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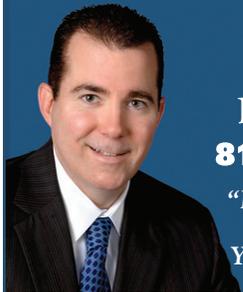
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## Proposed school taxes to be lower

By B.C. Manion

bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

After years of gut-wrenching personnel cuts, Pasco County Schools expects to add employees this year, while reducing tax bills for property owners and balancing a budget of nearly \$1.2 billion.

The proposed budget is based on a tax rate of \$7.15 per \$1,000 of taxable value compared to a tax rate of \$7.36 this year.

Based on this year's proposed budget, the owner of a \$100,000 home, after \$50,000 in exemptions, would pay \$357.50 in school taxes, a reduction of \$10.50 from the current rate.

The proposed budget anticipates the district's enrollment to be 67,955, an increase of 925 over last year.

Allocations in the budget include:

- \$500,000 to cover costs associated with opening Sanders Memorial, Quail

Hollow and Shady Hills elementary schools, which are slated to reopen in the 2015-16 school year.

- \$7.9 million for the equivalent of 176 full-time positions, primarily to comply with state class size requirements.

- \$2.8 million for professional and curriculum mandates.

- \$1.5 million for increased health insur-

See TAXES, page 12

## Special needs classes struggling to stay afloat

By Michael Murillo

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Megan Burgess loves to paint and sing. She looks forward to her weekly art and music class, designed for people with special needs, which are Thursday evenings at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Complex on Collier Parkway. But if it doesn't get more support, she might lose that opportunity.

And that loss would be felt by both Megan and her mother.

"It would be horrible. You want the kids to be socializing," Violetta Burgess said.

Her daughter Megan, 21, has low-functioning autism. She has trouble communicating verbally, but her enthusiasm for the class is clear: When Violetta tells her it's time for art or music, Megan goes to find her shoes. She knows where she's going that night, and has a fun time singing, using percussion instruments, painting and participating with everyone else in the class.

The problem is that "everyone" was just five students this past session. And for VSA Florida, the state branch of Very Special Arts — an international nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding art opportunities for people with disabilities — five is simply not enough.

"It does put the program in jeopardy, because if we don't keep our numbers up, we're not able to keep it going," said Wendy Finklea, VSA Florida's director of programs. "We aren't at the point where the class is sustaining itself."

The class requires at least seven students to break even, but really needs a steady ros-



MICHAEL HINMAN/STAFF PHOTOS

Megan Burgess snaps photos at her weekly art class at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Complex with art teacher Angela Dickerson looking on. VSA Florida's art and music classes for special needs students aren't breaking even, and if attendance doesn't improve, the program could be in jeopardy.

ter of 10 or more students to be financially viable long-term. The \$40 per month that participants pay not only compensates the teachers who direct the classes, but also covers a nominal fee the organization pays

the recreation complex.

Since classes moved from the University of South Florida to Land O' Lakes in January,

See SPECIAL, page 12

## MOSI gives health screenings new meaning with theater upgrades

By Michael Hinman

mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

When the Imax theater first opened at Tampa's Museum of Science & Industry in 1995, the technology behind the larger-than-life films was still quite revolutionary.

Today, however, it's hard to find a movie complex without an Imax screen, and nearly all of them are digital — leaps and bounds beyond MOSI's now almost antiquated film-based system.

But that's changing after a \$2 million donation from Florida Hospital that will not only rename the dome theater after the hos-

pital chain, it will bring science to the masses in ways that were never imagined 20 years ago. Called "Florida Hospital Presents Live SX," surgeons at local hospitals will perform routine surgeries, which will be broadcast live to MOSI's Coleman Science Works Theater for middle school, high school and college students.

"Live SX" will be a lot like the more traditional surgery amphitheatres, except without the need to travel to a hospital. Surgeons will answer questions from the audience, and provide a glimpse into surgery many may not have had otherwise.

"We believe that investing in MOSI is important for the community," said Mike

Schultz, president and chief executive of Florida Hospital West Florida Region, during a check presentation at the Fowler Avenue museum last week. We believe our investment will help support MOSI as it moves forward, to create long-term sustainability of the museum, and further (develop) future scientists and health care professionals while helping develop the work force in the greater Tampa Bay area.

"We want to make a difference."

Access to medical professionals in this way is something many don't get to experience otherwise, especially in suburban areas

See MOSI, page 12

# State outlines sales tax holiday guidelines

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Florida's back-to-school sales tax holiday returns Aug. 1-3, which will provide tax exemptions for clothing items up to \$100 each, as well as up to \$750 on computers and related accessories.

The clothing amount is increased from \$75 in previous years.

The tax waiving does not apply to clothing selling for more than \$100, or any school supply item selling for more than \$15. It also does not cover anything purchased in a theme park, entertainment complex, public lodging establishment or airport.

Eligible items purchased during the holiday period using a gift card will qualify for the exemption, regardless of when the gift card was purchased, officials said. Eligible items purchased with a gift card after the holiday period are taxable, even if the gift card was purchased during the holiday period.

Shoppers also should be careful of special sales, like buy one and get one free, or

buy one and get one for a reduced price. The items cannot be averaged to qualify for the exemption.

However, if a customer purchases an eligible item during the holiday period, but then exchanges it for the same item, no tax will be due, even if the exchange is made after the holiday period. If a customer purchases an eligible item during the holiday period, then later returns the item and receives credit on the purchase of a different item, the new item purchased is subject to sales tax.

When it comes to rain checks, eligible items purchased during the holiday period will qualify for the exemption regardless of when the rain check was issued. However, issuance of a rain check during the holiday period will not qualify an item to be eligible for the exemption if it's purchased after Aug. 3.

For more information on how the sales tax holiday is covered, visit MyFlorida.com/DOR, or call (800) 352-3671 between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.



Send business news to [mhinman@lakerlutznews.com](mailto:mhinman@lakerlutznews.com)

## LOCAL BUSINESSES BOAST SUCCESSFUL EVENTS

The Connerton community on U.S. 41 recently treated 700 guests to an extended holiday celebration with its July Fifth Big Event — an old-fashioned neighborhood party in its new town community.

The event included local bands, food trucks, games, and 30 minutes of holiday fireworks.

Also having a successful recent event was Gulfside Hospice & Pasco Palliative Care for its first Founder's Day celebration in New Port Richey. More than 150 people attended.

The program celebrated 25 years of the company, which was originally founded as Central Gulfside Hospice in 1988.

## WATCH N' PLAY COMES TO RADIANT

David and Aggie Gainer of Land O' Lakes will compete with Redbox with a new Watch N' Play kiosk at Radiant stores in the area.

The first has opened at the Radiant on the corner of Collier Parkway and State Road 54, with a second location in the next couple months at a new store under construction near State Road 54 and Interstate 75 near the entrance to The Grove shopping center in Wesley Chapel.

The kiosk offers new DVD movies and video games 28 days ahead of Redbox, David Gainer said, as well as the ability of customers to purchase movies and games directly from the kiosk.

The franchise, also owned by Selma Jones and Keisha Jones, plans to open seven locations in Pasco and northern Hillsborough counties over the next year, joining more than 190 Watch N' Play locations at Radiant nationally.

The Pasco locations are the first in Florida for the service.

## MARKETING SUMMIT IN TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Marketing Summit will take place Aug. 8 beginning at 8:45 a.m., at Mainsail Conference Center, 5108 Eisenhower Blvd., in Tampa.

The event is hosted by EMSI in Wesley Chapel, which provides news content for print and online news outlets, as well as television and radio talk shows.

For information, visit [TampaBayMarketingSummit.com](http://TampaBayMarketingSummit.com), or call Marsha Friedman at (727) 443-7115, Ext. 201.

## FLORIDA TRADITIONS ACQUISITION FINALIZED

Home BancShares Inc., the parent company of Centennial Bank, has finalized its acquisition of Florida Traditions Bank, and its branches located in eastern Pasco and Hillsborough counties, among other places.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but previous published reports put the sale at \$43 million in stock. The combined Centennial Bank will now boast \$7 billion in total assets, and \$5.5 billion in total deposits in nearly 150 branches in Florida, Arkansas and Alabama.

Bud Stalnaker, the chief executive of Florida Traditions, will stay on with the new Centennial as division president for Central Florida.

Florida Traditions was founded in 2007 by a group of East Pasco County business owners who saw a need for a locally owned and locally managed bank, according to the company's website. It had eight branches in Zephyrhills, Dade City, Spring Hill, Winter Haven, Lakeland, Plant City, Kissimmee and St. Cloud.

## PASCO EDC ANNUAL BANQUET

The 2014 Pasco Economic Development Council annual banquet will be Sept. 2 beginning at 5 p.m., at Saddlebrook Resort Grand Pavilion, 5700 Saddlebrook Way in Wesley Chapel.

Cost is \$75 per person.

For more information, or to make a reservation, call (813) 926-0827, or email [suzanne@pascoedc.com](mailto:suzanne@pascoedc.com).

## EDI2 NEEDS APPLICANTS

Hillsborough County's Economic Development Innovation Initiative will stop taking applications for its fourth funding cycle Aug. 1.

The program is developed to drive the growth of technology and innovation at start-up companies and small businesses. It encompasses the need for financial, technical and infrastructure support, and addresses the Hillsborough County Commission's support of the business community.

Since its launch last year, 55 applicants have received just under \$600,000 in funds to support the growing entrepreneurial ecosystem through support of events, industry promotions and service providers.

For information, visit [HillsboroughCounty.org/EDI2](http://HillsboroughCounty.org/EDI2), or call Jennifer Whelihan at (813) 272-6217.

## 'DANCING WITH OUR STARS' RETURNS

The Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce will once again host "Dancing With Our Stars," with a performance scheduled for Oct. 18.

The chamber still has a few dance slots to fill, as well as a need for volunteers to help behind the scenes for the "stars" who will be trained by dance professionals to perform a short routine.

The overall winner will be based on monetary votes, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting arts programs in the community.

To participate, volunteer or even sponsor, visit [CentralPascoChamber.com](http://CentralPascoChamber.com), or call (813) 909-2722.

## WESLEY CHAPEL NETWORKING GROUP

Networking for Your Success meets every Thursday at 8 a.m., at Lexington Oaks Country, 2615 Lexington Oaks Blvd., in Wesley Chapel.

Cost is \$5, and annual membership to the group is \$79.

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# These athletes are ready to take on the world

By B.C. Manion

bcmajian@lakerlutznews.com

After claiming the gold at the Special Olympics Florida State Summer Games in May, a group of athletes from Land O' Lakes will trek to Los Angeles next summer to compete at the 2015 Special Olympics Summer World Games.

The team got the word on July 21 via Skype during a surprise announcement in a mini-auditorium at Land O' Lakes High School.

Coach Vicky King corralled members of the team to the meeting under the guise they would be talking about their gold-medal per-

formance in the state competition at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in May.

But the athletes were really there to hear about their selection as an 11-member contingent of the 15-member Team Florida.

They compete in Division 2 soccer, with seven athletes on each side of the ball. It is a unified team, meaning there are four Special Olympics athletes playing along with three partners, who are there to provide help and support.

The team will join thousands of Special Olympics athletes from 170 nations to compete for international medals for a week beginning July 25, 2015. The games include 21 Olympic-style sports.

School principal Ric Mellin, who answered the Skype call, is delighted by the news.

"Words can't express how excited I am for these students," he said. "They put a tremendous amount of effort into preparing for the local games and the state games, and I think the grittiness that they showed impressed the selection group."

The details regarding costs aren't yet in, so it is unclear how much the team may need to raise, Mellin said. Besides the trip to

L.A., the team also is expecting to spend a week in Indianapolis in a couple months to help prepare.

"If we do need to do some fundraising, that'll be a wonderful opportunity for the locals here in Land O' Lakes to provide some additional support," Mellin said. "We would greatly appreciate it. Our community has always been wonderful when we've asked for things in the past, and I'm sure they would step up and help support these students as well."

Coach King is excited about the experiences that await her athletes.

"It's an opportunity of a lifetime," she said.

King is happy the team is being rewarded for its dedication.

"We worked really, really hard this year," the coach said.

Valerie Lundin, one of the directors for Pasco County Special Olympics, said Land O'



Rufus Smith-Jones moves the ball forward during the Pasco County Games at Wesley Chapel High School, with teammates Tyler Sanders and Chris Hales right behind him.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAND O' LAKES HIGH SCHOOL

Orday Smith advances the ball during a soccer game at Wesley Chapel High School during the Pasco County Special Olympics Games on Feb. 28.

Lakes High has an exceptional Special Olympics program. The unified teams give athletes with disabilities and those without them a chance to gain a better understanding of each other.

"The premise is they get to know one another, they partner together, they travel together," she said. "So, when they're in the mall or the cafeteria, they're friends."

Ghaida Shehab said her son, Hassan, who plays on the team, is "very happy" that the team has been selected to compete. After hearing the news, he told Shehab: "See mom? Are you proud of me?"

"I think it's good for him," Shehab said, adding she plans to go the games, as well.

Tommy Guglielmello, one of the team's partners, said he enjoys the role he plays on the team.

"The partners help the game move along," Guglielmello said. "It's awesome being out there when they score."

## The LAKER / Lutz NEWS

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# From teacher to candidate, Ledbetter just can't say no

By Michael Hinman  
mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

Where there's a will, there's a way. And when there's a need, there's Beverly Ledbetter.

The retired educator has made Dade City her home since the days of Richard Nixon, inspiring thousands of students at Pasco Junior High School and later Pasco High School for more than three decades. Along the way, Ledbetter found herself in the most unexpected jobs, whether it be coaching the school's soccer team, or helping educators through her work with the teachers' union.

It was always impossible for Ledbetter to turn down a calling when she was needed, and that's what attracted her to Will Weatherford's state House seat — one that has her heading into a November contest against former Zephyrhills mayor Danny Burgess.

"There are a lot of things I see with our lawmakers that are very frustrating," she said. "I'm particularly concerned with the lack of respect in Tallahassee."

The polarizing political atmosphere that has practically crippled Washington has crept to the state level, making it impossible for someone to work with anyone they disagree with. That means Democrats — and a good chunk of the state's population they represent — are being marginalized, with no one willing to break through and find ways to come together.

"One of the things that you learn as a teacher is to look at both sides of the issue," Ledbetter said. "There are Republicans who have good ideas, just as there are Democrats who have good ideas, and they should be acknowledged."

Ledbetter has always considered herself politically minded, and has made a number of trips to Tallahassee over the years lobby-



MICHAEL HINMAN/STAFF PHOTO

**Beverly Ledbetter says she's always been motivated to find a voice for those who get pushed aside, and learned as a teacher the importance of understanding all sides of an issue. It's her drive, she says, that will get her to Tallahassee.**

ing for education. Her husband, Michael Ledbetter, was a Pasco County commissioner in the late 1970s, and the two actually met during a Young Democrats meeting at the University of South Florida several years before that.

Ledbetter actually considered running

## BEVERLY LEDBETTER

Democrat for House District 38

### OCCUPATION

Lead faculty, Saint Leo University  
Retired teacher, Pasco County Schools

### FAMILY

Michael Ledbetter, husband  
Nathan Ledbetter, son  
Courtney Williams, daughter

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for school board, but realized quickly that she can make a greater impact overall by helping to set policy at the state level.

Many observers believe the advantage in the House race belongs to Burgess, a Dade City lawyer who was Zephyrhills' youngest mayor. It's a heavily Republican district already, and Burgess has strong name recognition — especially in eastern Pasco County.

Ledbetter, however, is hardly a stranger to voters. As a teacher and a coach, she has directly touched the lives of many in the area, which could help her draw votes from beyond Democrats. In fact, many of the people who signed her petitions to get on the ballot were Republicans, she said.

Raising money is going to be tough, however.

"My friends are teachers, many of them who haven't had raises in a long time," Ledbetter said. "When I get that check from a fellow teacher, and it's usually around \$25, it gives me a warm feeling. But I also know

it's an investment that makes me feel determined to go out and work my butt off, and prove that their trust in me is well-placed."

Education is one of Ledbetter's top priorities, but it's not the only one she wants to tackle in Tallahassee. She also is pushing to expand Medicare coverage in the state to help get more residents health care through the federal Affordable Care Act. Gov. Rick Scott, a Republican who opposes the federal health care program unofficially known as Obamacare, has refused to expand Medicare, citing a concern that the cost to do that will fall back on Florida taxpayers.

"How can you look a parent in the eye and tell them their family can't have medical attention?" Ledbetter said. "I taught kids who had teeth rotting out, and kids who needed glasses. Luckily, in Dade City, we have some very generous doctors and dentists who were willing to step up and help, but not everywhere is like Dade City."

Ledbetter also wants to spur economic growth not by giving companies large amounts of money and tax breaks to locate here, but to help train the workforce so they can attract higher-wage jobs to the state.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy," she said. "When you can give them a leg up, and give them the support they need, they will create the jobs."

Ledbetter is a lifelong Democrat, but says she would prefer to label herself a "practical realist." That means acknowledging her November election is a tough one to win, but also knows that when it comes to voters, they can sometimes do the unexpected.

"It's going to be difficult, I know that," she said. "But I believe in standing up for people who can't necessarily do it for themselves, whether it's the elderly, children, or simply people who need health insurance. That's why I'm a Democrat."

## POLITICAL AGENDA

SEND POLITICAL NEWS TO MHINMAN@LAKERLUTZNEWS.COM

### BRAND USA BILL MOVES FORWARD

U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Palm Harbor, says his bill in Congress — the Travel Promotion, Enhancement and Modernization Act — passed the House recently by a vote of 347-57.

"Tourism is an integral part of our economy, especially in Florida," Bilirakis said, in a release. "Increased tourism means more American and Floridian jobs."

Bilirakis says his bill will create job growth without utilizing any taxpayer dollars.

The U.S. Senate is taking up a companion bill that Bilirakis has asked them to pass "without delay."

The bill strengthens American competitiveness in the global travel and tourism markets by reauthorizing Brand USA — a public-private partnership designed to encourage tourism in the country, according to Bilirakis. The Congressional Budget Office says Brand USA would reduce the nation's deficit by \$231 million.

The travel and tourism sector is the top industry in Florida, employing more than 1 million Floridians and generating nearly \$71.5 billion in spending.

### CHAMBERS TO HOST CANDIDATE FORUM

The Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce is joining forces with the Trinity-Odessa Chamber of Commerce to sponsor a candidate forum for both the Pasco County Commission and the Pasco County school board July 30 beginning at 6 p.m.

It will take place at Keystone Community Church, 21010 State Road 54 in Lutz.

Anyone wishing to ask questions of those running for the District 2 county commission race or the District 5 school board race can email them to office@centralpascochamber.com.

District 2, which would replace the retiring Pat Mulieri, is a Republican race involving former state Rep. Ken Littlefield, Wesley Chapel entrepreneur Mike Moore, and Zephyrhills financial analyst Bob Robertson.

The District 5 school board race is between Steve Luikart and Marc Yacht.

For information, visit online at CentralPascoChamber.com.

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# Remsberg ready to give commission an intervention

By Michael Hinman  
mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

The first step in finding out who will replace Pat Mulieri on the Pasco County Commission begins at the Aug. 26 primary. There voters will choose between three politically focused men — Ken Littlefield, Mike Moore and Bob Robertson — to represent Republicans in the November election.

But a primary win for any one of them is just the beginning. The eventual GOP nominee will have to win over voters one more time after August, and prove he's the better candidate than the lone Democrat in the race, a Land O' Lakes social worker who says she wants to return the county government's focus back to helping people.

Erika Remsberg works long hours for Pasco County Schools, helping some of the more than 1,800 students stay focused on their studies, despite the fact they don't have a place they can call home.

"You lost your home, you lost your friends, you lost your teachers and classmates, and you probably lost all your stuff if you were evicted from somewhere," Remsberg said. "Your family is focused on survival, not necessarily reading and math, and all of that can have a tremendous negative impact on their education."

Remsberg and her husband, Philip, moved to Pasco County 13 years ago to be closer to her parents. She was born in the Bronx, but raised in Long Island, graduating from New York University and marrying soon after.

Remsberg never imagined herself running for any type of elected office, but when she learned Mulieri was retiring, she feared one of the lone voices for the issues closest to her heart was going to be silenced.

"I have been very vocal that the county has not done enough to coordinate social service, and they haven't done enough to



MICHAEL HINMAN/STAFF PHOTO

**Erika Remsberg is not afraid to speak her mind, but says she also knows when compromise is needed to achieve countywide goals. She hopes that belief will help earn her a seat on the Pasco County Commission in November.**

deal with the critical needs in the county," Remsberg said. "I think Pat Mulieri has done the best job in trying to advocate and listen, but now the best advocate that we have is now retiring."

The commission has been plagued with bitter disputes over recent months, ranging from a park one commissioner wants to turn into a tourist attraction, to how the

## ERIKA REMSBERG

Democrat for Pasco County  
Commission, District 2

### OCCUPATION

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### FAMILY

Philip Remsberg, husband  
Jordan Remsberg, son  
Alex Remsberg, daughter

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county is going to pay for much-needed road improvements and new construction projects, she said. In the process, money has been wasted on large corporations — including some that never made it here, like T. Rowe Price — but smaller businesses have been ignored.

"We need to start from the base up, not from the top down," Remsberg said. "You don't give a corporation millions of dollars while failing to help people get the transportation they need, the jobs and career centers they need, or the income they need to survive. You want to give tax breaks to companies that are going to pay at or above the median income, and not companies that are just going to pay minimum wage."

The key to growing jobs and salaries is through workforce development, Remsberg said. County officials are missing a number of grant opportunities available to them, some which could help smaller businesses grow and enhance the work force at the

same time through projects like apprenticeship programs.

"There are always ways to reach more than one goal," Remsberg said. "These small businesses might need some help, and many of these people need job experience. It's a way to give something back to everyone." County officials also have to spend more time learning how to spend money smartly, and less time getting worked up about small increases in taxes to help pay for it, Remsberg said.

"I hear a lot about the millage rate, and everyone gets very excited when taxes get raised," she said. "But many times, we're only talking about increases of like \$20 a year. That's a small amount of money that can dramatically impact programs that are being strained or completely ignored otherwise."

Remsberg also believes there are not enough sheriff's deputies on the streets, and more money is needed to help both law enforcement and fire-rescue. Public safety must become a higher priority, because a county cannot grow properly unless its residents feel safe.

So far, Remsberg has raised a little more than \$3,000 for her campaign, a fraction of the more than \$111,600 combined for the three Republicans in the race. But winners aren't always determined by how much money a candidate has in the bank, and Remsberg won't be discouraged.

"I am a social worker, so I love going for the underdog," she said. "It's just that this time it's me, which is a new experience for me. But I'm good with grassroots efforts and community organization, and I'm getting out wherever I can to share a message of how we all need to work together."

"We can't put a roof on a home with no foundation, and no walls," she said. "We need to take care of our responsibilities when it comes to helping everyone, and only then can we truly start growing."

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Joya Coen with GentleCare Pet Hospital  
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[vet@gentlecarepethospital.com](mailto:vet@gentlecarepethospital.com)



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# PET of the WEEK



## Jon Luc says hello

Don't you just love this photo? My name is Jon Luc, and I am the beautiful chocolate poodle here with my Yorkie little brother Just Jack. We love to run around and play all day. Even when we rest, we share the same bed. We live with our proud owners, George and Mary Tristal of Wesley Chapel.

## Send us a picture and information on your favorite pet!

Write a short paragraph about why your pet is special along with a photo and mail to: **Pet of the Week**, c/o The Laker, P.O. Box 479, Lutz, FL 33548 or email to [kwelton@lakerlutznews.com](mailto:kwelton@lakerlutznews.com), ATTN: Pet of the Week

**PLEASE NOTE: OWNERS NAME AND ADDRESS MUST BE INCLUDED FOR YOUR PET TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PUBLICATION.**

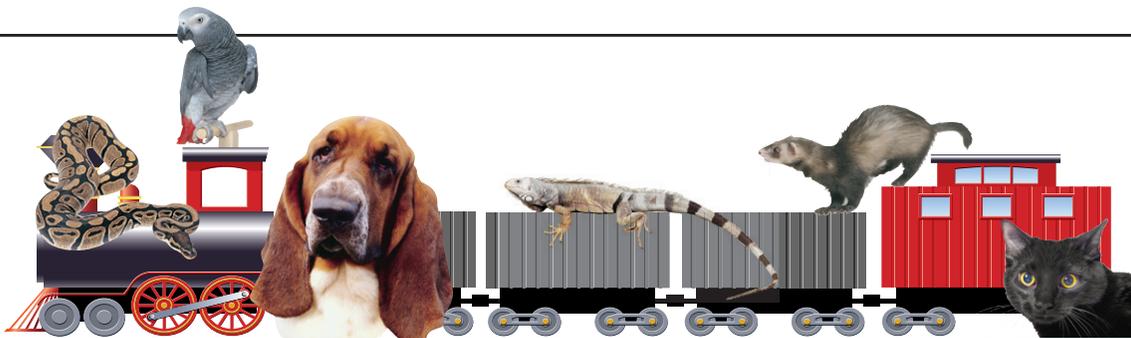


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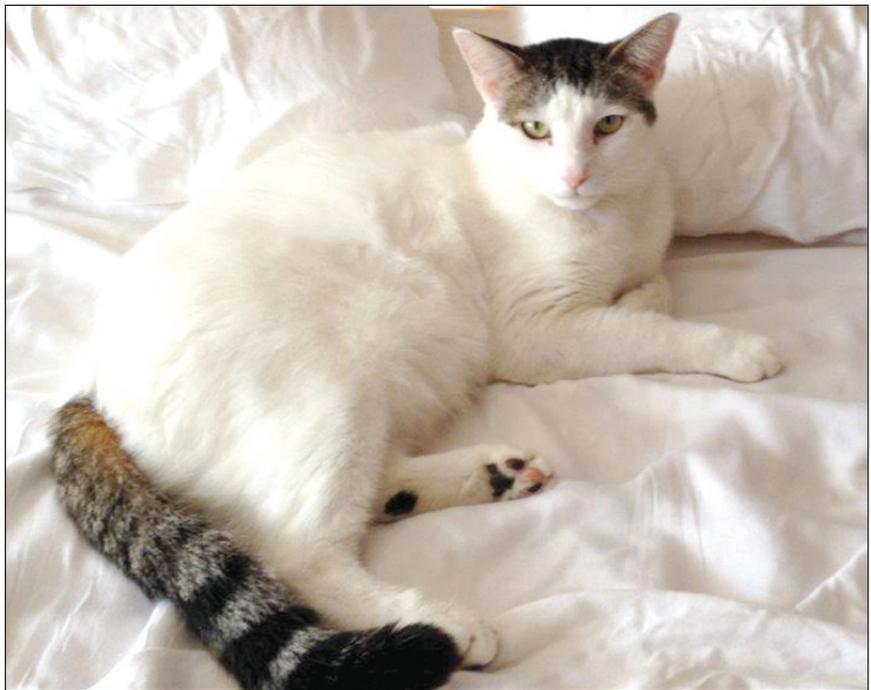
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If you would like to invite King into your family, email Cat Crusaders at [adopt@tampacatcrusaders.org](mailto:adopt@tampacatcrusaders.org). For more information about other adoptable cats, visit [TampaCatCrusaders.org](http://TampaCatCrusaders.org).

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# What's Happening

Your Community Calendar • Submit 2 weeks in advance to: [news@lakerlutznews.com](mailto:news@lakerlutznews.com) • All listings free of charge

## SHARE A HAIRCUT

Hair Cuttery is starting its annual Share-a-Haircut program for children throughout the month of August. For every child up to age 18 who purchases a back-to-school haircut at Hair Cuttery, one will be donated back to an underprivileged child in the community. For locations, visit [HairCuttery.com](http://HairCuttery.com).

## COMMUNITY BLOCK PARTY

First United Methodist Church of Lutz, 960 W. Lutz Lake Fern Road, is hosting a free community block party Aug. 1 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The theme is "We Bring the Beach to You." The event will include free food, music, beach games, face painting and more. For information, call Vicki Apple at (813) 949-1751.

## BARNES & NOBLE POP CULTURE

To celebrate pop culture, Barnes & Noble at The Shops at Wiregrass, 28152 Paseo Drive, Suite 100, is hosting the following events:

- "Frozen Friday: Cool Off With Olaf" on Aug. 1 at 7 p.m. Fans of the movie "Frozen" can take part in a sing-along, story time, crafts and activities.
- Marvel Day on Aug. 2. Celebrate Marvel's 75th anniversary with activities, giveaways and product offerings. The event will include a chance to win Marvel tote bags and posters. For information, visit [TheShopsAtWiregrass.com](http://TheShopsAtWiregrass.com).

## MUSICAL THEATRE

The youth musical theatrical troupe Broadway Bound will perform its original production "A Day in the Life of ... Me" Aug. 1 at 7:30 p.m., and Aug. 2 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., at the Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Road in Tampa. For information and tickets, call (813) 922-8167, or visit [CarrollwoodCenter.org](http://CarrollwoodCenter.org).

## KEYSTONE VBS

Keystone Community Church, 21010 State Road 54 in Lutz, is hosting a free vacation Bible school Aug. 1-2 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., for children ages 4 to 12. For information, call (813) 948-4522, or visit [KeystoneCommunity.org](http://KeystoneCommunity.org).

## GREYHOUND DOGS

Bay Area Greyhound Adoptions is hosting an adoption event Aug. 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Pet City, 2119 Collier Parkway in

## FREE FOR KIDS!

### Cobb's free kids shows

Grove 16 Cobb Theatres, 6333 Wesley Grove Blvd., in Wesley Chapel, is hosting its final free summer kids shows at 10 a.m., Aug. 5-7. The shows are "Rio 2" and "Mr. Peabody & Sherman." Doors open at 9:30 a.m. Schools, groups and camps are welcome. Same-day ticketing only. For information, call (813) 948-5444.

### MOSI free for youngsters

The Museum of Science & Industry, 4801 E. Fowler Ave., in Tampa, is now offering free admission to all children younger than 5. For information, call (813) 987-6000, or visit [MOSI.org](http://MOSI.org).

### Free summer bowling

AMF University Lanes, 13109 N. 56th St., in Temple Terrace, is offering free bowling for kids this summer when their parents register them online. Kids can bowl three free games every weekday from opening to 6 p.m., until Labor Day. For information or to register, visit [AMF.com/university-lanes-fl](http://AMF.com/university-lanes-fl).

### Kids earn a free book

Children in a reading level up to sixth grade can earn a free book through Barnes & Noble by reading any eight books and completing a reading log. The summer program runs through Sept. 2 at participating locations. Offer is good while supplies last. Limit is one free book per customer.

Land O' Lakes. For information, call (813) 272-2332, or visit [BayAreaGreyhounds.org](http://BayAreaGreyhounds.org).

## ST. MARK'S CELEBRATION

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, 9724 Cross Creek Blvd., in New Tampa, is inviting the public to celebrations at and after each mass Aug. 2-3 to thank those who have pledged to build a new church. For information, call (813) 907-7746, or visit [StMarkTampa.org](http://StMarkTampa.org).

## LAMECON 2014

The Library Anime & Manga Enthusiasts Convention will be Aug. 2 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., and Aug. 3 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. There will be an anime dance night, costume contest, manga grab bags, vendors room, artist alley, panel discussions, gaming room, movie room, a café, and cosplay and trivia contests. Admission is free. The convention is at both the Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, and the Land O' Lakes Recreation Center, 3032 Collier Parkway. For information, visit [LAMECon.com](http://LAMECon.com), or LAMECon 2014 on Facebook.

## TAMPAPALOOZA AT FAIRGROUNDS

Tampapalooza will be at the Florida State Fairgrounds, 4800 U.S. 301 in Tampa, Aug. 2-3 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The event will

include local food, local craft beer, kids activities, farmer's market, music, raffles, stilt walkers, and an aerial yoga show. Admission is free. For information, call (800) 345-3247, or visit [Tampapalooza.com](http://Tampapalooza.com).

## 'FISHING 401' AT IDLEWILD

Idlewild Baptist Church, 18333 Exciting Idlewild Blvd., in Lutz, is hosting "Fishing 401" Aug. 4 from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. The Men's Momentum group will discuss fishing tactics with World Fishing Network's Bill Miller and Idlewild's Richard Seward. For information, call (813) 264-8717.

## TAX COLLECTOR OPEN HOUSE

The Pasco County Tax Collector is hosting a grand opening at its new location, 4610 Pet Lane in Lutz, off Wesley Chapel Boulevard, Aug. 4 at 10 a.m.

## SPIRIT NIGHT FOR MARTIAL ARTS TEAM

XTreme Adventures, 24810 State Road 54 in Lutz, is hosting a spirit night to support the U.S. Martial Arts Team, Aug. 6 from noon to 9 p.m. There will be door prizes, raffles, arts and crafts for kids, and chances to win official team merchandise. The organization will donate 15 percent of

proceeds to the U.S. team when it's mentioned.

## PASSPORT TO ITALY WINE WORKSHOP

Charles Visalli of Time For Wine is hosting the wine workshop "Passport to Italy Teach and Taste Event" Aug. 6 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., at Dash of Salt N' Pepper, 10353 Cross Creek Blvd., in New Tampa. There will be food and wine pairings of Italy, appetizer samples with recipes, and a cruise presentation. Class size is limited to 30 guests. Cost is \$15 per person, or \$25 per couple. To reserve a spot, call (813) 664-1430.

## WEEKEND FIREWORKS SHOWS

Channelside Bay Plaza, 615 Channelside Drive in Tampa, will host free fireworks shows every Saturday through August. The festivities run from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., with food trucks, live music and weekly entertainment. A Labor Day event is scheduled for Aug. 31. For information, visit [TampasDowntown.com](http://TampasDowntown.com).

## CONTINUOUS BOOK SALE

The Friends of the Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, is having a continuous book sale daily during the summer months. There will be hundreds of books for sale Tuesdays through Saturdays. Donations of gently used books also are accepted. The Friends also is looking for new members. Those interested can stop by the library to sign up. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

## FIRE & ICE GALA

The Rotary Club of Trinity is hosting its Fire & Ice Gala fundraiser Sept. 27 starting at 6 p.m., at Heritage Springs Country Club, 11345 Robert Trent Parkway in Trinity. Various levels of sponsorships and benefits are available. For gala information, call Tina Shelton at (727) 439-0516. For sponsorship information, call Angie Gardner at (727) 808-4517.

## MEADOW POINTE YOGA

The Meadow Pointe community in Wesley Chapel is offering yoga for fitness and focus. Power yoga is Mondays and Thursdays at 7 p.m., stretch yoga is Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m., and restorative nidra monthly is offered on a Sunday at 7 p.m., for \$10. For information, email [kelly-hisa.yoga@outlook.com](mailto:kelly-hisa.yoga@outlook.com).

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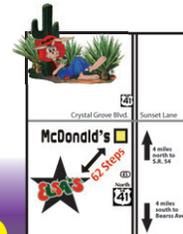
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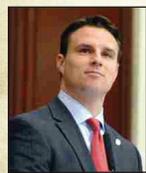
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# On the move to help teachers

LOL Transport & Moving is taking part in a 'Stuff the Bus for Teachers' campaign through Aug. 5. Donations of school supplies can be dropped off at 5811 Ehren Cutoff in Land O' Lakes, Monday through Saturday, between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Or an arrangement can be made for pickup by calling (813) 996-3775. Accepting donations are, from left, Sam Mendolera, Jan Roberts, Wes Van Hout, Rene Van Hout, Karen Horgan, Austin Cramer and Robin Hanna.

## TAXES, from page 1

ance costs. The budget assumes a \$1 million reduction in district energy costs and \$1.6 million in savings from cutting the district's early retirement program. The proposed budget also reflects an expected increase of 607 students attending

charter schools, receiving McKay scholarships for special needs or enrolled in Department of Juvenile Justice centers. Those 607 students represent \$2.4 million in funding, which comes into Pasco, but goes to those programs. The total projected enrollment for those programs is 3,762, representing more than \$23.3 million. The district expects to have a total of



Joanne Hurley

\$3.4 million available for salary increases, based on these budget projections. School board member Joanne Hurley said this year's budget deliberations are a welcome

departure from the previous seven years. In those years, the board was forced to make "painful, painful decisions," Hurley said. "It is so nice at this time of the year to say we have a balanced budget," she said. "This is a real luxury after the past seven years." A final public hearing on the district's budget will be held in September.

## SPECIAL, from page 1

attendance has ranged from four to eight students. Those figures have required VSA Florida to keep it going with other funds, Finklea said. They also provide scholarships based on need for families who cannot afford the monthly cost. While the class is caught in a numbers game, Finklea said the benefits go way beyond the balance sheet. "They learn self confidence, they learn teamwork, collaboration, tolerance, understanding," she said. And since the students are often asked to

describe or explain their art, they learn to express themselves in a variety of ways. While the Land O' Lakes class attendance is troubling, that location isn't alone. Many of their locations struggle with attendance, Finklea said. She believes there are several reasons why the programs don't always gain traction, from a lack of societal emphasis on the arts, to scheduling conflicts, to parents not even knowing the classes exist. But the ones who attend appreciate the program, and Finklea said the training the teachers receive to work with special needs students contributes to the positive feedback. While Finklea and VSA Florida are disappointed with the turnout so far, they aren't

giving up. VSA Florida will continue advertising and promoting the classes, and is working with a consultant to find other opportunities to get the word out to the community. After a scheduled summer break in August, the classes will begin again in September, and Finklea said they'll have roughly six months to get the program running at a higher capacity before some tough decisions have to be made. Right now she believes many people with special needs are missing out on the benefits of the class, and if it has to be cancelled or relocated, the existing students will join them. "They're probably missing out on a huge chance for creative expression and probably a chance to enhance their cognitive and so-

cial outcomes, which ultimately develops a stronger quality of life," Finklea said. That outcome would disappoint Megan, and her mother would have a tough time replacing the activity and the enjoyment she gets out of it. "My daughter would lose out because I don't know what I would do," Violetta said. "She's older, and it's hard to find something for her that's close." Siblings of special needs students also are encouraged to join and participate with them in the classes. Children under 7 must be accompanied by an adult. For more information about VSA Florida, call (813) 974-0715, or visit VSAFL.org.

## MOSI, from page 1

like northern Hillsborough and southern Pasco counties, said Molly Demeulenaere, MOSI's vice president of growth. "A lot of hospitals don't open their operating rooms, and we'll be working with

families in Pasco County to help make that possible," she said. "Younger kids especially are going to have access to this information before they start to figure out what they want to do for a living, and (it) allows them to spark that interest at a much earlier age." Where the surgeries will take place depends on Florida Hospital itself,

Demeulenaere said. They could be hosted from Tampa, Wesley Chapel, even Zephyrhills. The Imax dome image is 10 times larger than a conventional 35mm frame, and three times larger than a standard 70mm frame, museum officials said. The dome theater offers a six-channel, high-fidelity motion picture sound system manufactured by Sonics Associates Inc., as well as a projector, which when it was installed, was one of the most advanced, using technology to keep the picture steady and prevent film hiccups. MOSI always has prided itself as a hands-on museum, bringing science directly to people who visit. "When people think of a museum, they normally think of these big open spaces where you don't touch anything," Demeulenaere said. "But museums are a true lab of creativity and education, and play a

vital role in the community as a whole." MOSI did not say when work would begin on the theater, and it may have to wait its turn in line as other science centers are undergoing similar transitions and there are few companies qualified to do the work. Most of the money donated by Florida Hospital will go into the "transformation," as MOSI is calling it, although remaining funds can be used to help supplement other programs at the museum. "Florida Hospital is demonstrating true community leadership, and I think we should really thank our lucky stars for Florida Hospital and all the work that they do in our communities throughout Florida," MOSI board chair Robert Thomas said. "I just can't begin to tell you how important this is, and how thrilled we are to have them as a partner in the future of this organization."

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# Mariano's knee-jerk decision could kill gas tax increase

By Michael Hinman  
mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

Jack Mariano might be the chairman of the Pasco County Commission, but his popularity among fellow commissioners might be hitting an all-time low.

Mariano was hammered by commissioners Ted Schrader and Kathryn Starkey during last week's regular meeting in New Port Richey over his promotion of an expanded recreation park on the west side of the county. Starkey accused Mariano of going too far in how he mischaracterized the commission's support of SunWest Park, and has wasted time by loading public comment periods at meetings with supporters of the project.

Later in the meeting, when Schrader refused to adjust proposed millage rates for the coming year, Mariano — still wincing from the argument over Sunwest — made it clear that he would no longer be the fourth vote needed to pass an expanded gasoline tax to fund county road projects.

"This is taking away flexibility," Mariano told Schrader about not reorganizing the tax rates. "So don't look for a fourth vote over here for the gas tax."

The commission is proposing a starting tax rate at 9.3364 mills, although the hope among commissioners is to get the final taxation rate below 9 mills. One mill represents \$1 of tax on every thousand dollars of taxable property value. So a \$100,000 home with \$50,000 in exemptions would pay \$466.82 for the year.

Mariano had wanted to move some of the millage from a proposed transportation budget to help maintain roads, to the operating budget. That would, in turn, make that money available to increase the hours libraries are open — hours that were cut when budgets had to be slashed at the height of the economic downturn.

The transportation millage of 0.3984 was put in place as an alternative to a 5-cent tax increase per gallon of gas, which would help raise \$8 million to fund road improvements.

Schrader has supported doing only a 5-cent gas tax increase with no hike in property taxes. However, such a move would require the votes of four people, and Commissioner Henry Wilson already said he would not support it. That leaves Mariano as the swing vote, since both Schrader and retiring commissioner Pat Mulieri expressed support.

Shifting the millage numbers would



FILE PHOTO

**Pasco County commissioner Jack Mariano is now hinting he won't support a raised gas tax because a fellow commissioner won't be 'flexible' on the upcoming budget.**

give the commission a chance to start funding some slashed programs again, using set-aside money that would likely not be needed to fund roads if a gas tax was passed, Mariano said. But Schrader didn't like the idea of moving numbers around.

"That is a slip-and-fall scam, and I'm absolutely not supporting that," Schrader said. "That is not being fair or truthful to the residents. If you're willing to raise property taxes for parks and libraries, just say it."

Instead, Schrader wants the commission to work for a tax break, and look to start funding these struggling programs next year when higher property values mean potentially more tax revenue coming in.

"I think it's a good idea to give the people a break," Mulieri said. "I don't think I have gotten a note about parks fees or libraries."

In the end, the commission voted to approve the preliminary tax rate at 9.3364 mills without adjusting any of the numbers.

The first hearing on the budget is scheduled for Sept. 9 at 6:30 p.m., at the Historic Pasco County Courthouse in Dade City.

## Simple ways to make voting hassle-free

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

In August, the 2014 election cycle will begin. And before voters go to the polls to decide who will represent them in government, Pasco County elections supervisor Brian Corley is offering some last-minute reminders.

"Help us do our job better by ensuring that your voter registration is up-to-date," Corley said in a recent note to voters. "The more accurate our file, the better able we are to serve the voters of Pasco County."

Voter registration address changes can be done by telephone, online, or by written notification. But anyone failing to update their address prior to election day could create some delays at the polls.

Those who have not voted since the last gubernatorial election in 2010 should check their registration status online at PascoVotes.com, Corley said. Or, status can be checked by calling (800) 851-8754.

Another way to help speed up the voting process is to make good use of a sample ballot.

"Mark your sample ballot and take it

with you so you can copy your choices onto your official ballot," Corley said.

Also, some polling locations have changed, and voters affected by those areas received new registration cards. However, people who haven't maintained a current address with the elections office may not have received that information, and could end up at the wrong location when it's time to vote.

Florida is a closed primary state, meaning primaries are usually closed only to members of specific political parties. However, the primary race for Pasco County Commission District 4 between Republicans Mike Wells and Henry Wilson is an open race, meaning anyone — no matter their party affiliation — can vote.

Also, races for county commission and school board might be assigned geographic areas, but everyone in the county is eligible to vote for them, whether they live in those areas or not.

"With plenty of advanced notice and proper preparation, there should be no reason to forgo one of the greatest freedoms afforded to all Americans," Corley said.

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# Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE

## Avoid surgery. Eradicate pain.

by Mike Matthew  
special to The Laker

Peggy Boyd, owner of Surgical Alternative, has found a way to end pain without costly and traumatic surgical procedures. "My work goes far beyond massage therapy," says Peggy. "A better term for my work would be structural therapy."

She graduated from massage therapy school in 1998 and started out doing sports massage. Her work moved to a whole new level as she began to learn neuromuscular methods. She saw significant results as she focused on rehabilitative massage.

"I began to see lasting changes in people's bodies, in their posture and in their attitude toward their daily life," says Peggy. "Their quality of life improved as their pain was gone as a result of our work."

"I want to help people eliminate pain, not just temporarily as is often what happens with standard massage therapy," says Peggy. "I want to get to the source of the problem and rehabilitate it. Then the pain will go away long-term."

"We want people to know this type of therapy exists," says Peggy. "We can help people avoid extreme physical actions like surgery. This type of therapy also works well in conjunction with other non-invasive therapies like chiropractic, physical therapy, acupuncture, etc."

The therapy as Surgical Alternative is designed to help people before they need surgery. They also recognize that sometimes surgery is necessary. This therapy can help clients recuperate faster, reduce their pain after surgery and help them get back to a normal range of motion pain-free.

"My focus is on rehabilitative work, helping people with injuries, and with those who want to prevent problems," says Peggy. "We pride ourselves on educating our clients about their bodies and helping them to see how their routines may be contributing to their painful conditions."

Repetitive use injuries are a big problem they see all the time. The therapists at Surgical Alternative help their clients understand where the source of their pain really is coming from. The cause of their pain is not necessarily where the symptoms show up.

"We take the time to understand our clients lifestyle and work routines which often contribute greatly to their condition," says Peggy. "We can reverse many conditions without surgery." "Call us and make us explain to you how we can help release your pain," says Peggy.

"We also see clients who fall between the cracks," says Peggy. "The doctor can't find anything wrong, but the pain is real. We can help clients find the source of the problem and release the pain long term rather than simply masking it with unnecessary medications." An example of this is hip pain. Many times it is tightened muscles that are keeping a person's structure out of balance. This improper alignment can cause uneven wearing at the joints resulting in pain.

Surgical Alternative offers packages as well as a monthly maintenance program for those who want to keep their body balanced. Their typical session is 90 minutes and cost \$120. Peggy has been in business for 12 years and at her current location for a little under 4 years. They have clients as young as 6 years of age and some well into their 90's. "We see everyone from triathletes with plantar fasciitis, to the person whom has lost range of motion and thinks that their body should not feel like this," says Peggy.

Peggy and her staff want to help people get beyond merely existing and into truly living.

They're having an open house on Saturday, August 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. They will also be celebrating the grand opening of their new store, Upward Spiral, where they'll be offering products to support health and healing. They'll have product samples for you and giveaways too.



Owner Peggy Boyd

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## WELLNESS



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### TCH STAFF SUPPORTS LOCAL PROGRAMS

The medical staff at Tampa Community Hospital recently donated \$10,000 to Southeastern Guide Dogs Inc., which has been providing guide dogs to people with visual impairments since 1982.

Within the last six months, the medical staff at TCH has donated \$30,000 to various programs.

### NEW BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Gulfside Hospice is starting a new free monthly bereavement support group on July 30 at 6 p.m., at Connerton Court Assisted Living Facility, 21021 Betel Palm Lane in Land O' Lakes.

The group will meet on the last Wednesday of every month. Upcoming dates are Aug. 27, Sept. 24 and Oct. 29.

For information, call Pearl Lamourt at (727) 992-4231.

### TOBACCO CESSATION PROGRAM

The Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, is offering a free seminar to help tobacco users quit.

The "Tools to Quit" program will be July 31 at 5 p.m.

Participants will set a quit date, make a plan, and work through simple steps to quit, as well as receive optional free nicotine replacement therapy.

Space is limited.  
For information, call (813) 929-1000, Ext. 213.

### 'LATCH ON' AT SIMMS PARK

Momcierge is hosting the "Big Latch On" in Simms Park, Bank Street and Grand Boulevard in New Port Richey, Aug. 2 at 10 a.m.

All breastfeeding mothers and supporters are invited to join in this family picnic-style gathering. Attendees are asked to bring a blanket and a snack.

For information, visit Momcierge on Facebook.

### FREE SCREENING OF 'EXTERNAL HIGH'

National Alliance on Mental Illness Pasco County is offering a free screening of "Eternal High" by Bryce Mackie. The film covers a teenager's experience with addiction, depression, suicide and recovery.

The screening is Aug. 4 at 7 p.m., at North Tampa Behavioral Health, 29910 State Road 56 in Wesley Chapel.

Refreshments will be served.  
For information, visit [NAMIPasco.org](http://NAMIPasco.org).

### CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

The Health & Wellness Center at Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel, 2700 Healing Way, is hosting a caregiver support group the first Tuesday of every month, for family and friends caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

The next meeting is Aug. 5 at 10 a.m.  
To register, call (813) 991-7524.

### PLANT-BASED FOOD SEMINAR

The Health & Wellness Center at Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel, 2700 Healing Way, is offering the seminar "Power of Plant-Based Foods" Aug. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

Learn about a plant-based diet with more antioxidants, nutrients, vitamins, minerals and fiber, and less damaging fat and sugar.

Seminar is free for Health & Wellness members, and \$5 for non-members.

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# Sit back, relax and enjoy Florida's marine life



## Worth the Trip

By B.C. Manion  
bcmanion@cnews.com

Before setting up her cruise business in Tarpon Springs, Suzanne Upchurch and her business partner traveled the entire west coast of Florida looking for the perfect spot.

They had a cruise and ferry business in Massachusetts where they did history and lighthouse tours, and they were looking for a place where they could operate during the winter.

"We went through Tarpon Springs, all of the way to Key West," Upchurch said.

They came back to Tarpon Springs because that's where their boat — the *Island Star* — had been built, and they felt at home with the Anclote Key lighthouse and the nearby power plant.

The lighthouse had the same structural form as the lighthouse in Marblehead, Massachusetts, Upchurch explained. And, the power plant is a replica of the one in Salem, Massachusetts.

Their company, Sun Line Cruises, started operating seasonally in Florida 14 years ago. They brought with them the historical and lighthouse tours as well as ferry service.

"Of course, the season is much shorter up there," Upchurch said. "It gets cold real fast up there."

She decided to come to Tarpon Springs seasonally to break into an area with something that was not being offered, Upchurch said. As it turns out, they decided to offer eco-tours, which Upchurch thoroughly enjoys because she said it allows her to share her love of nature.

People who take her cruises can count on an affordable trip, which combines the pleasure of gliding across water and having a chance to learn about the area's history and its marine life. Sometimes Upchurch narrates the trip. Other times, the Florida naturalist or marine biologist on her staff does the honors.

Their goal is to give their passengers an enjoyable and informative experience, said Kathy Poreda, who sells cruise tickets from a colorful shack at 18 Dodecanese Blvd., in Tarpon Springs.

Patrons boarding the *Island Star* hail from all over the world, said Aaron Kalwa, one of the ship's captains. The company's website gets hits from places such as Ukraine and Belgium, Upchurch said.

A couple of years ago, a woman from Chicago rushed up to the ticket window and exclaimed, "We found you," Upchurch recalled. The woman's doctor had recommended the cruise after learning the customer was planning a visit to Tarpon Springs.

Virtually every ride offers passengers a chance to see an assortment of winged creatures, such as roseate spoonbills, terns, ospreys, egrets and pelicans. They also hear



COURTESY OF SUN LINE CRUISES

There's never any guarantee that you'll see dolphins leaping out of the water during your two-hour *Island Adventure Tour* operated by Sun Line Cruises out of Tarpon Springs, but there's a good chance you'll see something interesting and learn something new.



Sun Line Cruises offers a variety of trips from the sponge docks in Tarpon Springs, which generally offer the chance to see a variety of birds, such as this great egret.



B.C. MANION/STAFF PHOTO

Aaron Kalwa, one of the captains of the *Island Star*, recently pulled a struggling green sea turtle out of the water to help keep it alive.

about mangrove systems, fresh springs, the estuary's role as a marine nursery, and the history of the Anclote Key lighthouse.

The tour also includes commentary about the history of Tarpon Springs and its sponge docks, marine repair work, shipbuilding, and fishing industry.

Every cruise, however, is unique. On a March 2 outing, for instance, a passenger saw something strange floating on the water, said Kalwa, who was steering the ship that day.

"We were on our way out of Anclote River," he said. "As soon as we got out to St. Joseph's Sound, a passenger pointed out something floating in the water. We stopped to get a better look at it, and it looked like it was a turtle having some distress, struggling."

"It was a real busy day that day and it was in the middle of the channel, so we had to stop the boat. We were scared that he

was going to get hit by other boats. So, we stopped the boat, kind of protected him," Kalwa said.

The ship's first mate was able to get close, but she was unable to lift the turtle into the boat. So Kalwa, who has a burly build, had the first mate steer the boat, while he grabbed the turtle and pulled it aboard.

It was no easy feat. The green sea turtle, given the name *Bubba Gump*, weighed nearly 60 pounds.

The cruise company called the Clearwater Marine Aquarium who picked up the turtle and nursed it back to health. *Bubba Gump* was released into the Gulf of Mexico from Honeymoon Island on July 8.

Sun Line Cruises offers a 90-minute cruise, a two-hour cruise, sunset cruises, group tours, weddings, special events and sea scatterings.

The two-hour cruise makes a half-hour stop at Anclote Key, which is the northernmost barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico.

"We do a lot of school group tours. We have a marine science club. It's set up for different age groups," Upchurch said. Topics include marine and mammals, sharks and stingrays, and tsunamis and hurricanes.

As Kalwa carries passengers from the dock in Tarpon Springs out to Anclote Key and back, the ship captain gets a kick out of seeing guests get excited when they spot dolphins leaping out of the water or watch manatees glide by.

During a recent cruise, passengers got a thrill when they saw a single dolphin surfacing during the early part of their cruise, and then saw the telltale fins of a small group of dolphins on the way back.

They made their way from one side of the boat to the other, trying to capture the

## If you go

**WHAT:** Sun Line Cruises trips  
**WHERE:** 18 Dodecanese Blvd., Tarpon Springs  
**CRUISES:** Combination Sea Fari and *Island Adventure Cruises*, sail weekdays with weather permitting, at 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m..  
 • Sea Fari Adventure Cruises sail week-ends at 11:45 a.m.  
 • *Island Adventure Cruises* sail weekends with weather permitting at 1:15 p.m. and 3:15 p.m.  
 • Sunset cruises sail on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Departure times vary by season. Call for departure times and reservations.  
**COST:** \$16 for adults, \$15 for senior citizens and \$9 for children for Sea Fari; \$20 for adults, \$19 for seniors, and \$10 for children for *Island Adventure*; \$18 for adults and \$12 for children for *Sunset Cruises*  
**INFO:** (727) 944-4468, or SunLineCruises.net (Reservations for cruises are recommended)



Passengers wanting to board the *Island Star* will pick up at their tickets at this colorful shack. There's parking for a nominal fee available nearby.

## Steinbrenner feeling optimism with new roster

By Michael Murillo  
mmurillo@lakerlutznews.com

When a high school football team has to replace 22 graduating seniors, it can be devastating to their prospects the following year.

But in Steinbrenner High School's case, it might be just what they needed.

"The attitude and mentality of everybody is that they want to come and work hard. They saw what we struggled with last year, players just giving up," said Andres Bautista, who plays on the defensive line. "Those seniors, they're gone, so now we feel we have a better chance of achieving goals."

Bautista, now a senior himself, is just one of two players who are entering their fourth year with the Warriors, and he believes the roster changes will improve their fortunes. Too many seniors didn't give it their all, didn't respond to challenging times, or simply didn't perform up to their ability, he said.

As a result, the team finished a disappointing 3-7 overall, and 2-3 in the district last season.

Head Coach Andres Perez-Reinaldo, now entering his third year at the helm, isn't too concerned with dwelling on last year's fortunes. He'd rather take what he can from the past and apply it toward a more successful future.

"Every year is different in its own way," Perez-Reinaldo said. "We look at last year's successes and struggles, learn from them, and work on the new team and the new year."

The Warriors gave up a district-high 303 points, but they had problems on both sides of the ball. The offense also struggled, both failing to score and committing turnovers, which put the defense in bad situations.

And when put in those situations, coverage issues allowed the opposing team's offense to capitalize, Bautista said.

But that doesn't mean Steinbrenner didn't have significant bright spots. The Warriors were ranked second in kickoffs and punt returns. Not second in the district, nor the region. Steinbrenner was ranked second in those categories ahead of nearly every other school in the state.

Perez-Reinaldo believes that gives the team a significant advantage and can help improve their record in 2014.

"We hope to continue that," Perez-Reinaldo said of the high special teams ranking. "If you can win those two — special teams and defense — everything else will fall into place."

Perez also believes his receiving corps will be difference-makers this season. He credits Coach Michael Bosco for his work with the unit, and believes the wide re-



Andres Bautista is serious about providing leadership in his senior season, and working hard to get Steinbrenner High School's football team into the playoffs.

MICHAEL MURILLO/STAFF PHOTO

ceivers complement each other well.

While it's too early to know how everything will fall into place, Perez-Reinaldo likes what he's seen so far. A good work ethic and some success on the field have given him

some optimism headed into the regular season.

"I think it's important for kids to learn how to compete and then learn how to win," he said. "This off-season, our team has

### STEINBRENNER WARRIORS

#### LAST YEAR: 3-7

2-3 in district play  
Fourth place in Class 7A-District 7

#### KEY RETURNING PLAYERS

Andres Bautista, defensive line  
Zack Deitz, linebacker

#### KEY ADDITION

Quentin Poteralski, quarterback  
(was a backup last season)

#### PLAYER TO WATCH

Kezio Snelling, wide receiver  
"Had a breakout year, and he is definitely a guy to watch." — Coach Andres Perez-Reinaldo.

### 2014 Warriors Schedule

8/22 - Sunlake	10/10 - at Wharton
8/29 - at Plant City	10/17 - Wiregrass Ranch
9/5 - at Alonso	10/24 - at Freedom
9/12 - Spoto	10/31 - Gaither
9/19 - Sickles	11/7 - Jefferson Tech
10/2 - at Tampa Bay	

really come together through workouts and seven-on-seven tournaments. We won our first seven-on-seven tournament ever at Steinbrenner this summer, and I see that as evidence that our team is learning how to win.

"Now it's a matter to translating that to Friday nights."

Bautista is looking forward to getting back to playing on Friday nights as well, because he missed a few of them last season. A torn meniscus in his right knee ended his 2013 campaign after just five games, and he had to watch the team struggle from the sideline. Now, after a successful return in a spring game (Bautista says his knee is 100 percent), he's looking forward to providing the senior leadership he feels was lacking last season.

And Bautista believes the best way to provide that leadership is to show that he's dedicated to seeing Steinbrenner reach the postseason for the first time in his high school career.

"That's one of our biggest goals, is making the playoffs," Bautista said. "I'm going to play how I've been playing since freshman year: Playing hard and going 110 percent."

"I love football."

**CHECK THIS OUT**  
SEND SPORTS NEWS TO MMURILLO@LAKEKUTZNEWS.COM

### FREE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT AUG. 9

The fourth annual Balling For Jesus basketball tournament will be Aug. 9 at the Dade City Recreation Center at Pyracantha Park, 38122 Martin Luther King Blvd., in Dade City.

The event will include face painting, bounce houses, music, games and free backpacks. It runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Cost is free.

### DOUBLES TENNIS PLAYERS SOUGHT

Tennis 4 u/Tennis Para Ti is looking for doubles tennis players for matches in

Dade City.

The organization also is offering private and group tennis lessons for players of all ages and skill levels.

For information, call Jeanette Marcus at (813) 417-0061, or send email to jmarcusddm@gmail.com.

### NEW TENNIS LEAGUE

The Tri-County Tennis League is looking for individuals, teams and facilities to begin league play.

It will include age divisions from 40s and older. League play also will feature ratings-only play regardless of age.

For information, call Walt Bockmiller at (813) 527-8211.

### CENTRAL FLORIDA OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club, 12900 Lake Jovita Blvd., in Dade City, will host the Central Florida Open Championship

Sept. 18-19.

Up to 144 of the top professional and amateur golfers in central Florida are expected to compete on the club's South course.

Tee, range and custom flag sponsorships are available.

For information, call Rick Weber at (352) 588-9200, or email rweber@lakejovita.com.

### FOOTBALL AND CHEER JAMBOREE AUG. 9

The Dade City Pirates, Pasco Police Athletic League and Lacoochee Boys & Girls Club will have their 2014 football and cheer jamboree Aug. 9 at John's Burks Memorial Park, 13220 Gene Nelson Blvd., in Dade City.

Sponsorships are available, ranging from booths to business banners and announcer recognition.

For sponsorship information, email pppalpirate@gmail.com.

### T-SHIRTS SUPPORT CROSS-COUNTRY COACH

"I Run For Keppel" T-shirts are available to help support Land O' Lakes High School cross-country coach Kris Keppel, who is battling pancreatic cancer.

The shirts are \$15 each, with all proceeds going to Keppel.

For information or to make a donation, call (813) 406-5730, or send an email to carolyn011jr@hotmail.com or kbdehaas@aol.com.

### SPORT ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE FOR SENIORS

Senior Sports is seeking players older than 60 for a number of regular co-ed sporting events.

The group participates in golf every Wednesday and bowling every Thursday. It also has added tennis and indoor volleyball.

For more information, call Walt Bockmiller at (813) 527-8211.

# Forget Comic-Con, LAMECon shines this weekend

By Michael Hinman  
mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

Just last weekend, tens of thousands of fans converged on San Diego for its annual Comic-Con event, paying obscene amounts of money for travel, hotel and tickets just to get inside.

But this weekend, local residents can get their geek on. And they don't even have to spend a dime.

The Library Anime and Manga Enthusiast Convention, more affectionately known as LAMECon, kicks off Aug. 2 at the Land O' Lakes Library and at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Center on Collier Parkway. The free event attracted more than 700 people last year, and organizer Paul Stonebridge says his goal is to top 1,000 this year.

"Our central audience is teens and 20-somethings, so it's like the 14-to-30 crowd," Stonebridge said. "But it's really open for everybody. We have stuff for kids, and even a 'Game of Thrones' panel for adults. We've really doubled our convention size this year."

LAMECon got its start six years ago in Hudson before moving to Land O' Lakes in later years. It provides a way for young people to celebrate their love of anime and manga — more or less Japanese comics and animation — without spending the kind of money expected at larger conventions like Metrocon, held earlier this month in downtown Tampa.

"We're pretty far from the conventions in South Tampa and Orlando, and there are a lot of people in Pasco who simply can't afford it," Stonebridge said. "These are mainly

## If you go

**WHAT:** LAMECon 2014, Library Anime and Manga Enthusiast Convention  
**WHEN:** Aug. 2 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Aug. 3 from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway on Saturday; Land O' Lakes Recreation Center, 3032 Collier Parkway on Sunday  
**COST:** Free  
**INFO:** LAMECon.com

high schoolers and college kids, and they desperately wanted to go. And now they have something they can go to."

Although food and games are one way to attract people to conventions, Stonebridge says it's the panels hitting popular topics among fans that draw the most attention. This year, LAMECon will have two tracts that will include discussions like the aforementioned Emmy-nominated HBO series "Game of Thrones," as well as trivia, Asian horror and Japanese culture.

There will even be a panel featuring readings from bad fan-fiction — stories set in the universe of popular television shows, movies and even anime and games, written exclusively by fans.

One feature this year is an achievement system designed to encourage attendees to participate as much as possible. More than 50 achievement badges are available, which can be earned from attending panels, asking questions, visiting vendors, and simply just



COURTESY OF PAUL STONEBRIDGE  
Stephanie Stonebridge and Jessica Samuelson show off their costumes during last year's LAMECon in Land O' Lakes. The event returns this weekend at both the Land O' Lakes library and the recreation center on Collier Parkway.

showing up.

Hosting a convention is not cheap, and LAMECon doesn't earn any money from the typical ways conventions generate revenue like ticket sales or vendor rental fees. In fact, local businesses can set up and offer wares for free.

LAMECon is funded through grants and donations, as well as sponsors like Publix Super Markets and the DeBartolo Family Foundation, Stonebridge said. The convention also offers premium memberships for a small donation, which can include food, T-shirts and other offers.

Conventions like this have earned a lot of new respect over the years, growing from the early days of Star Trek conventions that were typically ridiculed in the mainstream. The success of shows like "Game of Thrones" and the "Lord of the Rings" film trilogy has helped that, Stonebridge said.

But it's the comics entertainment company Marvel that deserves a lot of the credit, he said.

"Marvel has had a huge hand in all of this, more than anyone else," Stonebridge said. "All the comic boom movies, those have been in the mainstream. And so it's OK to like comics and video games now."

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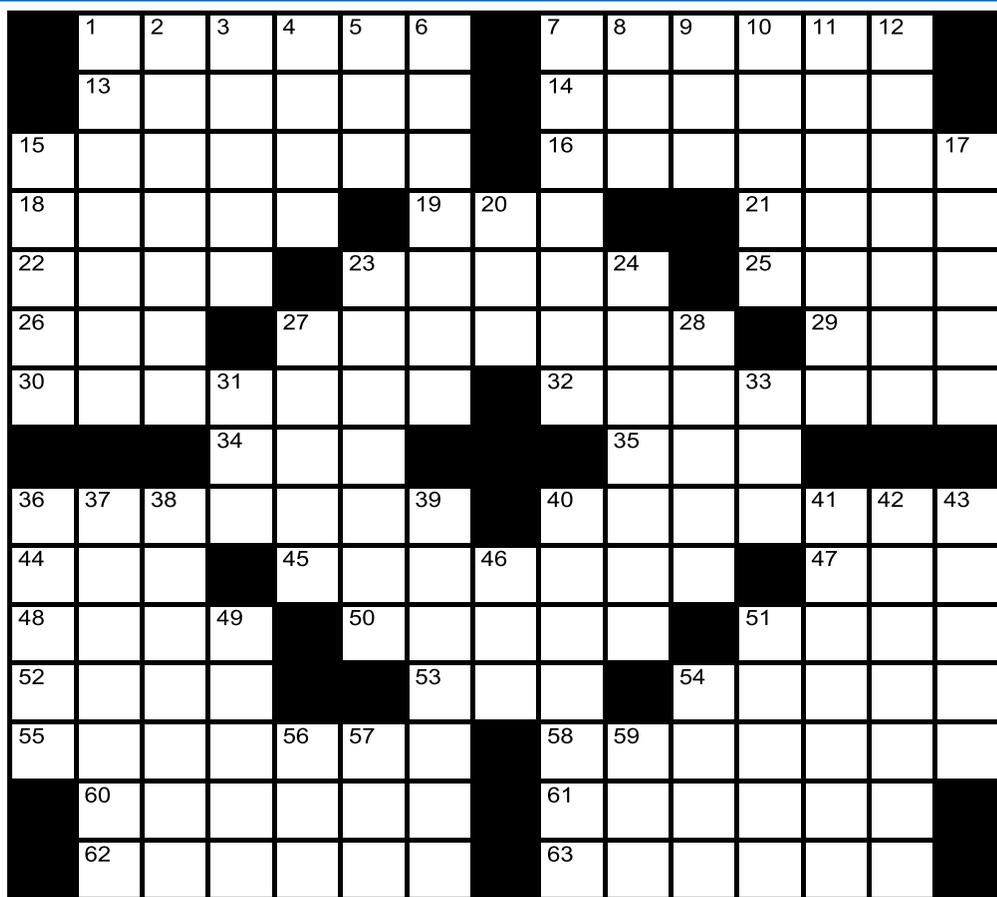
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ACROSS

- 1. Bouquets
- 7. Prejudices
- 13. Emissary
- 14. Cause of hereditary variation
- 15. Spruce up
- 16. Power tools for smoothing wood
- 18. "Unforgettable" singers
- 19. Decide to leave, with "out"
- 21. Arch type
- 22. Cuckoos
- 23. Pigtail, e.g.
- 25. Bluster
- 26. Affranchise
- 27. Fixed
- 29. After expenses
- 30. Aridity
- 32. Baton wielder
- 34. Appropriate
- 35. Charge
- 36. Sack

40. \_\_\_ Island, TV show

- 44. Backstabber
- 45. Vine-supporting latticework
- 47. "So \_\_\_ me!"
- 48. \_\_\_ acid, a product of protein metabolism
- 50. Lieu
- 51. "Empedocles on \_\_\_" (Matthew Arnold poem)
- 52. Data
- 53. Sylvester, to Tweety
- 54. Ishmael's people
- 55. Collapse
- 58. Some theater
- 60. Farmer, at times
- 61. Sacred Zoroastrian writings
- 62. Fitting room endeavors
- 63. Cash in

DOWN

- 1. One who distributes charity
- 2. That which exists
- 3. Baddies
- 4. Foot pads
- 5. Absorbed, as a cost
- 6. Married women (Spanish)
- 7. Christian rite involving water
- 8. Down with the flu
- 9. \_\_\_ king, food (2 wds)
- 10. Man of La Mancha
- 11. Chic
- 12. More tranquil
- 15. Almost boil
- 17. Begin
- 20. Crash site?
- 23. Rouses to action
- 24. Hearing impairment device (2 wds)
- 27. Cache

- 28. Parenting challenges
- 31. 40 winks
- 33. Undertake, with "out"
- 36. Ancient Celtic priest
- 37. Heartfelt
- 38. More rigid
- 39. A through Z
- 40. Freight car without sides or roof (2 wds)
- 41. Ancient fertility goddess
- 42. Ray of sunlight
- 43. Bakery supply
- 46. Grassland
- 49. England Dan and John Ford \_\_\_, singing duo
- 51. Clear, as a disk
- 54. Lying, maybe
- 56. "Much \_\_\_ About Nothing"
- 57. Big \_\_\_ Conference
- 59. "\_\_\_ Maria"

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SEE SOLUTIONS, PAGE 22



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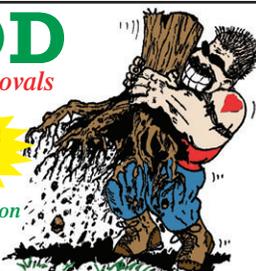
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44	R	A	T	45	T	R	E	46	L	L	I	S	47	S	U	E	
48	U	R	I	49	C	50	T	E	A	D	51	E	T	N	A		
52	I	N	F	53	T	A	T	54	A	R	A	B	S				
56	E	F	L	57	A	58	C	59	S	A	B	A	R	E	T		
60	S	E	L	61	A	62	A	V	E	S	T	A					
63	T	R	Y	64	O	N	S	65	R	E	D	E	E	M			

8	6	4	2	3	9	1	7	5
5	7	2	1	8	4	6	3	9
1	3	9	5	6	7	2	4	8
7	1	6	4	9	3	5	8	2
2	8	3	7	5	1	4	9	6
4	9	5	8	2	6	3	1	7
6	4	8	3	7	5	9	2	1
9	2	1	6	4	8	7	5	3
3	5	7	9	1	2	8	6	4



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