arts & Crafts Festival has attracted thousands to this community north of Tampa.

The event, Dec. 7 and Dec. 8 at Lake Park, 17302 N. Dale Mabry Highway in Lutz, features nearly 250 vendors offering paintings, photography, jewelry, woodcarving, ceramics, pottery, stained glass, quilts and food.

The event, co-sponsored by the GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club and Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department, is free after a \$2 per vehicle parking charge.

The art show is juried, with cash prizes awarded by the Woman's Club.

A variety of foods will be available, with the Woman's Club booth offering breakfast items, hot dogs and the club's peach cobbler. Other food booths will offer barbecue, Cuban selections sausages, funnel cakes and other items.

The event gives shoppers a chance to peruse booths to find holiday gifts and décor. It also raises money for the Woman's Club, which uses the proceeds to support many local organizations, said Phyllis Hoedt, co-chairwoman of the festival.

It's a popular event, attracting as many as 30,000 visitors.

The show enjoys a good reputation, and vendor booths sell out shortly after applications become available each March, Hoedt



Vendors display their wares at the annual Lutz Arts & Crafts Festival. (File photo)

If you go

WHAT: The 34th Annual Lutz Arts & Crafts Festival
WHEN: Dec. 7 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Dec. 8 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.
WHERE: Lake Park, 17302 N. Dale Mabry Highway (on the west side of Dale Mabry, south of Van Dyke Road)
COST: Admission is free, with \$2 charge for parking

said. Many of the event's vendors come from other states to set up their tents at the festival.

Pulling off the annual event requires an army of volunteers, Hoedt said. The Civil Air Patrol, the Boy Scouts and the Woman's Club itself provide dozens of helpers, and community volunteers pitch in, too.

For additional information, call Hoedt at (813) 949-1937, or her co-chairwoman, Shirley Simmons at (813) 949-7060.

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Private 1st Class Edward G. Coppin graduated from the U.S. Marine Corps basic training at Parris Island, S.C., where he earned a sharpshooter medal.

At the same time his sister, Petty Officer 2nd Class Marissa L. Coppin with the U.S. Coast Guard, was deployed to Bahrain.

Both are the children of Bruce Coppin of Tampa and Karen Keen of Wesley Chapel. Both also are graduates of Wesley Chapel High School, with Marissa Coppin receiving her diploma in 2007, and Edward Coppin crossing the stage this past summer.



Edward G. Coppin



Marissa L. Coppin



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Pantopia to open at Busch Gardens next year

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Busch Gardens Tampa will not only open North America's tallest freestanding drop tower next spring, but it will also unveil a new themed area: Pantopia.

Being built in the area currently known as Timbuktu, the new Pantopia will boast elaborately jeweled theming and feature rides and attractions, new food and beverage options, entertainment, shopping, and a renovated indoor theater.

The centerpiece of Pantopia will be Falcon's Fury, a drop tower that stands 335 feet. Once riders make it to the top, they will pivot 90 degrees in midair into a face-

down dive position. From there they will plunge at 60 mph at 3.5 Gs.

"In addition to the power and allure of Falcon's Fury, Pantopia will celebrate the spirit of animals, welcome adventurers from the four corners of the Earth, explore ancient lore and display fantastic architecture," said Jim Dean, president of Busch Gardens, in a release. "Guests will find multiple portals and doorways, and learn about the legends that have drawn journeyers from around the world to Pantopia."

Park-goers can keep up with what's happening with Falcon's Fury and Pantopia by visiting FalconsFury.com.



Food trucks like this will gather on the first Friday of each month at the Lutz First Friday Food Truck Rally. The idea is to provide a community gathering spot, while raising money for the Lutz Citizens Coalition and Lutz Preparatory School. (Photo courtesy of Tampa Bay Food Truck Rally)

'First Friday' food truck rally debuts

By B.C. Manion
bcmalion@cnewspubs.com

People who want to grab a bite to eat can check out a new option this Friday at the Lutz First Friday Food Truck Rally.

The event will be the first Friday of every month, said Mike White, president and founder of the Lutz Citizens Coalition.

The coalition and Lutz Preparatory have partnered to put on the event, which will raise money for the school and the citizens coalition. It runs from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Dec. 6, at Lutz Preparatory School, 17951 N. U.S. 41.

"It's just going to be a good time," White said. "Come enjoy some good company and relax. It's no cooking. No dishes. No hassles."

He thinks the food truck rally will become part of a local tradition, as families who are headed to football games, ballet recitals and other events will stop to grab a bite to eat. The money raised from the event will go to support the U.S. 41 tree project, cleanups on Sunset Lane, and other efforts by the coalition to help protect the quality of life in Lutz, White said.

The food truck rally will offer patrons plenty of choices, said Michael Blasco, chief executive officer of Tampa Bay Food Truck Rally. It will feature a dozen food trucks offering such options as gourmet hot dogs, Cajun food, flatbread, cheesesteaks, pressed sandwiches, South American and Italian fu-

sion, and, of course, desserts.

"It's like traveling the world," Blasco said.

The food truck rally is just one of the events happening in Lutz this month. The community will also have its final celebration to mark its 100th year: The Lutz Centennial Christmas Card Lane.

That is set to run from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Dec. 17 on the Train Depot grounds at the corner of U.S. 41 and Lutz Lake Fern Road.

Lutz and Maniscalco elementary schools will provide entertainment with Lutz Guv'na Suzin Carr acting as emcee.

The evening also includes the lighting of the Christmas tree and an appearance by Santa.

Organizers are encouraging attendees to bring a blanket and lawn chairs.

Any Lutz resident, business, club or organization that wants to display a Christmas card can make one using either a quarter-inch plywood or 10mm Corex, the material that is used to make white yard sale signs.

Anyone who would like to participate should bring their card to Lutz Memorial Park, which is across the street from the Train Depot, between 8:30 and noon on Dec. 14. Boy Scout Troop 12 will set up the card.

For more information about Centennial Christmas Card Lane, call (813) 949-1937.

For more information about the food truck rally, call Tampa Bay Food Truck Rally at (813) 464-5600.

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LIBRARIES

Land O' Lakes Branch Library

- Toddler Storytime, 10:15 a.m., and 10:45 a.m., Dec. 20 and Dec. 27
- Preschool Storytime, 11:30 a.m., Dec. 6, Dec. 20 and Dec. 27
- Reading Buddies, 10 a.m., Dec. 7, Dec. 14 and Dec. 21
- Popcorn and a Movie, 2 p.m., Dec. 7
- Teen Advisory Board, 6 p.m., Dec. 10
- Computer Skills, 10 a.m., Dec. 11
- Taste of Sunshine, 5 p.m., Dec. 11
- Social Seniors, 10 a.m., Dec. 14
- Breakfast with Santa, 10:30 a.m., Dec. 13
- Chess Club, 2 p.m. Dec. 14 and Dec. 28
- Tween Craft: 3-D Snowflake Fun, 2 p.m., Dec. 14
- Japanese Class, 3 p.m., Dec. 14 and Dec. 28
- Teen event, 6 p.m., Dec. 17
- Land O' Lakes Book Club, 1:30 p.m., Dec. 18
- Friends of the Land O' Lakes Library, 2:30 p.m., Dec. 18
- Friday Afternoon Movie, 1:15 p.m., Dec. 20
- Young Adult Book Share, 10 a.m., Dec. 21
- Kids Crafts – Holiday, 2 p.m., Dec. 21
- Closed all day – Christmas holiday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 25
- Senior Games, 10 a.m., Dec. 26
- Flash Fiction Writing, 10 a.m., Dec. 28
- Closed all day – New Year's Holiday, Dec. 31

The library is closed Sundays and Mondays, and is located at 2818 Collier Parkway. It can be reached at (813) 929-1214.

Austin Davis Public Library

- Tai Chi with Bonnie Birdsall, 6:15 p.m., Dec. 9 and Dec. 18
- Baby Time 11:30 a.m., Dec. 10 and Dec. 17
- Microsoft Access – Basic Queries and Filters, 3:30 p.m., Dec. 5
- Puppet Show: The Shoemaker and the Elves,

- 10:30 a.m., and 3:30 p.m., Dec. 11
 - Microsoft OneNote, 3:30 p.m., Dec. 12
 - Pinterest, 3:30 p.m., Dec. 19
 - Early closing, 6 p.m. Dec. 23, Dec. 26 and Dec. 31
 - Closed all day – Christmas holiday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 25
- The library is located at 17808 Wayne Road in Odessa, and can be reached at (813) 273-3652.

Lutz Branch Library

- Storytime, 11:30 a.m. Dec. 10 and Dec. 17
 - Lucky Cat Yoga: Chair Yoga, 10:30 a.m., Dec. 4 and Dec. 18
 - Baby Time, 10:15 a.m., Dec. 5, Dec. 12 and Dec. 19
 - Toddler Time, 11 a.m., Dec. 5, Dec. 12 and Dec. 19
 - Scrapbooking at the Depot, 10:30 a.m., Dec. 7
 - Chess Do It at the Lutz Library, 1 p.m., Dec. 7 and Dec. 21
 - Library Website, 2 p.m., Dec. 9
 - Knitting at the Depot, 6 p.m., Dec. 10
 - Book Discussion: Skipping Christmas, 6:30 p.m., Dec. 10
 - ABCs and 123s of Yoga, 11 a.m., Dec. 11
 - Tail Waggin' Tutors, 2 p.m., Dec. 14
 - eBooks and eReaders: An Introduction, 2 p.m., Dec. 16
 - Block Party, 6:30 p.m., Dec. 16
 - Atlantic Coast Theatre: "Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus," 6:30 p.m., Dec. 16
 - Jump, Jive and Jam, 11:30 a.m., Dec. 18
 - Early closings, 6 p.m., Dec. 23, Dec. 26 and Dec. 31
 - Closed all day – Christmas, Dec. 24 and Dec. 25
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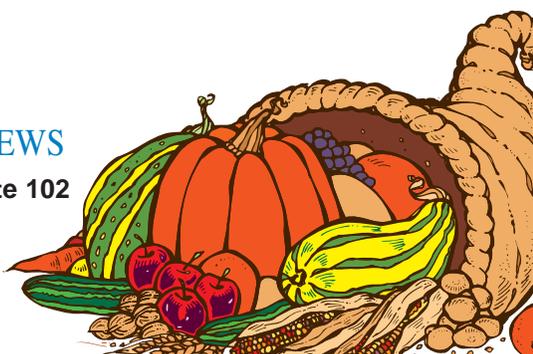
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Making holidays for the birds

By Melinda Myers
Special to The Laker/Lutz News

Add a little holiday sparkle to your landscape for you and your guests to enjoy. No matter the weather outside, a few decorative touches can greatly increase the beauty and enjoyment of your winter landscape.

Try one, two or all eight of these tips to improve your landscape's winter appeal.

Add some solar-powered accents. Light a pathway, your favorite tree or front porch without installing additional outlets. Look for unique colors and shapes like the solar star lantern or the changing colors of northern lights spheres for added appeal.

The wide variety now available can help create a memorable winter display. Be sure to select solar accents that provide hours of enjoyment when fully charged.

Create an outdoor holiday tree for you and your feathered visitors to enjoy. Decorate a few of your evergreen trees and shrubs with purchased or homemade birdseed ornaments. Holiday shapes made of energy-rich birdseed and suet give the trees a holiday flare, while providing important food for birds to enjoy.

These also make great gifts for your favorite gardener or bird watcher.

Light up your winter containers. Fill a weatherproof planter with potting mix or play sand. Purchase greens from your favorite garden center or trim a few from your landscape. Stick the cut end of the greens in the potting mix or sand to create an attractive display.

Add some colorful berries, decorative twigs and ribbon. Then add some height and light to your winter container with fiber optic solar lights.

Place the container by your front steps for holiday visitors to enjoy day or night.

Increase color and motion with the help of heated birdbaths. Attract greater numbers and variety of birds by providing water year-round.

Northern gardeners should consider heated birdbaths to ensure water is available even during the coldest months. Further, help the birds by adding a few stones or branches to the birdbath. This allows the birds to drink without getting wet, helping them to preserve their body heat.

Create your own homemade outdoor lights. Line pathways, accent plantings or dress up fence posts with ice globe luminaries.



Birdseed ornaments can add some holiday décor to the landscape while providing much-needed nutrients for the birds. (Photo courtesy of Gardener's Supply Co.)

Produce your own, or purchase ready-to-make kits. Use colorful outdoor light-emitting diode fixtures, or tea candles to light up blocks or sphere of ice.

You and your family will have fun creating these memorable night-time accents.

Add some livable art. Hang a few colorful and unique birdhouses in your backyard. They provide color and whimsy to the winter garden, and will be ready for your feathered friends to move in this spring.

Include a 'gingerbread' house for the birds. Hang decorative birdseed houses from a shepherd's crook or tree branch. Be sure to place it in an area where you and the birds can enjoy the decorative treat.

Look for a sheltered, but open, area where the birds can watch for predators while enjoying their winter feast.

Move your holiday tree outdoors. Place your cut tree in a vacant spot in the garden, or make it part of your bird-feeding station. The tree provides some extra greenery in the often-drab winter landscape, as well as shelter for visiting birds.

Then add a few of those birdseed ornaments for added food and winter decoration.

Gardening expert, television and radio host, author, and columnist Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience, and has written more than 20 gardening books. Her website, www.MelindaMyers.com, offers gardening videos and tips.

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- 2.) Email your recipe and if you want, attach a jpg photo of your cookie, to news@cnewspubs.com. Put "Cookie Recipes" in the subject line and don't forget to include your name, address, phone number, email and the story behind your recipe.
- 3.) Drop off your recipe and entry form at our office in **Copperstone Executive Suites at 3632 Land O' Lakes Blvd, Suite 102, Land O' Lakes, FL 34639.**



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Land O' Lakes girls soccer: Undefeated and focused

By Michael Murillo

The Laker/Lutz News Correspondent

When a high school team is undefeated after winning games by scores such as 8-0, 7-0, 9-1 and 6-1, you might think they have a very good baseball program with talented athletes on offense and defense.

And that assumption would be correct. Except for one thing: Those aren't baseball scores. They're soccer scores.

The girls soccer team at Land O' Lakes High School isn't just beating their opponents on their way to an 11-0 record, they're burying them with 65 goals in 11 games, versus just eight goals scored against them. Only two games have been close (each decided by one goal), and they rule Class 3A-District 8 with a 10-0 record.

Land O' Lakes has a strong history — they've won their district the past two seasons — and a very bright future this year. But don't tell that to Coach Vicky King. She doesn't let her players rest on their laurels or look past opponents toward the end of the season. They focus only on the practice ahead of them, the next opponent and playing good soccer every time they step onto the pitch.

"We don't even talk about our wins and losses. No one has talked about our record at all," King said with a decisive tone. "We don't take anything for granted. We have to earn every goal. Nothing will be given to us."

In fact, King said she doesn't even remember her team's record last year, even though they won the district title. Her time isn't spent on the past, but getting the Gators ready for their next opponent.

Now in her 27th year coaching soccer at Land O' Lakes, King has guided dozens of different teams. She noted that this squad is very talented, and while they do have a standout scorer — sophomore Victoria Cannata leads the team with 12 goals — the Gators have 16 players who have scored at least one goal so far this season. That diversity in offense makes them difficult to defend, and gives the team a number of options they can use to attack their opponent.

"You can't shut us down by shutting down one person," King said. "We have a lot



Land O' Lakes coach Vicky King gives a pep talk last winter to a team that finished with its second straight district title. The Gators have a strong start to this season, off to an 11-0 start, and averaging just under six goals a game. (File photo)

of depth. We've created a lot of scoring opportunities that we haven't created the past two years."

Senior Brooke Silvest has played soccer all throughout high school, and notices something special about this year's team. Even though they're very young and skilled, it's been improved team chemistry that has made a difference.

"We all work really well together," she said. "We all get along much better than we ever have in the past. That helps a lot."

Players aren't selfish with the ball, often choosing to earn an assist rather than take the shot themselves. Talented underclassmen have chemistry with the more experienced players, and as a result, Silvest believes this is the school's best girls soccer

team since she's been a member.

Silvest and the team have also bought into King's philosophy, making no assumptions before a game and maintaining focus throughout their matches, regardless of the score. She admits that some of the earlier games were closer than they should have been because they weren't playing their best (and possibly looking ahead on the schedule), but their focus is now always on the task in front of them.

The team goes into each match with the simple goal of working hard, rather than considering opponents' records or their own past performances, Silvest said.

And while she doesn't want to deviate from that strategy, Silvest has a lot of optimism about the team's potential, and

believes they have a chance to eclipse last year's accomplishments.

"Last year we got knocked out in regional semis, and I think we can go to state this year," Silvest said. "We're a much better team, and I think we can beat the team that knocked us out."

The Gators still have a half-dozen district games remaining on the schedule, including a rematch against Sunlake, whose only loss was a 2-1 defeat to Land O' Lakes last month. But whatever they accomplish this year, it will be with a commitment to growing as a team and getting better with each game.

"We should improve," King said. "We don't want to peak too early. We want to improve as the season goes on."

CHECK THIS OUT

Adult soccer league wants players

With the fall season ready to commence, adult soccer players are being sought to participate in a league that plays men's, women's and coed games Sunday afternoons at CrossRoads Community Methodist Church on County Line Road in Wesley Chapel.

Players must be 18 or older.

For more information, call Colin at (747) 999-5425, or visit NewAPSL.com.

Sign up for lacrosse tournament

Registrations are now being accepted for the 2014 Lax Max Florida Lacrosse Tournament taking place at Lakewood Ranch on the weekend of April 6.

Lax Max is designed for recreational travel and town team programs within Florida. The event offers a choice of either one-day three-game jamboree, or a two-day tournament. It features boys and girls round-robin competitions at various levels for ages under-10 through under-18.

For more information, visit USAmateurSports.com, or email usamateursports@aol.com.

Flapjack 5k run

The 20th annual Flapjack 5k Race will take

place Dec. 15 at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Complex, 3032 Collier Parkway in Land O' Lakes.

The event, hosted by the Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce and presented by Esmeralda's Boutique, begins at 8 a.m. for the 5-kilometer race, and 8:45 a.m. for the 1-mile race.

Adults are \$20 and kids and teens through their senior year of high school are \$15 through Dec. 5. After that, all entries are \$25.

For more information, visit CentralPascoChamber.com, or Active.com.

Local players are national champs

Clearwater Christian College's volleyball team won the 2013 National Christian College Athletic Association Division II national championship Nov. 16.

The Cougars entered the tournament seeded second, and secured the title after defeating six opponents, including Ozark Christian College in the final match.

Two Odessa players were part of the team — Devan and Karley Dampier. They are both graduates of Mitchell High School, and are the daughters of Drew and JaneAnn Dampier of Odessa.

Devan Dampier is pursuing a degree in ex-

ercise sport science at the school, while Karly Dampier is pursuing a degree in interdisciplinary studies.

Free hoop shoot for kids

The Zephyrhills Elks Lodge will host the Local Lodge National Elks Hoop Shoot free throw contest Dec. 7 at the East Pasco Family YMCA, 3701 Chapel Hill Loop.

The contest is open to boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 13, and is free to participants. Registration is at 8:30 a.m. at the YMCA gymnasium.

All participants are required to wear gym shoes, T-shirt, and pants or gym shorts. Basketball uniforms are acceptable, but not required.

Following the competition, the participants and their families are invited to a luncheon and awards ceremony hosted by the Elk Lodge, located at 6851 Wire Road in Zephyrhills.

For more information, call Jay Klamer at (813) 782-2861.

Senior Slo Pitch registration

The Slo Pitch Softball League, geared toward players older than 60, will host registration every Friday beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Complex, 3932 Collier Parkway in Land O' Lakes.

Teams will be balanced, and will play Friday mornings. For more information, call Walt Bockmiller at (813) 527-8211.

Contest has schools cheering

The Florida High School Athletics Association has launched the Sunshine State Spirit Showdown, a video contest in which students are encouraged to submit videos showing their classmates and community exhibiting positive sportsmanship while rooting for their favorite school.

Students from around the state are invited to submit videos ranging in length from 90 seconds to three minutes, including at least 30 seconds on why that school's student section is the greatest.

Videos can be uploaded to www.FHSAA.org/upload by Jan. 31.

Fans will then have a chance to vote for their favorite video, with voting to last from Feb. 6 until March 6. Taking those votes into consideration, FHSAA's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee will conduct final judging. The winner will be announced March 10. Judges will look at sportsmanship, participation, school spirit, organization, creativity and fun.

Students are encouraged to make the videos unique by including anything from picture montages and background music, to special chants, or even choreographed dances.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/SpiritShowdown.

—Submit your sports updates to mhinman@cnewspubs.com.

FHSAA wants to change athlete eligibility rules

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Athletes looking to play sports at the school of their choice could soon get a little reprieve under a proposed new rule.

The Florida High School Athletic Association said it's looking to narrow the focus of its so-called "follow the coach" rule, which currently restricts a player from participating in sports at a school that includes a coach they've worked with outside the school.

Bylaw 9.2.4 prohibits students from transferring schools in order to play for a coach who guided them in a non-school activity, such as travel ball or a club team, the FHSAA said. The idea behind the rule was to prevent coaches from using those activities as a recruiting tool through "previous contact."

The new rule would open up other sports to the athlete over the one-year waiting period, and only restrict specifically the sport the coach is involved with. Yet, the athlete could even play the affected sport, as long as it's not at the varsity level.

That means if a student played on a travel team headed by a rival school's basketball coach, and then transferred to that school, he could not play varsity basketball there for one year, but he could play football, baseball or other sports, the FHSAA said.

Students who choose a high school out of middle school would be able to compete without restriction, even if it involves a coach they met through non-school activity.

Athletes would be allowed to fully participate in the sport without the one-year restriction, if the coach in question has not

been a part of the program's impacted sport for a period of at least one year.

Roger Dearing, FHSAA's executive director, said the rules would "ensure fairness" by focusing enforcement actions only on those schools where sanctions would be required.

"Our goal has always been to provide the best possible environment for our student-athletes, and maintain a level field where everyone plays by the same rules," Dearing said, in a release.

The change — which also adjusts mediation standards — came, in part, because of the 2012 enactment of House Bill 1403 that altered previous FHSAA policies limiting a student's ability to participate in athletics following certain school transfers. It allowed students who obtained an approved transfer to participate in athletics right away, and put the burden of proof on high school administrators when it came to potential recruiting violations.

The FHSAA's proposed bylaw changes would continue to prohibit recruiting for athletic purposes, and were developed in part through input from high school officials through a "core value" survey over the summer.

Nearly half of the appeals over the last two years involved freshmen entering high school for the first time, the FHSAA said. The new rule would eliminate many of those appeals, since students finishing middle school and entering high school can do so without worrying about whether a coach there had previous contact with them.

The proposed bylaw changes would go before the FHSAA Representative Assembly in January. If approved, they would take effect for the 2014-15 school year.



A successful hunt

Morgan Wade, 17, joined her father Alan Wade recently on a hunting trip to Levy County, and picked up not only this six-point, 118-pound buck, but also a 172-pound black boar on the same day. Morgan, of Lutz, is a senior at Freedom High School, and is a member of the Lutz Leaguettes softball team. (Photo courtesy of Alan Wade)



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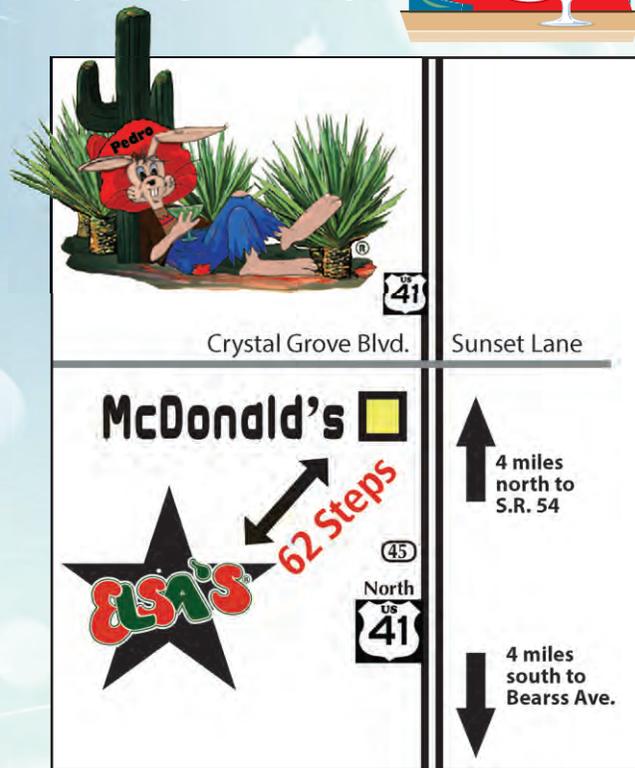
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WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters in each word to spell Santa's name in places around the world. (Hint: Sweden)

TOMENJLTU

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

ANSWER: Julitten

SEE SOLUTION, PAGE 30

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CRYPTOQUIZ

Each of the following cryptograms is a clue to the identity of a celebrity chef. Using the hints I=O and M=P, decipher the clues to name the chef.

- 1 OMMFUOBRKA
- 2 AMOLI
- 3 MIAGCUI
- 4 RJG
- 5 RIIWDOCK

This chef is known for the catchphrase "Live, love, eat!"

Answers: 1) Appliances, 2) Spago, 3) Postrio, 4) CUT, 5) Cookware, Wolfgang Puck

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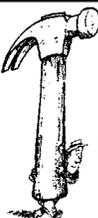
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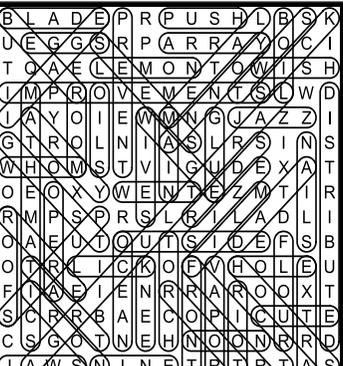
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LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE OF ACTION BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

IN RE: The Teacher's Certificate of:

Randall Owen Johnson
7611 Notre Dame Drive, Apt. B
New Port Richey, Florida 34653

Notice is hereby given to Randall Owen Johnson, Respondent, of the prosecution of an Administrative Complaint seeking the revocation or suspension of his teacher's certificate.

If Respondent, Randall Owen Johnson, wishes to schedule an informal conference under the provisions of Section 120.60(6), Florida Statutes, with all requirements for the retention of the certificate, he should contact Marian Lambeth, Office of Professional Practices Services, Florida Education Center, 325 West Gaines Street, Room 224-E, Tallahassee, Florida 32399, (850) 245-0438.

If such a conference is not requested, this notice shall constitute service of the Administrative Complaint, which shall be filed with the Education Practices Commission.

Failure to file a response to the complaint with the Education Practices Commission, Florida Education Center, 325 West Gaines Street, Room 224, Tallahassee, Florida 32399 by January 28, 2014 shall constitute holding the Respondent in default. The Complaint will then be considered by the Education Practices Commission for final action to impose disciplinary sanctions, including revocation or suspension, under the terms of Section 120.57, 120.60, 1012.79, 1012.795, and 1012.796, Florida Statutes.

PLEASE BE GOVERNED ACCORDINGLY.

Dated this 22nd day of October, 2013

Pam Stewart
Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

Notices

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