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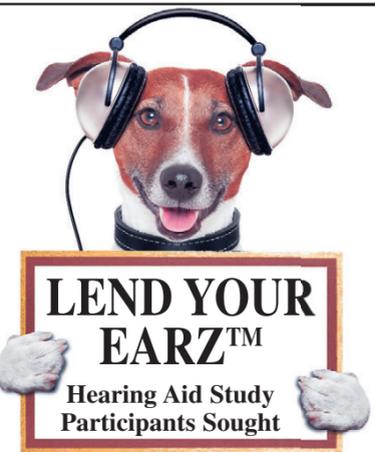


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**INSIDE
PAGE 1B**

New schools, new programs on tap

By B.C. Manion

bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

The days of relatively easy rush-hour commutes are approaching an end as students, teachers and other employees gear up for a new school year.

Students in Pasco County Schools begin the 2014-15 school year on Aug. 18, and Hillsborough County public schools begin classes a day later.

Wiregrass Ranch High School already is urging students and parents to give themselves ample time to arrive.

"Traffic in the morning is always busy,"



FILE PHOTO

Children arrive at Quail Hollow Elementary School on the last day the school had classes before closing down for renovation. Quail Hollow is slated to open in the 2015-16 school year.

Robyn White, the school's principal, noted on the Wiregrass Ranch website. "With 40 buses arriving, 500 student drivers, 200 employees and hundreds of parents driving to

school, you must arrive early to prevent being late to school."

If that's the scene at just one school, imagine how it will play out across two massive school districts.

In addition to traffic generated by Hillsborough and Pasco public schools, there also are thousands of students in both counties attending private schools and charter schools, including Academy at the Lakes, Land O' Lakes Christian School, Countryside Montessori, The Reading Corner, Learning Gate Community School, Imagine School and Academy at the Farm, just to name a few.

The traffic jams will begin in earnest when students return to classes, but the volume will pick up a bit earlier as teachers

See **SCHOOL**, page 6A

Let them go?



MICHAEL HINMAN/STAFF PHOTO

More than half the residents of Pasco County hop in their cars each morning and drive across the county line for jobs in places such as Hillsborough and Pinellas counties.

Live in Pasco, work elsewhere won't be the norm forever, some say

By Michael Hinman

mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

It pretty much started when John Gallagher was caught in heavy traffic on Interstate 75.

The morning rush is exactly that, the morning rush. But Gallagher, then the Pasco County administrator, realized that these were primarily people who lived in his county, but were heading south to work jobs in Hillsborough and even Pinellas counties.

From that time forward, Pasco County

made it a priority to develop policy that not only encouraged people to find homes in the county, but to work here as well. That meant working to attract high-wage jobs to the area with efforts like tax incentives, and removing some of the red tape involved in locating a business in the county.

Ken Littlefield, a former state representative who is running for Pasco County Commission, may bring a completely different perspective to the dais if he's elected, however.

"A lot of people see 60,000 to 80,000

people leaving Pasco to go to work in Hillsborough or Pinellas counties as a negative. But I'm not sure about that," Littlefield said. "It's like they are working in the mine. They are bringing the gold back to Pasco, and they are spending that money here. When that money is spent here, there is economic growth that is taking place."

Littlefield shared those views during a candidate forum last week at Keystone Community Church in Land O' Lakes, host-

See **WORK**, page 6A

Homeowners worry about golf course value drain

By Michael Hinman

mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

In the three months since the links at Plantation Palms Golf Club closed, a homeowners association has been left powerless, and confused neighbors listen to any rumor they can about the fate of the 156-acre course.

A small party tent, which once provided shade to golfers near the clubhouse, now sits neglected, its dirty canopy flapping in the wind. Equipment that used to keep the greens pristine is buried in overgrown grass.

One hole, not far from the entrance, still sports a small flag, desperately calling attention to golfers who may never come.

Patty Stach doesn't play golf, but the deserted course has become a nightmare for her. She's ready to move to a new town, but she can't even put her Plantation Palms house up for sale because of what's happen-



MICHAEL HINMAN/STAFF PHOTO

Golfers have been replaced with wildlife along the Plantation Palms Golf Club, which has been deserted since MJS Golf Group closed the course last May.

See **GOLF**, page 6A

Tilling the soil to share earth's bounty

By B.C. Manion

bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

It's around 8 a.m. on a Saturday, and a volunteer crew is hard at work in a garden at Tims Memorial Presbyterian Church in Lutz.

Renee White is yanking plants out of a raised bed, like a one-woman wrecking crew. Her husband Mike is on the other side of the garden trying to make sure that he's placing a wood post in the right spot for a new raised bed.

Eric Kopp is working up a sweat, first sawing wood for the new garden bed, and then fixing a water pipe that's broken.

Meanwhile, Ann Marks and Princess Layne are tending to other garden chores. Marks is scooping up piles of vegetation that Renee White has cleared out of a bed and carrying it to a compost heap. Layne is stripping okra leaves off a plant to allow sunlight to reach other plants.

The volunteers are part of The Mustard Seed Garden Ministry.

They launched the project last year, first finding an area on the church's property that would work for a garden, said Renee White, who is a Hillsborough County master gardener.

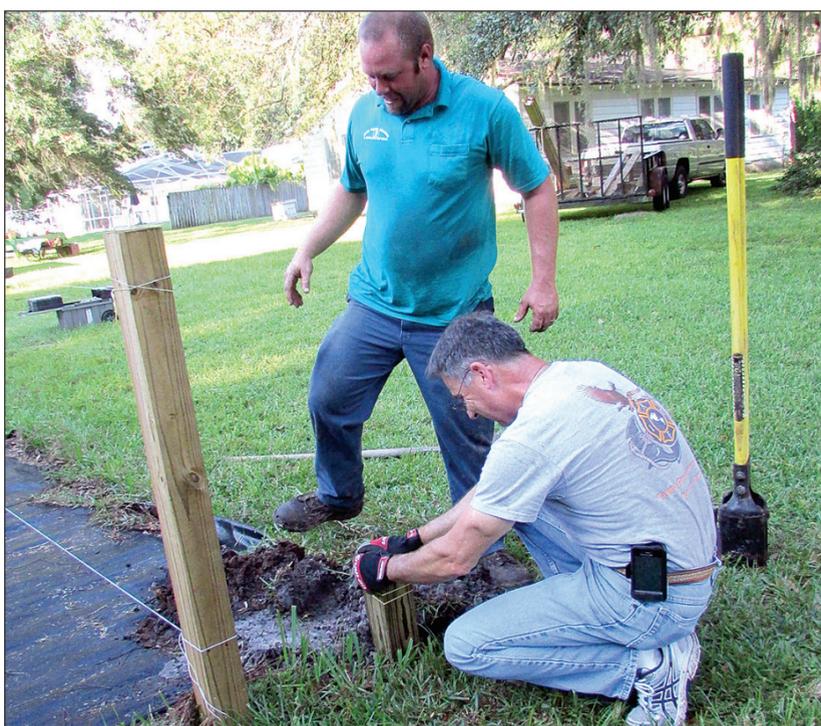
To plant the garden they needed flat terrain, water and sun. They also needed a spot that wasn't already being used by another group at the church, she said.

"Of all the places that we surveyed on the 11 acres, this was the one that fit everything," White said.

The volunteers set about transforming a



Renee White yanks with a vengeance to strip a bed of vegetation to clear the way for a future planting.



Eric Kopp, standing by a crouched Mike White are putting in a post to help support a new garden bed.

65-by-55-foot patch of land into a thriving garden.

The idea for the garden came from members of the mission committee, White said.

"Several of us had the idea," she said. "We have this property, why don't we use it to God's glory by taking care of people who don't have fresh food."

At the moment, okra, peppers, cherry tomatoes, basil and flowers are growing in the garden. At other times of the year, they plant different crops.

The plants are grown in raised beds, and the gardeners rotate what they grow to reduce problems with fungus, disease, nematodes and other pests.

They also grow a variety of flowers on the front side of the garden.

"We have our pollinators up front here," White said.

Besides attracting bees and butterflies, the flowers create a beautiful view for passersby and visitors to the church grounds.

As they harvest the garden, they donate its yield to the First Baptist Church and Grace Family Church in Lutz, which both feed the hungry. They also donate produce to Christian Social Services in Land O' Lakes, which gives it to people in need.



This pepper is just one of the kinds of vegetables grown at The Mustard Seed Garden to help feed the poor.

their garden.

The ministry also allows people to use 4-by-4-foot plots for a \$10 annual donation. Layne is growing okra and flowers in one of those plots.

"I just love gardening, and where I live, I do not have a lot of gardening space," said Layne, who lives in Willow Bend. "So, this is my garden away from home."

She enjoys helping in the garden ministry, too.

"I just love being active in my church," Layne said.

Kopp said this is his first experience in serving on an outreach ministry, and he's glad he signed on.

"I own a landscaping company, so it's a pretty natural thing," Kopp said.

Marks, who lives in Wesley Chapel, said she comes from a long line of gardeners. Unlike them, she said, she's not a skilled gardener. "Weeding is my specialty," she said, but she enjoys being involved. "It's all community. It's pulling our strengths together to help out people who can't help themselves."

The Mustard Seed Ministry raises money for garden supplies by going to local produce markets and having their own farmer's market at the church. Whatever they don't sell, they donate to Christian Social Services.

"One day, it may be tomatoes and broccoli and cabbage and lettuce. On another day, it may be something else," White said. That's in addition to donated crops from



A group of volunteers at Tims Memorial Presbyterian Church has created The Mustard Seed Garden Ministry. The crops they grow help to feed the hungry. The flowers they grow feed the soul.

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We never doubted that bigger is better

By Diane Kortus
Publisher



Unless you're reading this column online, by now you should have realized that something big is different about this week's paper.

Really big. We are 6 inches longer, or 25 percent bigger, than we were last week.

This makes us the same size as most daily newspapers, and gives you two sections of the paper instead of one.

We've been working on this transition since May, so today is a big day for my staff and me. We are thrilled with how our new paper looks and feels, and hope you are too.

Converting to a larger size has touched just about everything we do, from the size of our ads to the size of the plastic bags we use to deliver your paper. It's been more work, and has affected more aspects of our business, than we ever imagined.

But we've never doubted our decision to go bigger. We truly believe this is the best way to meet the changing needs of our readers and advertisers.

There are many reasons behind the change that we've talked about in promotional ads and in our news columns for the past month. But the biggest one is a larger paper gives us more space to print local stories for you and your family.

Becoming the same size as a daily also communicates that we're no long the "little community paper" that some people

may perceive, but rather a "real newspaper" to be taken seriously.

We've stepped up our game to fill the void left by the two daily newspapers in our market — The Tampa Bay Times and The Tampa Tribune — which have steadily cut back their local news coverage and frequency of their regional sections in Pasco and north Hillsborough counties. These big dailies once had neighborhood news sections they published seven days a week. As they scaled back their news staffs, their regional editions dwindled from seven days a week, to five, to three and now just once or twice a week.

We have picked up their slack by expanding The Laker/Lutz News, both in size and content. We still give you the human interest stories you've always loved, but we've increased our coverage of growth and development, new and expanding businesses, public and private education, and city and county government.

There's no doubt that size does matter and bigger is better — at least when it comes to newspapers in the communities we serve in Lutz, Odessa, Land O' Lakes, Wesley Chapel, Zephyrhills and Dade City.

Going bigger has energized my employees and the business community that supports us like nothing before. And we're confident our new size also will inspire our readers and make you more loyal than ever to The Laker/Lutz News.

Please let us know what you think of our new size. We're betting the only complaint we'll hear is the larger size is harder to hold when drinking a cup of coffee and reading your paper Wednesday morning.

New health coverage help for Medicare PUP

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Medicare beneficiaries who have lost their health care coverage offered through Physicians United Plan will have a chance to participate in a special election period to retain that coverage.

The termination, which takes effect July 1, affected approximately 38,000 Medicare beneficiaries throughout Florida, including Pasco, Hillsborough, Pinellas and

Polk counties, according to the Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas Inc.

PUP beneficiaries were transferred to traditional Medicare effective June 1, however many enrollees will not have the same type of coverage they did before June 1. The aging agency is encouraging those affected by the change to visit Medicare.gov for a list of approved services under original Medicare, and ask questions by calling (800) 633-4227.



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What's Happening

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

PILATES CLASSES

Back in Health Wellness Center, 18942 N. Dale Mabry Highway in Lutz, is hosting mat Pilates classes on Tuesdays at 10 a.m., and Saturdays at 9 a.m. Classes are a small-group setting and \$8 each. First class is free. For information, email Susan Mosher at lemondropcc22@gmail.com.

KIDS' GARDENING

Pasco County Cooperative Extension is hosting free gardening activities for kids ages 6 and older Aug. 9 from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., at the Land O' Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. Kids, accompanied by an adult, can learn how plants interact with the environment and how to grow vegetables. To register, call (352) 518-0156.

AUTHOR JUNE HALL LUNCHEON

June Hall, author of "No More Pity Parties," will host a power luncheon Aug. 9 at 11 a.m., at Hampton Inn, 2740 Cypress Ridge Blvd., in Wesley Chapel. Cost is \$24. To reserve a seat, or for information, visit JuneHall.com.

SHARK WEEK AT AQUARIUM

The Florida Aquarium is offering a kids' admission discount during Shark Week Aug. 9-16. Kids ages 11 and younger wearing a make-it-yourself shark week mask or glasses will receive a \$5 discount on a regular paid ticket. There will be shark-themed activities throughout the week, including mermaid appearances, scavenger hunts, games, and guest speakers. For a mask or glasses template and complete schedule of events, visit FLAquarium.org.

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

The Nature Coast Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will meet Aug. 12 at 7 p.m., at the Land O' Lakes Community Center, 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. This is a movie night with popcorn. The presentation will highlight four explorers on a trek from the Florida Everglades to the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia. For information, call (727) 376-7663.

AUDITIONS AT LIVE OAK THEATRE

The Live Oak Theatre Company is hosting auditions for "Anne of Avonlea" and "The Music Man" Aug. 12 at 7:30 p.m., and Aug. 14 at 6:30 p.m., at Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 200 Mount Fair Ave., in Brooksville. For information, email vincevanni@tampabay.rr.com.

OLD LUTZ SCHOOL SPRUCE-UP

The Old Lutz School, 18819 U.S. 41 in Lutz, is having a spruce-up day Aug. 23 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. There will be indoor cleaning, yard work, hanging blinds, painting, and organizing upstairs storage.

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Back to School Bash at Cobb

Cobb Theatres Grove 16 and Cinebistro, 6333 Wesley Grove Blvd., in Wesley Chapel, will host its annual Back to School Bash Aug. 9 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with special guest WWE superstar Titus O'Neil.

O'Neil was recently featured in the Ad Council's "Take Time to Be a Dad" campaign, and was the recipient of the 2014 Rainbow PUSH Coalition Humanitarian Award. This annual free event works to bring families together where local heroes create student heroes.

The bash will feature school supplies, games, face painting, haircuts, tutoring information, dental hygiene tips, and more. For information, call (813) 948-5445.

There will be a brief general meeting at 11 a.m. For information, call Ben Nevel at (813) 334-5712, or Suzin Carr at (813) 453-5256.

YARD SALE, FISH FRY

Revolutionary Life Church, 18310 U.S. 41 in Lutz, is having a yard sale and fish fry Aug. 23. The men's ministry The Rock will start the yard sale at 8 a.m., followed by a fish fry, which will include the pastor's smoked mullet. For information, call (813) 948-7555.

ZOO SALUTES HEROES

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is celebrating Family Fun Month throughout August by offering a free weekday admission to active duty, retirees and veterans of the U.S. military and first responders. To take advantage of the offer, the military member or first responder needs to register online at LowryParkZoo.org/Hero, print a voucher, and present it with valid identification at the zoo ticket window. The voucher is valid for the military member or first responder, plus one free guest.

CACTUS, SUCCULENT SALE

The University of South Florida Botanical Gardens, 12210 USF Pine Drive in Tampa, is

hosting the 20th annual Central Florida Cactus & Succulent Society Labor Day Show & Sale Aug. 30 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission and parking are free. For information, call (813) 974-2329, or visit Gardens.usf.edu.

RUNNING CLUB START-UP

Mentmore Running Group is looking for local runners of all levels to join. The free group runs Monday through Friday at 5 a.m., and 8 p.m., and Saturdays at 6:30 a.m. It starts and finishes behind Wells Fargo, 18975 State Road 54 in Lutz, at Mentmore Boulevard. There will be monthly field trips, couch to 5-kilometer training, fitness and camaraderie. Strollers are welcome. For information, email [Monica Del Re](mailto:MonicaDelRe@gmail.com) at mdelre@gmail.com.

WINE WALK WEDNESDAY

The Shops at Wiregrass, 28211 Paseo Drive in Wesley Chapel, will host Wine Walk Wednesday Sept. 3 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. For a \$15 donation to benefit the Jason Ackerman Foundation, guests will receive a souvenir wine tumbler and passport for wine and food tastings. There will be live music and the latest fashion trends. Guests must be 21 or older, and show valid identification. For information, visit TheShopsAtWiregrass.com.

CONTINUOUS BOOK SALE

The Friends of the Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, are 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 are looking for new members. Those interested can stop by the library to sign up. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

DONATE FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Denny's, 29933 State Road 52 in San Antonio, is accepting household items, clothing, tools, yard items, garage items and electronics from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., through Sept. 3, in support of breast cancer awareness. All proceeds will be donated to the Susan G. Komen Foundation. For information, call Frank Martin at (352) 588-7931.

COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

First United Methodist Church of Land O' Lakes, 6209 Land O' Lakes Blvd., is hosting a women and children nondenominational Bible study Thursday mornings at 11:30 a.m., beginning Sept. 4. For information, email Jeanine Coris at ejcoris@live.com, or call (813) 910-7670.

SCALE AEROBATIC COMPETITION

Bay City Flyers of Land O' Lakes is hosting a IMAC 2014, a scale aerobatic competition, Sept. 13-14 at 8:30 a.m. Gates open at 6 a.m., for pilot setup. Coffee and donuts will be provided. Kitchen opens at 11 a.m., for lunch. Admission is \$3 for spectators. For directions and information, visit BayCityFlyers.org.

COASTAL CLEANUP IN NPR

There will be a Coastal Cleanup Sept. 20 from 8 a.m. to noon to clean up the salt flats, mangroves and lagoon edges at Pasco Palms Preserve in New Port Richey. Bug spray, garbage bags, gloves, safety vests, water and some food will be provided. Participants should bring grabbers, kayaks and 5-gallon buckets or smaller. No dogs allowed. The group will meet at Eagle Point Park, 4499 Strauber Memorial Highway in New Port Richey. For information, call (727) 847-8140, ext. 8333, or email [Katie MacMillen](mailto:KatieMacMillen@pascocountyfl.net) at KatieMacMillen@pascocountyfl.net.

LEARN TO TANGO

The Tampa Bay Tango Club and Tampa Downtown Partnership are offering a free weekly tango class at Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park, 600 N. Ashley Drive, in Tampa, on Thursdays at 6 p.m., through next March. All skill levels are invited. For information, call (813) 221-3686.

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- Karen Naef, Lutz customer



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By Michael Hinman
mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

After spending decades as a teacher and administrator in Pasco County Schools, Steve Luikart was ready to enjoy retirement. That is, until a letter to the editor in an area newspaper caught the attention of his wife, Nancy, and his life would never be the same.

"The letter writer wanted to know when someone with the background and experience in the school system would run for the school board," Luikart said. "My wife got me up at 5:30 that morning and made me read it. 'Do you know what I'm saying?' she asked me. I said, 'Yes, I do.'"

Later that week, Luikart was in the supervisor of elections office, filing paperwork to run for school board, a seat he won in 2010 with 45 percent of the vote in a three-person race. Since then, Luikart has called himself a representative of the men and women who work in the school system, providing a voice he says they may not have otherwise.

"I know how the teachers feel, and how the custodians feel, and how the cafeteria and support staff feel," he said. "I have worked with all those folks for so long, I can

bring a different perspective when some of these things come up" on the board.

Luikart championed the opening of health clinics across the county that he said not only helps keep employees healthy, but saves the school district money in medical costs. Luikart also pushed for a program led by England's University of Cambridge that provides accelerated methods of academic study, as well as an aeronautics program at Sunlake High School.

"One of my main goals, if I'm re-elected, is to look at our vocational technical programs and get more involved," Luikart said. "I want to find out more what the students and the community need, because we need to be able to train our students who are not going on to college, and who are not getting higher paid jobs coming out of high school."

The vo-tech programs have been something close to Luikart's heart in his more than three decades as an educator. He was a



Steve Luikart

STEVE LUIKART

Non-partisan candidate for Pasco County School Board, District 5

OCCUPATION

Retired administrator, Pasco County Schools

ELECTED OFFICE

Pasco County School Board, 2010

FAMILY

Nancy Luikart, wife
Steve Luikart, son
Jamie Golubeff, daughter
Shawna Luikart, daughter

RESIDENCE

New Port Richey, lifelong

FUNDRAISING, THROUGH JULY 25

\$9,786

second-generation graduate of Gulf High School in New Port Richey, and returned to the high school after college to become an educator.

Whenever Luikart travels around the country, he visits various vo-tech programs, looking for ideas. He realized in observing those programs, Pasco's vocational technical programs are falling short.

"They are nowhere close to the levels they should be at," he said. "We have to make sure that when these students graduate, they will get two steps in front of the average guy. We need to expand some of the programs that we're offering."

Luikart also wants to break out various career academies so that they are more centralized and accessible to students across the country, and not just specifically with a high school, like the culinary academy at Land O' Lakes High School.

"If I'm at Sunlake, I have to drive over to Land O' Lakes High School and try to enroll in it," Luikart said. "If these academies were part of the Marchman Technical Education Center, it would become more economically viable from the district's standpoint."

Luikart says he wants his next four years to be like the last four on the board, and that starts with listening to everyone affected by the board's decisions.

"I don't rule with a heavy hand," he said. "I rule with the people."

Yacht says school district needs protection from itself

By Michael Hinman
mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

It's not uncommon to find education leaders with the "doctor" title before their name. But Marc Yacht is not one of those kinds of doctors. He's actually a medical doctor, the retired director of the Pasco County Health Department.

And he now wants to lend his medical knowledge and experience to Pasco County Schools as a member of the school board.

"I'm advocating for more nursing services in the schools, since many children now have chronic medical problems that require more attention," Yacht said. "I also would like to offer my expertise when it comes to health policy issues that come before the school board. That's a big one for me, and something we haven't really had since Marge Whaley left a number of years ago."

However, Yacht is not looking to just address medical needs in the school district. He also wants to rein in what he says is the district's out-of-control dependence on charter schools and voucher credits, which eats money that could've otherwise been spent on improving public schools.

"We are No. 43 nationally when it

comes to public schools," Yacht said. "We are so low on the list for funding, it really concerns me when money is being drained from public schools for charter schools."

More than 87 percent of voucher credits, he said, are going to religious schools.

"That is a Constitutional issue for me," Yacht said. "I am a 100 percent advocate for public education, and I feel no Florida tax dollar should go to religious or private schools."

Teachers also are getting unfairly blamed for a school's poor performance, Yacht said.

"We do not understand the problem that children have when they are coming into a school," he said. "Much of it is poverty, and they don't have the resources others do. And our teachers are being demoralized by all this, plus they haven't received a raise for five years, so that's not helping much either."

One thing that Yacht hopes to share with fellow board members, if elected, is to be



Marc Yacht

MARC YACHT

Non-partisan candidate for Pasco County School Board, District 5

OCCUPATION

Retired director, Pasco County Health Department

FAMILY

Helen Yacht, wife
Phillip Yacht, son
Becky Yhap, daughter
Susan Michelle Hinkle, daughter

RESIDENCE

Hudson, since 1987

FUNDRAISING, THROUGH AUGUST 1

\$3,953

more open-minded to the concerns brought to them by the community. Far too often, it seems the board has made up its mind in advance, and what parents and students feel is usually left on the table.

The worst example, he says, was when the school board decided last year to allow

a cell tower to be built at Seven Oaks Elementary School in Wesley Chapel.

"Parents came before the school board and really addressed concerns," Yacht said. "They didn't just come mad, they came with information. More than 50 of them spoke in front of the school board. But still, in the end, there were four votes for the cell tower, and only one against."

The school board also needs to refocus some of its attention on the larger issues affecting the county, Yacht said. Far too often, time is wasted in areas it shouldn't be.

"The school board deals with a lot of minutiae, like when a teacher needs to get disciplined or a child apologizes for bad behavior," Yacht said. "They are getting involved, and it's kind of like Nero fiddling while Rome is burning. They are looking at smaller issues when the house is falling down."

Yacht's focus is to protect the very education system he says is being threatened by the push of privatization. And he's ready to do that from a spot on the school board.

"We have to start looking at the larger issues, because if we don't, public schools are going to be gone," Yacht said. "That is the agenda of this (state) government, and we can't let it happen."

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SCHOOL, from page 1A

and other school employees begin reporting back to work to get ready for another year.

Many parents are already hitting the malls, discount stores and local shops to buy their kids new school clothes and supplies for the coming year. Parents who want to be in the know should check their school's website to make sure they are getting the supplies that their kids will need. Most websites offer a list of supplies that differentiates between grade levels.

Parents also can benefit from attending "meet the teacher" day at elementary schools and orientation sessions for older students to get a better feel for their child's campus and the school's rules. Again, all that information is available on schools' websites.

The coming school year is ushering in new educational options for students in both school districts. Pepin Academies has a new public charter school in New Port Richey that will serve students with special learning needs throughout Pasco County.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the county, Darby Christian Academy in Dade City will offer a community school model, based on a biblical worldview. That school, a



FILE PHOTO

Hundreds of yellow school buses will hit the roads in Hillsborough and Pasco counties in a couple of weeks when the new school year begins. Pasco County Schools begin classes on Aug. 18. Hillsborough County's public school children begin a day later.

ministry of Darby Community Church at 14745 Bellamy Brothers Road, offers instruction for kindergarten through 10th-graders.

Stewart Middle School and Zephyrhills High School are adding The Infinity Academy, a program that blends online instruction with classroom learning to give students the chance to quickly move through material they master, but spend more time on lessons that cause them to struggle.

Both schools also are offering a program

Pasco County Schools Calendar 2014-15

- Aug. 18 — Students' first day
- Sep. 1 — Labor Day
- Oct. 20 — Teacher planning day
- Oct. 27 — Report card distribution
- Nov. 24-28 — Thanksgiving break
- Dec. 22-Jan. 2 — Winter break
- Jan. 5 — Teacher planning day
- Jan. 12 — Report card distribution
- Jan. 19 — Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Feb. 16 — President's Day
- March 16-20 — Spring break
- March 23 — Teacher planning day
- March 30 — Report card distribution
- April 3 — Non-student day
- May 20 — Seniors' last day
- May 25 — Memorial Day
- June 3 — Students' last day
- June 11 — Final report card distribution

called AVID, which stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. At Zephyrhills High, AVID will be available for 60 incoming ninth-graders who will take it as an elective.

WORK, from page 1A

ed by the Central Pasco and Trinity-Odesa chambers of commerce. Other candidates seeking the same seat on the commission quickly rebuked his remarks.

"When I think about a premier county, I think about jobs in that county," said Mike Moore, who is facing Littlefield for the Republican nomination.

Money, he said, doesn't necessarily come back home. Especially since people spend a lot of time at work, and spending money around their jobs.

"There was a time that I worked outside the area quite often, and I would fill my gas tank on the way home in another county," Moore said. "I would shop in the afternoon — guess where, in another county. Guess where I ate breakfast? Another county."

Pasco residents spend an average of 30 minutes on the road commuting to work, compared to 26 minutes for residents living in Hillsborough, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Two decades ago, that commute time was 24 minutes, and despite advancements like the widening of I-75, U.S. 41 and the construction of the Suncoast Parkway, the time it takes to get to work is just going up for Pasco residents.

It's something county leaders still want to curb, especially since Pasco ranks as one of the worst commute times in the state, spending the equivalent of three full work weeks, and a bit of overtime, behind the wheel each year.

"That's valuable time, and time is money," said James Edwards, the transportation manager with Pasco's Metropolitan Planning Organization.

But it's not just sales tax the county collects from having more business here, but other ways of producing more money inside the county as well.

"Basically, the big (economic) payoff is at the other end of their trip, which is where they are employed," Edwards said. "The intent is to build that employment base within your own county, so that you capture the best of all worlds."

How can the county keep more workers here? Find companies willing to pay higher wages, said another county com-

mission candidate, Bob Robertson. He cited a report from the National Bureau of Labor Statistics that showed the average weekly wage in Pasco was \$624, while it was well above \$800 in Hillsborough and Pinellas.

"I live in Pasco and work in Pasco," the Zephyrhills financial analyst said. "When you have a chance to make 30 to 35 percent more, it's no wonder more people drive south."

Making it worse, Robertson said, is the fact any educated work force Pasco develops ends up moving away.

"We are hearing about kids who are coming out of school, and they are not going to Hillsborough or Pinellas. They are going to Atlanta, or they are going somewhere else altogether," he said. "That is not a good thing for Pasco County."

Sandy Graves, who chairs the government affairs committee at the Central Pasco Chamber, said a lot of what's needed is patience.

"I am happy that people have jobs and choose to live here in Pasco, because that is the reality of the situation at present," she said in an email. "There is no doubt that Hillsborough and Pinellas have the commercial economic base that supplies those jobs for many that live here, but our county needs to prepare for the natural growth of businesses that will move northward in the future."

However, Erika Remsberg — the lone Democrat seeking to replace Pat Mulieri on the county commission — believes there is something the county can do right now: invest in small businesses.

"We should be putting 75 percent of our economic development money into small business," Remsberg said. "It's a lot less expensive, and can have more of an impact. Just think, if they all added just one job, we would have 3,000 more jobs in Pasco County."

Any change to scale back the need to commute will take a while, the MPO's Edwards said.

"It's going to take a long time to change it, probably 15 to 20 years to change that dynamic," Edwards said. "But at the end of the day, it's really a revenue-based decision, and what's good for the employment sector is good for the county?"

GOLF, from page 1A

ing just a block or so away.

"If you're a golfer, it affects your way of life," she said. "But even if you're not a golfer, it affects the value of your home. Who would want to buy into a community where the golf course looks like this?"

Mitch Osceola, Jayson Ray and Steve McDonald — collectively known as MJS Golf Group LLC — bought the course in 2011 through a \$2.2 million loan from Native American Bank of Denver. All three have Native American roots: Osceola is a Florida Seminole, Ray is from the Klamath Modoc tribe of Oregon, and McDonald from the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation of Kansas.

Despite their different upbringings, they found common ground in golf. Osceola, Ray and McDonald realized their dream to own a golf course when a Vero Beach developer decided to sell a course they built in the heart of Land O' Lakes.

"We've got big ideas for Plantation Palms that will help the HOA grow as well," Ray told The Laker at the time.

But now, the ownership is quiet. They haven't communicated with the HOA, and they didn't return a message seeking comment from The Laker. The doors that used to welcome golfers are now adorned with a citation from the Pasco County code enforcement office, demanding the grass get cut.

Dave Brooks, a former member of the HOA and a longtime member of the club, says there's nothing the community can do except wait for something to happen.

"It's frustrating that the course is in such bad shape, and it's frustrating that we can't play the course," he said. "But at the same time, there's not much we can do. It's a privately owned golf course."

After the May closing, the HOA president David Gunsteens told residents to stay off the course, and that he would close the front gates to the community during the day to stop people from coming in trying to get free trips around the links. Each month, he would update residents on what's happening with the golf course in the community's newsletter — at least as much as he could with the little information he had.

The class will focus on organizational skills, text coding, reading and writing coaching, and math and science tutorials.

At Stewart, the AVID elective will be offered for students in grades six through eight.

In Hillsborough County, the public charter Lutz Preparatory School has added a middle school. This year, the school will serve sixth- and seventh-graders. Next year, it intends to add eighth grade.

Three elementary schools in The Laker/Lutz News coverage area have new principals.

Claudia Steinacker will lead Cox Elementary School, and Christina Twardosz is at the helm of Centennial Elementary School, both in Dade City. Gretchen Rudolph-Fladd is the new principal at Veterans Elementary School in Wesley Chapel.

This school year also signals the first full year of operation for Porter Campus at Wiregrass Ranch, a new satellite of Pasco-Hernando State College.

The college campus is next door to Wiregrass Ranch High and not far from Wesley Chapel High School, which is expected to lead to enhanced educational opportunities for the high school students and to give the college a chance to recruit more future students.

"Once again this month, I have to report that we still have no word on the status of the golf course," Gunsteens wrote in the most recent newsletter. "We continue to attempt to obtain permission from the course owners in order to do some basic mowing in some of the more visible areas, but have continued to be unsuccessful in that area."

If the county does have to come in and mow, it could make the property even more difficult to sell or bring back online. Especially since the cost to just maintain a 30-foot buffer from neighboring properties would be in the thousands of dollars, said Joaquin Servia, the county's code enforcement manager.

"The government isn't really equipped to deal with a situation like that," Servia said. "It's such a large area, and there's no way that any government is going to be able to maintain a golf course like that to the standards that people would really expect."

The county has three other golf courses that also are in limbo, Servia said. However, the owners at those are doing at least the bare minimum to keep code enforcers at bay.

If the county does come in and do work, they will lien the property, which will make it that much more expensive to sell.

The biggest rumors circulating around the community are that at least two groups — including one led by a resident — have tried to make offers on the golf course, but neither have received a response from Native American Bank. None of those rumors could be verified, and Joel Smith, a senior vice president and chief credit officer for the financial institution, didn't return a call seeking comment.

However, a receptionist who answered the phone at the bank said they have received a number of calls from people asking about the course.

One way or the other, something needs to happen soon, because Stach says she's ready to leave.

"It's a beautiful community, and everybody loves it. It would just be nice to have the golf course up and running," she said. "Nobody can move right now. We're all kind of stuck. And as that grass gets deeper and deeper, we're starting to realize it might be a while."

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Saint Leo University hosts free beginning teacher boot camp

By B.C. Manion

bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

Beginning educators may feel a bit shell-shocked, as they navigate through their first year of teaching. But a July 25 seminar at Saint Leo University aimed to combat those feelings.

The free half-day session, led by instructor Beverly Ledbetter, was filled with practical advice — in essence, a road map — to help new teachers protect themselves against potential pitfalls as they launch their careers.

The boot camp, now in its third year, is a public service offered through Saint Leo's School of Education and Social Services. The university is at 33701 State Road 52, in East Pasco County.

Teachers at the session came from numerous schools, including Wesley Chapel and Wharton high schools, Rushe Middle and Woodland, Seven Oaks, Pasco, Double Branch, R.B. Cox, San Antonio and Wesley Chapel elementary schools.

Nancy Cerezo, associate professor of education at Saint Leo, offered a bit of advice, too. She urged the teachers to seek assistance if they are encountering difficulties.

"If you don't ask for help, they don't know you're drowning," she said. "Do not be afraid to seek help from people on your faculty, on your campus. Ask seasoned teachers, ask the principal, ask the librarian — ask someone."

Ledbetter talked to the teachers about what they should and shouldn't do on campus. It's a good idea to circulate with other teachers and school staff, to get to know them and to become known, she said.

"Know people's names," she advised. "That helps you."

It's especially smart to know the school's bookkeeper, its guidance staff, custodians, lunchroom workers and union representative, Ledbetter said. All of them can help teachers succeed in different ways.

Teachers also should know they will get a supply budget, she said, so they don't need to empty their wallets for classroom items. However, they must account for how they spend that money, so they should be sure to keep their receipts.

"Anything you buy for your classroom is tax-deductible," Ledbetter added.

Another piece of advice is how to interact with students.

"Never put yourself in the position to be alone with a student, because you never know what they are going to say," she said.

If a teacher wants to help a student after school, that's fine — just be sure another teacher or other students are present, Ledbetter said.

Play it safe when it comes to school attire, too, Ledbetter said. Female teachers must avoid revealing clothing.

Male teachers must be aware of how they position themselves near students. They should avoid bending over a female student, to avoid accusations of impropriety, she said. Teachers need to read their contracts to make sure they know what is appropriate and inappropriate in the classroom.



B.C. MANION/STAFF PHOTO

Hilary Berbach, left, and Samantha Crumpler are starting their teaching careers in Pasco County this year. They took advantage of the free table of goodies that instructor Beverly Ledbetter brought to use as props in her 'boot camp' for beginning teachers.

"Be careful of jokes in the classroom," she added. "You never know how a student is going to take a joke."

Another concern is how to deal with money, especially since misappropriating school funds is an infraction that can result in losing retirement benefits, Ledbetter said.

"Before you handle student money, know the procedures at your school," she said. "If you're on a field trip and a student asks you to hold their lunch money, think twice."

Hilary Berbach, who will teach kindergarten at Woodland Elementary School in Zephyrhills, and Samantha Crumpler, who will teach kindergarten at San Antonio Elementary School, were among those attending the seminar. Crumpler said she'd already heard warnings about not being alone with children and being careful with money, but she liked Ledbetter's advice about getting to know the school's bookkeeper and saving receipts for school supplies for tax deductions.

Berbach liked Ledbetter's suggested survival kit for teachers. She said she'd never considered how useful it would be to have safety pins around in case a need arises.

Both teachers are eager for school to start.

"I'm very nervous and very excited," Berbach said. "I want to get in my classroom and set things up and meet my students. I'm so excited to know who my students are."

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BUSINESS DIGEST

Send business news to mhinman@lakerlutznews.com

CHAMBERS CONSIDER MERGER

The Greater Wesley Chapel Chamber of Commerce has opened up talks with the New Tampa Chamber of Commerce with the idea that the two could explore "integrating membership" of the two chambers. The goal, Wesley Chapel chamber executive director Hope Allen said, would be to "build a strong organization focused on membership development, community development and economic development in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area."

The Wesley Chapel chamber's board of directors have appointed a task force to explore the logistics and benefits of a merger, and are now conducting a due diligence review, Allen said.

"While discussions are still in their infancy, we are always interested in reviewing partnerships that enhance our business community," Allen said, in a statement. "After the task force completes its review, the next step is to engage a broader pool of people in the discussion, including current chamber members and community leaders."

The New Tampa chamber, founded in 2009, has a little more than 100 members. The Wesley Chapel chamber was founded in 1998, and maintains about 460 members.

It's not clear how big a new combined chamber would be, since some businesses are members of both chambers.

A decision is expected by October.

RN JOB FAIR

Florida Hospital Zephyrhills will host an experienced RN job fair Aug. 7 from noon to 5 p.m., in the hospital's main lobby.

Hiring managers will be on hand to try and recruit registered nurses for the hospital.

Those who apply for an open RN posi-

tion before the fair can receive a welcome gift, as well as learn about open opportunities and sign-on bonuses.

NEW OWNER WITH JAN'S WINES & BOOS II

Norma Ruckey, along with her daughter Kristen Ruckey and son T.J. Ruckey, have purchased Jan's Wines & Boos II at 19233 N. Dale Mabry Highway in Lutz.

The location offers wine as well as a full-service bar with beer and a wide range of liquor and gourmet cheese trays.

It is open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to midnight. It's open Sundays from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

For information, call (813) 948-0619.

PEP BOYS COMING TO LUTZ

Construction is set to begin soon on a new Pep Boys automobile service shop on State Road 54, just blocks from Collier Parkway in Lutz.

The company is planning a 5,500-square-foot service and tire center with six service bays, according to spokeswoman Lizbeth Galantino, and will hire six people.

The land is located on the corner of State Road 54 and Catfish Lake Lane, and is currently owned by Jerry and Linda Newton of Indian Rocks Beach, according to county property records. The Newtons purchased the 1.6 acres of vacant land in 2005 for \$875,000.

This would be the area's first Pep Boys location, complementing the closest one on North Dale Mabry Highway just north of Ehrlich Road.

Pep Boys recently remodeled many of its stores, removing a lot of the sterile garage environment many locations were known for, and replacing them with lounges that include flat-screen televisions, a beverage station, and free high-speed Wi-Fi access.

The Philadelphia-based company, founded in 1921, has nearly 800 locations nationwide.

CONSTRUCTION JOBS SLOWLY CLIMBING

The number of construction jobs available in the greater Tampa Bay market rose 3 percent in June compared to what it was a year ago to 58,600 workers. Yet, when com-



MICHAEL HINMAN/STAFF PHOTO

Lowe's Rising

The walls are now up on the long-awaited Lowe's, being constructed on 42 acres of land on State Road 54 just east of Land O' Lakes Boulevard. The 152,000-square-foot store is expected to open by winter, bringing 125 jobs to the area. The store was originally planned to open in 2009, but the poor economy pushed it back a few years.

pared to the rest of the state, that growth is below average, according to a new report by Associated General Contractors of America.

The Fort Walton Beach and Naples area had the largest growth in the state with a 16 percent increase in workers. However, those two areas combined have just a little more than 16,000 construction jobs, a fraction of the Tampa Bay region.

The greater Orlando area, which has the second highest number of construction jobs with 54,900, had an 8 percent increase year over year.

The state added 44,500 construction jobs since June 2013, an increase of 12 percent.

DOLLAR TREE BUYING FAMILY DOLLAR

Two popular low-cost retail chains with dozens of locations locally will become one company by early next year.

Dollar Tree Inc., says it will buy Family Dollar Stores Inc., in a deal said to be worth \$8.5 billion.

While both Dollar Tree and Family Dollar will share the same main office, not much else is expected to change, Dollar Tree executives said in a release. Stores will continue

to operate under their own banners and their own policies, creating a combined force to compete with Dollar General.

The new Dollar Tree company will have 13,000 stores across 48 states and five Canadian provinces, with annual sales expected to hit \$18 billion.

Family Dollar operates six stories locally, including four in Zephyrhills, and a store each in Dade City and San Antonio. Dollar Tree has stores in Lutz, Land O' Lakes, Wesley Chapel, New Tampa, Zephyrhills and Dade City.

HONORS FOR HOMES BY WESTBAY

Homes by WestBay has won three awards from the Florida Home Builders Association Sales & Marketing Council's 2014 Excel Awards, handed out during its annual Southeast Building Conference last month.

Among its awards, Homes by WestBay won for Best Interior Merchandising of a Model Home for its model at The Biscayne at FishHawk Ranch in Lithia. It also won for Best Corporate Video and Best Website.

Homes by WestBay is a builder in several local communities, including Connerton and LakeShore Ranch.

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Wesley Chapel school offers individualized instruction

By B.C. Manion
bcmanion@lakerlutznews.com

A small private school, tucked in an office park off Ancient Oaks Boulevard in Wesley Chapel, offers a style of education tailored to the individual needs of children.

The school, which calls itself New LEAPS Academy, is licensed for kindergarten through 12th grade. But so far, it has students ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade.

The school specializes in serving students with special needs. Its acronym, LEAPS, stands for:

- Listening to needs
- Educating to abilities
- Achieving goals
- Partnering with families
- Succeeding

As the school enters its second year of operation, it has an enrollment of 16 students. The hope is to increase that enrollment to 20 by the time classes begin on Aug. 18, said Deb Natale, the president and co-founder of the school, at 27724 Cashford Circle, Suite 101, in Wesley Chapel.

"There are no other schools that do what we do," Natale said, noting what makes her school unique is that it serves children with a wide range of disabilities, instead of serving only children with a particular disability such as autism or hearing loss.

Natale said the Wesley Chapel and New Tampa area needs this kind of school. And she knows this firsthand. She and her husband Tony, who is on the school's board and is chairman of fundraising, have a granddaughter who has special needs.

Each student is evaluated individually to gain an understanding of his or her needs, said Jessie Wamsley, the lead teacher and school manager. Goals are set for each student, and educational plans are



Hailey Ferrara works on a lesson at the white board during last school year at the New LEAPS Academy in Wesley Chapel. It is a school that aims to prepare its students to live independent lives.

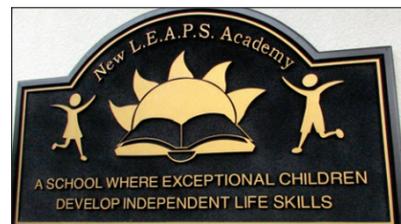
revised as a child progresses.

"We fit our curriculum to fit the students' needs," Wamsley said, versus trying to use a one-size-fits-all approach. "Our classroom is purposely small, so the kids do get that one-on-one attention."

Children who attend the school have a variety of challenges, Wamsley said. Some do not speak, for example, and the school uses various strategies to help those children communicate, including using American Sign Language.

Some children have anxiety issues and others have learning disabilities, the women said.

Tuition is \$8,700 and the school accepts McKay scholarships, which are available through the state for children with special needs. Special services, such



B.C. MANION/STAFF PHOTO

This plaque, on the exterior of the New LEAPS Academy building, expresses the school's mission.

as speech therapy and occupational therapy, also are available from specialists for additional fees.

The school's aim is to prepare its students to lead independent lives, Natale said. Its goal is to help each child reach his or her potential, Wamsley said.

While the school serves children of diverse needs, it is not equipped to help every child, Wamsley said. Some children have severe medical or behavioral problems that are beyond the reach of the school's capabilities.

Parents who are interested in learning more about New LEAPS Academy are invited to come in for a visit to see if the school can meet their child's needs, Natale said.

To arrange a meeting time, call (813) 973-7938.

For more information about the school, visit NewLEAPS.org.

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HEALTH & WELLNESS



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LEARN TO BE A SHINE VOLUNTEER

Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders, a volunteer program of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, is in need of help.

Volunteers offer free counseling and assistance to seniors and those with disabilities on topics related to Medicare, Medicaid, prescription drug assistance, supplemental insurance and more.

Volunteers are needed in Pasco and Pinellas counties.

A three-day training is provided. Costs for transportation are reimbursed and meals are provided.

For information, call Sue Samson at (727) 570-9696, ext. 234.

To fill out an online application, visit FloridaSHINE.org.

HEART-HEALTHY NUTRITION

The Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, is offering the class "Heart Healthy Nutrition: Eating for a Healthy Lifestyle" Aug. 7 at 10 a.m.

A registered dietician will discuss controlling blood pressure through dietary balance, good and bad fats, controlling sodium intake, calorie balance, and dietary fiber.

Seating is limited, and reservations are required.

For information, call (727) 834-5630.

GIVE BLOOD, GET \$10 TO PUBLIX

OneBlood is teaming up with Publix and providing its bloodmobile to the following locations:

- Aug. 8: Publix, 19034 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., New Tampa, from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

- Aug. 9: Publix, 16560 N. Nebraska Ave., Lutz, Aug. 9 from noon to 6 p.m.

Donors will receive a free wellness checkup and a \$10 Publix gift card.

To make an appointment, call (888) 936-6283, or visit OneBloodDonor.org.

MS SUPPORT GROUP

The Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, hosts a monthly multiple sclerosis support group on the second Tuesday of the month, with the next meeting scheduled for Aug. 12 at noon.

Caregivers and family members are invited to attend.

For information, call (727) 372-1568.

ATHLETIC INJURIES SEMINARS

The Health & Wellness Center at Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel, 2700 Healing Way, is hosting these athletic injuries seminars:

- Aug. 12, 6 p.m.: "Foot and Ankle Injuries in Athletes."

Dr. Guillermo Donate will present information on understanding the types of injuries and helpful prevention tips. Reservations are required. A free meal will be provided.

- Aug. 13, 7 p.m.: "Injury Prevention for Athletes: Reduce Your Risk of Injury."

Daniel MacLea and Aly Dhanani will present information on identifying high-risk movement patterns and corrective exercise strategies to reduce the risk of injury.

For information on both seminars, call (813) 929-5432.

OBSTETRICS PROGRAM OFFERS CLASSES

The obstetrics program at Medical Center of Trinity, 9330 State Road 54, is offering the following:

- Aug. 16 at 9 a.m., a pediatric/infant CPR course. Cost is \$15 per person, or \$25 for two.

- Aug. 16 at noon, a tour through the mother-baby and birthing suites.

- Aug. 16 at 1 p.m., breast-feeding class with a focus on fundamentals and how to access support.

Reservations are required for all classes. For information, call (727) 834-5630.

FREE PREGNANCY CARE

LifeChoices Women's Care, 1527 N. Dale Mabry Highway, Suite 101 in Lutz, offers free pregnancy testing and limited obstetrical ultrasounds to teens, women and couples facing an unplanned pregnancy.

The center is open Monday from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Appointments are recommended.

For information, call (813) 948-7734.

NAMI OFFERS SUPPORT

The Pasco County Chapter of National Alliance on Mental Illness offers two monthly support group meetings at 7 p.m.

- Family & Friends Support Meetings: North Tampa Behavioral Health, 29910 State Road 56 in Wesley Chapel, the first and third Tuesday of each month. This group is for family and friends of those with mental illness.

- NAMI Connections: NAMI Pasco Office, 6480 Jallo Plaza, 6480 Land O' Lakes Blvd., Land O' Lakes, every Tuesday. This group is for those living with mental illness.

For information, call (727) 992-9653.

OLOR CANCER NETWORK

Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church Family Cancer Network meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month in Rosary Hall, 2348 Collier Parkway in Land O' Lakes, beginning at 7 p.m.

Cancer survivors and caregivers are invited to attend.

For information, call (813) 949-4565.

SURVIVING CANCER SEMINAR

Dr. Roberto Diaz from the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute will speak about surviving cancer Sept. 25 at 7 p.m., at Keystone Community Church, 21010 State Road 54, in Lutz.

The program is free, and will cover new treatments for cancer, and allow for a question-and-answer period.

For information, call Walt Bockmiller, chair of the Keystone Cancer Support Group, at (813) 527-8211. Or call Keystone Community Church at (813) 948-4522.

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

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Troop makes historical visit

Girl Scout Troop 494 of Lutz recently toured the birthplace of Juliette Gordon Low, where Girl Scouts was founded, on a trip to Savannah, Georgia. The trip was funded by the group's annual cookie sales. Visiting history were, from left, Anna Iglesias, Emma Brown, Alexia Duprey, Reece Kennaugh, Briana Beyer, Kera Broers, Emma Hennessee, Kaitlyn Sheppard and Ashlyn Roger.

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Chalk Talk

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BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE

The Children's Home Society of Florida is having a back-to-school drive through Aug. 11 to help foster children.

There are separate needs for elementary, middle and high schools, including backpacks, index cards, pens, markers, transparent tape, calculators and wide-ruled paper.

The drop-off location is 4250 Oak Fair Blvd., in Tampa, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For information, call Rachelle Duroseau at (813) 949-8946, ext. 237, or email rachelle.duroseau@chsf.org.

MEET THE TEACHER AT OAKSTEAD

Oakstead Elementary School, 19925 Lake Patience Road in Land O' Lakes, is hosting its Meet Your Child's Teacher Day Aug. 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event is for all students and parents to visit the classrooms, meet the teachers,



B.C. MANION/STAFF PHOTO

A tribute to the Porters

Pasco-Hernando State College honored the Porter family of Wiregrass Ranch by erecting this permanent display on a wall at Porter Campus at Wiregrass Ranch, a satellite of the college that opened in January. The Porter family donated 60 acres to the college to open the satellite in Wesley Chapel.

join the PTA, pay supply fees, and sign up for transportation.
For information, call (813) 346-1500.

LIBERTY MIDDLE OPEN HOUSE

Liberty Middle School, 17400 Commerce Park Blvd., in Tampa, is hosting an open house Aug. 14. Guests can meet the principal and teachers, staff members, guidance counselors, and representatives of the PTA.

Sixth-graders are invited to attend at 2 p.m., and seventh- and eighth-graders at 4:30 p.m.

For information, call (813) 558-1100, or visit Liberty.mysdhc.org.

MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER

The Medical Center of Trinity Volunteers, 9330 State Road 54, is hosting a fundraising event for scholarships for students studying in the medical field.

The fundraiser is Aug. 21-22 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., in the lobby of the hospital, and will showcase Masquerade Jewelry and accessories. All items are \$5 and under.

There will also be a silent auction featuring gift baskets, gift cards, and other items.

For information, call (727) 834-4017.

SCHOOLS REOPEN AUG. 18

Students in Pasco County will return to

school for the 2014-15 school year Aug. 18.

Notable dates on the calendar are:
• Possible hurricane makeup days are Nov. 24-25, and Feb. 16

- Veterans Day will be a school day
- Thanksgiving holiday is Nov. 24-28
- Winter break is Dec. 22 through Jan. 2
- Spring break is March 16-20
- Last day of school is June 3

For complete calendar information, visit Pasco.k12.fl.us.

STILL TIME TO ENROLL AT PHSC

Students interested in enrolling for fall term classes at Pasco-Hernando State College should register immediately. Classes begin Aug. 25.

PHSC will introduce three new health programs this fall: pharmacy technician, surgical technology, and health information technology.

There also will be two bachelor degree programs in supervision and management, and in nursing.

Students can apply online at PHSC.edu/wise. The application fee is \$25.

An additional \$20 is assessed during the late registration period. Late registration is Aug. 25-29.

For information, visit the school's website at PHSC.edu.

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MICHAEL MURILLO/STAFF PHOTO

From left, Tyler Kirby, Ty Tanner, Jalen Pickett and Jackie Tucker will drive the Zephyrhills Bulldogs' offense in 2014.

ZEPHYRHILLS BULLDOGS

LAST YEAR: 7-3

4-3 in district play
Third place in Class 5A-District 6

KEY RETURNING PLAYERS

Ty Tanner, quarterback
Jalen Pickett, running back/wide receiver/safety

PLAYER TO WATCH

Jackie Tucker, wide receiver
"I guarantee you Jackie Tucker is going to be known after this year. He's a tall kid who's already gathering a ton of attention." — Coach Reggie Roberts

more players focus on just offense or defense instead of having to play both ways, Roberts said. In the past, with perhaps just 26 or 27 players on the team, there simply wasn't enough talent to let athletes concentrate on one side of the ball. This year the coach wants to suit up 40 players, allowing them to stay fresher during the games and focus on where they can best help the team.

He thinks that change alone will make a difference for the Bulldogs this season.

"That was our problem the last three or four years, ever since I took over this program," he said. "That always hurts when kids have to go both ways."

It also hurts when a team loses talented seniors, and Roberts admits the Bulldogs took a hit on the offensive line. They lost four seniors at that position, and other players will need to step up and fill those roles.

Roberts feels optimistic about the team's ability to take the next step, however, in part because he's been able to change the attitude in the locker room. With a tenure that's eclipsed a high school athletic career, all the players on the team know Roberts, his philosophy, and his expectations.

They have years of winning under their belts (Zephyrhills has gone 20-10 in its last three seasons) and Roberts has installed an attitude that winning is not only attainable, it's expected, when they give their best effort.

"Every year is getting easier, I'll be honest with you," he said. "It was a little easier last year. It's hard to change a locker room and the kids from my first year are gone. Right now these kids have the attitude that we can win every time we get on the football field."

One goal for the Bulldogs is to get off to a strong start (three of their first four games are at home) so they aren't scrambling for wins later in the year. If it comes down to beating a rival, the team will give it their all, Roberts said.

But he expects the team's fortunes to be set before they face Pasco at the end of October in their last district game of the year.

"I have a feeling that the playoffs are going to be set long before that game," he said.

Zephyrhills coach focused on playoffs, not Pasco

By Michael Murillo
mmurillo@lakerlutznews.com

Three years ago, a late-season loss to Pasco High School derailed the Bulldogs' chances at the playoffs.

The following year, it happened again: The Pirates won, and Zephyrhills High School stayed home for the postseason.

Last season the division rivals played again, with both sides needing a victory to make the playoffs. And just like the previous two contests, Pasco came out ahead and Zephyrhills was left out.

The rivalry might have fans circling this year's matchup on their calendar, but to Zephyrhills head coach Reggie Roberts, it's still just another game on the schedule.

"It's not something I sit around and think about," Roberts said. "Contrary to what people believe, I'm not worried about Pasco. We have a lot of games. If we lose all our games and win the Pasco game, we're still not in

2014 Bulldogs Schedule

8/22 - Wesley Chapel	10/10 - Nature Coast Tech
9/5 - Gulf	10/16 - Central
9/12 - at Mitchell	10/24 - at Hernando
9/19 - South Sumter	10/31 - at Pasco
9/26 - at Weeki Wachee	11/7 - at Sunlake

the playoffs."

Making the playoffs is the next step for the Bulldogs and Roberts, who is now entering his fifth year as the school's coach. The team has finished with a winning record for three straight years, but has fallen short of the postseason each time in Class 5A-District 6.

To build on their success and make the playoffs, Zephyrhills will need to improve over last year, and Roberts likes what he's seen so far. The team has been working out hard, getting stronger and faster, and has im-

pressed in seven-on-seven drills.

In particular, Roberts thinks the Bulldogs will be known as a defensive force.

"They swarm to the football," he said. "They're very speedy, but these guys are strong, too. They're very strong guys who will hit you."

But Roberts expects a more dynamic offense on the field as well. With playmakers at the receiver position like Jackie Tucker and Tyler Kirby, Roberts wants to see the offense stretch the opposing defense and not allow them to focus on the running game.

Zephyrhills also will benefit by having

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Browning, Sunlake eye district title in 2014

By Michael Murillo
mmurillo@lakerlutznews.com

Sunlake High School has come a long way since head coach Bill Browning led the Seahawks onto the field for their inaugural season back in 2007.

They started out by losing 21 out of their first 22 games, and didn't win a district contest until their third season.

Now they're enjoying a run, which includes two playoff appearances and just five regular season losses in the past four years. They have playoff appearances, plenty of wins, and a reputation as a tough team to beat in Class 6A-District 6.

But something's missing. In all that time, the Seahawks have never won a district title. Three times in their history — including last year — they lost just one game during the regular season, but that game was to the eventual district champion.

And the players want that title for themselves in 2014.

"We're planning on doing that this year," said Austin Yeloushan, a senior who plays middle linebacker and tight end. "We've been working hard in the weight room." The team also got in a good deal of game experience against quality opponents at a recent football camp at Stetson University, he said. Those performances give Sunlake confidence heading into their first game, an Aug. 29 road tilt against the talented Pasco Pirates.

While it's not the only thing on his mind, Browning also wants to see a district title on the team's resume.

"It's missing right now, but it really just provides more motivation for us," he said.

Since last year's losses were so close — the total time remaining when their opponents took the lead was less than one minute for both games combined — Browning feels the Seahawks are on the right path.

To continue, Sunlake will have to overcome some heavy losses due to graduating seniors. Their defense will be retooled, with



Running back Nathan Johnson, left, and linebacker Austin Yeloushan will be key to Sunlake's fortunes in 2014.

MICHAEL MURILLO/STAFF PHOTO

nine out of last year's 11 starters gone from the team.

But Yeloushan, one of the two remaining starters from last year's defense, believes the changes in personnel won't hold them back. In fact, he expects them to surprise their opponents with their ability once the games start, and that includes contributing on the scoreboard.

"I think a lot of defensive touchdowns are going to happen this year. We have a lot of playmakers," Yeloushan said.

Sunlake's running game should continue to be a strong point, with star running back Nathan Johnson returning for duty. Johnson is ready to build on last year's successful season — in more than 250 attempts, he lost just one fumble. But Browning believes a

good running game is about more than a skilled runner in the backfield.

"He'd be the first one to tell you that the offensive line will be key, of course, in determining the kind of season he has," Browning said.

Turns out, that's exactly what Johnson said.

"I love my offensive line. I had 1,500 yards last year, and I couldn't have gotten any of that without them," he said.

While the line lost two starters from last season, Johnson believes their replacements are actually better players, and is excited to see what they can accomplish in 2014.

While Sunlake might be considered a run-first team, Browning said they have enough skill at quarterback and receiver to

SUNLAKE SEAHAWKS

LAST YEAR: 9-2

3-1 in district play
Second place in Class 6A-District 6, lost in first round of playoffs

KEY RETURNING PLAYERS

Austin Yeloushan:
middle linebacker and tight end

Logan Wolfe:
outside linebacker and fullback

Nick Valdes:
wide receiver

PLAYER TO WATCH

Nathan Johnson, running back
"He was our workhorse last year. Very rarely goes down on first contact. A physical football player." — Coach Bill Browning

2014 Seahawks Schedule

8/29 - at Pasco	10/3 - at Mitchell
9/5 - River Ridge	10/10 - at Wesley Chapel
9/12 - at Anclote	10/17 - at Land O' Lakes
9/19 - Springstead	10/31 - Fivay
9/26 - Ridgewood	11/7 - Zephyrhills

avoid being one-dimensional. The team will welcome back quarterback Dayton Feidon, who went down with an injury last October.

The coach also expects big things from returning receiver Nick Valdes, who has had an impressive offseason.

While Browning can look back at his tenure at Sunlake and note the considerable progress, it's not in his nature to be happy just winning a lot of games and having a respectable finish each year.

"You always want to take it to the next step," he said. "As a coach and as a competitor, you're never satisfied where you're at."

Lutz player is simply all soccer, all the time

By Michael Murillo
mmurillo@lakerlutznews.com

Robbie Soronellas is never too far from a soccer ball.

At practice, the 13-year-old is working on drills. In games, he's the center-midfielder, directing the ball to the teammate with the best chance to advance the attack.

And when he's at his home in Lutz, he's usually kicking around a smaller, toy version of a soccer ball.

Soronellas usually earns a lot of praise for his skills. Except when his parents catch him doing it in the house.

"They'll get mad at me because I might break stuff," he said.

When it comes to soccer, Soronellas is more likely to break records than home furnishings. He was part of Tampa Bay United's U-13 team that won the Florida state cup for their age group, and competed in the regional finals in June. The team fell in the regional championship to the Georgia state champion by the score of 2-1.

It wasn't his first state title — he also won that honor with the Lutz Rangers when he played for the U-11 squad — but Soronellas admits to feeling some pressure in the regional championship.

"I was really nervous going into that game," he said. "The other team was really

big, so I was thinking, 'Man, it's going to be really hard to beat them.'"

When it comes to sheer size, big players will always have an advantage over Soronellas. At 5-feet tall and 85 pounds, he won't tower over any opponents. But he uses his coordination and skills to out-manuever the other side, and said that smaller players also can pick up extra fouls when players clash.

His team's success has translated into championships and successful runs in tournaments, but that doesn't mean a lot of goals to add to his personal statistics. Soronellas didn't score in the regional tournament or the state cup, and he's fine with that. As long as the team is doing well and he has space to deliver passes to the team's scoring threats. It's more important to put team goals ahead of individual ones.

"My dad always tells me that," he said.

His father, Frank Soronellas, knows a bit about winning soccer himself. A center-midfielder in his playing days, he helped bring a junior college national championship to Miami-Dade College, and later played for the University of Central Florida.

Soronellas admits his son would have had an edge over him at that same age. He takes pride in watching Robbie play, and notes that it's his aggressive mindset toward the position that has led to great success.

"He's a tenacious player," Frank said of his son. "When he's on the field he's not going to let you by."

That kind of playing style can frustrate opponents, which is exactly what the younger Soronellas wants. Even large, talented players can make mistakes if they're taken out of the game mentally. It's part of his team's strategy, and Soronellas said it becomes obvious when the strategy is working.

"They start yelling at each other and they basically break down," he said. "Sometimes when you start beating a team really badly, they start getting mad at each other."

Soronellas tends to stay calm during matches, though he admits to throwing a few tantrums when he was younger (he started playing soccer when he was 4). As he got older, he learned discipline and can now put tough losses in perspective: He's proud of what Tampa Bay United accomplished in the regional tournament and was excited to see the United States advance to the knockout stages at the World Cup last month.

Perhaps the only time Soronellas gets agitated is when he's not able to include his favorite game. When there are no matches or practices, he'll go see his brother Steven play soccer or practice for Steinbrenner High School. Or he'll do some running at a



MICHAEL MURILLO/STAFF PHOTO

Robbie Soronellas' bedroom is a tribute to his love for soccer, from his bed to his medals to his heroes on the wall.

local community center.

He might even play a soccer video game. And sometimes he'll grab a smaller ball and do what young athletes have done as long as parents have worried about nice things breaking at home.

"Sometimes around the house I have a mini-soccer ball and I'll start juggling it," he said.

CHECK THIS OUT
SEND SPORTS NEWS TO MMURILLO@LAKERLUTZNEWS.COM

REGISTRATION FOR ADULT SOCCER LEAGUE STARTS AUG. 15

The New APSL, a recreational but competitive league for men and women, will have registration for fall leagues Aug. 15-30. The season begins Sept. 7.

Men's, women's and co-ed games are played Sunday afternoons at Benito Middle School, 10101 Cross Creek Blvd., in New Tampa.

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

FREE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT AUG. 9

The fourth annual Balling For Jesus basketball tournament will be Aug. 9 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 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. Cost is free.

FOOTBALL AND CHEER JAMBOREE AUG. 9

The Dade City Pirates, Pasco Police Athletic League and Lacochee 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 ppalpirate@gmail.com.

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.

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.

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Soaring above life's everyday routine

By B.C. Manion

bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

When people see a colorful hot air balloon gliding across the sky in Land O' Lakes or Wesley Chapel, or other nearby places — chances are the beauty of the balloon is what captures their attention.

But that's a mere glimpse into the stories that play out every week in the hot air balloons operated by American Balloons, based in Land O' Lakes.

Just a few weeks ago, a couple got engaged during a flight that Tom Warren piloted out of Zephyrhills. After the groom-to-be popped the question, the balloon operator guided the balloon to a landing in the middle of the fiancée's family's property in Dade City where a big group was waiting.

During another recent week, the balloon operator piloted three engagements and a wedding.

American Balloons has flown hospice patients who wanted to fulfill a final wish, and has taken up wounded warriors so they could experience the freedom of flight, said Jessica Warren, the company's owner.

It has helped people celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and retirements. It has played a role in solemn events, too, as people bid a final farewell to a loved one.

The couple, who have operated the business for 17 years, enjoys sharing the tranquil experience that ballooning offers.

And, they never know whom they'll be flying next.

Some passengers travel from far away places to catch a ride on the wind, while others come from just around the block. So far, their oldest passenger was 97, while the youngest were infants.

Their balloons, equipped with doors, can accommodate people who use wheelchairs and have other physical limits.

Passengers have different reasons for boarding the balloon. Jessica Warren was sitting in the lobby one morning at the Hampton Inn & Suites Tampa in Wesley Chapel, checking passengers in.

"This guy came downstairs and began asking questions," she said.

When she explained the flight, the man wanted to join the group. And he could, because there was room — two scheduled passengers had failed to show up.

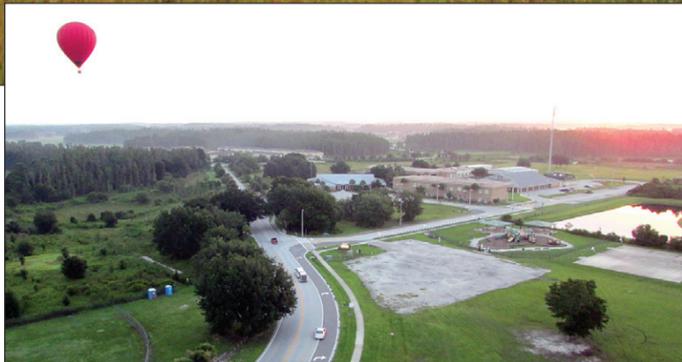
It turns out the man was from Puerto Rico and was suffering from a brain tumor, the balloon company owner said. He was traveling the world while he could, dipping into as many new experiences as time would permit.

Whether it's from a sense of adventure, a penchant for romance, or a matter of mere curiosity, the company attracts enough passengers to fly more than 150 flights a year. It would fly more, but many flights are cancelled because of weather conditions.

One recent Thursday morning, a group of seven passengers gathered at the hotel before dawn to check in for their flight.



B.C. MANION/STAFF PHOTOS
Balloon pilot Tom Warren shoots flames into the interior of a balloon, to heat the air in the balloon. The hot air is what gives the balloon its lift.



Tom Warren piloted a hot air balloon from American Balloons over New Tampa on a recent Thursday morning. In the distance, another balloon company is giving passengers a ride.



Jessica Warren dismantles a balloon after a morning flight over New Tampa.

They came from Wesley Chapel, Lutz, Lake Magdalene, Carrollwood and Tampa.

There was an air of anticipation as the group traveled by van to a field in New Tampa, where the flight would depart.

At the field, the Warrens and their three-member crew sprang into action. They quickly unloaded the massive fabric balloon and spread the envelope flat on the ground. They rigged the balloon's vents and set up giant fans to inflate the balloon.

Finally, they shot propane flames into the interior to heat the air, which is what causes the balloon to rise.

Within minutes, it was time for passengers to board. Some used footholds to climb into a compartment, while others stepped through an open door into the other side of the basket.

As they prepared to launch, Tom Warren — who has flown balloons all over the world — began his commentary.

The 10-passenger balloon, which stands 90 feet tall and 55 feet wide, is fueled by propane, he said. It can heat up to 208 degrees near the top of the balloon, and that heat is what keeps the balloon aloft.

He controls the balloon's direction by raising and lowering the balloon, to ride the wind, which blows in different directions and at varying speeds, depending on the altitude.

Every flight is unique, the balloon pilot said.

"We're not going to go very far today," Tom Warren said. "There's not a lot of wind. It's the kind of crapshoot that God gives you every day."

On this particular day, passengers can see stands of cypress, shimmering ponds and a gorgeous sunrise as they glide above New Tampa.

They can see the downtown Tampa skyline in the distance and can check out The Shops at Wiregrass, Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel, Pasco-Hernando State College's Porter Campus at Wiregrass Ranch, and subdivisions nearby.

The balloon pilot has seen some interesting sights through the years. He's seen boars the size of cows on land within Wiregrass Ranch. He's seen marijuana being cultivated in a field behind apartments. He's seen nudists on their back porch in Caliente, a clothing optional community in Land O' Lakes.

During this particular flight, though, the winds were calm, the wildlife was hiding and the balloon didn't travel far.

As they disembarked, passengers said they'd had a great time.

"It was so calm. I'm afraid of heights and I wasn't afraid at all," said Kathy Rizzo of Wesley Chapel. "It wasn't at all frightening. It was a very

American Balloons typically offers more than 150 flights a year, based on weather. The company also handles a wide variety of special events.

For more information or to book a balloon, visit AmericanBalloonRides.com, or call (813) 243-9507.

Flights cost \$189 per adult and \$125 for children, ages 5 through 15. Discounts are available for groups of six or more.

The company also offers private exclusive flights at \$525 per couple. The price includes a hot air balloon ride, a crew to inflate and pack up the balloon, a professional pilot and a traditional champagne toast and breakfast, following the flight.

smooth landing."

"It was quiet and peaceful," her husband Tom said, noting he especially enjoyed experiencing "the beauty of creation."

Jimi Gillespie of Carrollwood acknowledged she was bit nervous before the flight.

"I'm a little afraid of heights," she said, but it turned out that the ride was smooth and not at all intimidating.

Gillespie enjoyed seeing the world from a different perspective.

"It's a vantage point you don't typically get, so that was interesting," she said.

Brian Bernhard of Lake Magdalene has a pilot's license, so he's no stranger to flight. But this was his first time up in a balloon.

"I loved it," Bernhard said.

Jim and Kathy Appleby of Lutz both said they enjoyed the flight. After six cancellations by the balloon company, and three cancellations from themselves, the couple was finally able to go on a ride.

Now, Kathy Appleby said, she can scratch that off her bucket list.

She complimented the balloon pilot and crew.

"We've done a lot of this stuff and I thought they were very informative," she said. "They were very professional."

The pilot was entertaining too, Tom Rizzo added, noting it's an outing he'd highly recommend.



Jessica Warren and John Allen rig the balloon's cap, to prepare it for an early morning flight. The balloon has vents, which can be used to control the speed of its descent.

The kids are going back to school...

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A pet can be a wonderful companion, but he doesn't have to be an expensive companion.

Some tips for cutting costs on pet care

Special to The Laker/Lutz News

Regardless of whether you're a dog, cat, bird or other pet lover, most people can agree that pets are part of the family. Caring for a pet doesn't have to cost a fortune with a few helpful tips.

Experts at Dollar General suggest a number of ways to save money, like:

• **Homemade Toys** — There's nothing more satisfying than watching a pet bat around a catnip mouse or chase after a crinkle toy made by the pet's owner with love. There are pet-friendly craft ideas online.

• **Feeding Time** — Choose a pet food that balances the budget with the pet's dietary needs. Avoid overfeeding by following label instructions for the recommended amount of food that should be given to a

pet, which are generally based on weight and activity level.

With a proper and balanced diet, a pet can stay healthier and happier, and its owner can spend less in the process.

• **Quality Time** — One of the best ways to show a pet love is by spending some quality time together. Beyond giving a pet a healthy dose of exercise and fresh air, the best part of an extra-long walk or a game of catch is that it's entirely free.

• **Smart Shopping** — Pet care can be expensive, so be careful where a pet's medical needs are purchased. From heartworm medication to flea and tick treatments, to hypoallergenic shampoos, a discount retailer can help save on all these items.

- StatePoint

PET of the WEEK



One special personality

Lacy is our baby. She loves attention and will nudge you with her nose or paw if she feels ignored. Her favorite toy is a dry splash ball. She does not like water or getting wet, but the splash balls are light enough and just the right size for her to play with. She loves chasing after them and usually greets us with one when she wants to play. When she has had enough, she wraps her paws around it and places her head on top of it. All you have to do is mention the word 'out' and she does twirls and stomps her front paws. She is the happy and spoiled baby of Jimmy and Marilyn of Land O' Lakes.

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, ATTN: Pet of the Week

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

Together Against Rabies

Bring your pets & celebrate World Rabies Day with us!



Date: September 27, 2014

Time: 10:00am-3:00pm

Location: Ridge Manor Community Center
34240 Cortez Blvd • Dade City, FL 33523

Cost: Free admission

Rabies vaccinations: Free vaccination for dogs and cats (does not include county license)



All cats must be in a carrier. All dogs must be on a 6 ft leash or in a carrier.

Event will include educational seminars, information on rabies disease and prevention, and a rabies vaccination clinic for dogs and cats. Everyone in the community is invited to attend. Snacks, Food, and Beverages will be available for sale.

For more information please contact Joya Coen with GentleCare Pet Hospital at **813-949-4416** or via email: vet@gentlecarepethospital.com



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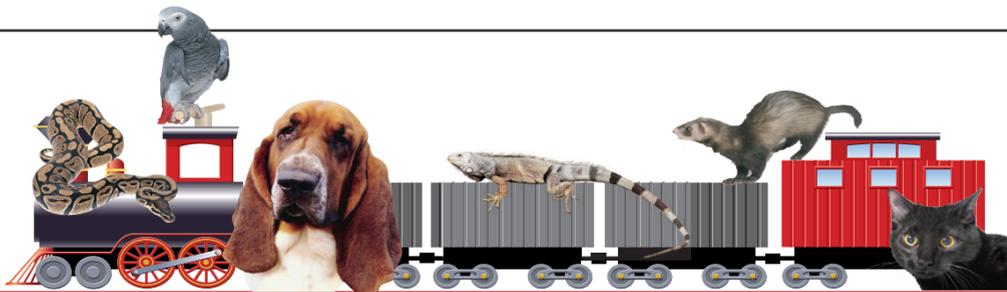
Sweet, declawed boy

Rocky is a shy-at-first but very sweet cat. He is about 3 years old, and is declawed. He currently lives with five other cats, but has taken to chasing one of them, so he's now looking for a new home. He's so handsome and will make a wonderful addition to a lucky family.

If you would like to invite Rocky into your family, email **Cat Crusaders** at adopt@tampacatcrusaders.org. For more information about other adoptable cats, visit TampaCatCrusaders.org.

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COURTESY OF PATRICIA SERIO

Guided by an artist's touch

GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club recently invited local watercolorist, Bob McAnespie — member of both the National Watercolor Society and Florida Watercolor Society — to one of its weekly arts and crafts sessions. McAnespie guided the ladies in creating their own masterpiece to frame. Displaying their works of art with Bob McAnespie are, from left, Jeannie Oller, Dianne Finn and Lois Cohen.

Florida looking for influential women in agriculture

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is looking for nominations for its 2014 Woman of the Year in Agriculture award.

Since 1985, this award has recognized 30 women who have made a significant contribution to Florida agriculture, according to a release. Recipients of the award have come from all parts of the industry, including cattle, vegetables, timber, citrus, row crops, equine, horticulture, tropical fruits, sugar cane, dairy, agricultural journalism, and agricultural education and outreach.

Last year's award went to Lynetta Usher Griner, who was recognized for her contributions to forestry, environmental

stewardship and wildlife conservation. She was the first woman elected president of the Florida Forestry Association.

Nominees must be at least 25 and be active in the agriculture industry. They also need to have been a state resident without a break since 2004.

A possible candidate is one who serves her community in some professional or civic capacity, and has made some unique and outstanding contribution to the agriculture industry.

The deadline to submit for the award is Aug. 15, with the winner announced at next year's Florida State Fair in Tampa.

For more information, or to download a nomination application, visit tinyurl.com/AgWoman2014.

Summer no time to be scammed by some shady solar contractors

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

With summer arriving, homeowners are looking for new ways to go green. And they might find solar energy as the perfect alternative.

While it can help save the environment with the added benefit of saving a little money, too, the Better Business Bureau is warning homeowners to be smart about investing in any type of improvement project.

While there are a number of home improvement scams that exist, solar energy scams are one that many may not be familiar with, the BBB said. Fraudulent contractors prey on those who are unfamiliar with the product, with issues ranging from installation to the actual panels themselves.

In 2013, consumers contacted the BBB nearly 84,000 times about solar energy equipment and systems dealers. The organization also received 259 complaints on solar energy dealers that ranged from contract and service issues, to customer service problems.

"Consumers need to be familiar with solar panels and how the benefits will affect them before investing their money," said Karen Nalven, president of BBB Serving West Florida, in a release. "It's especially important for homeowners to do their research before hiring a contractor to install solar energy products."

There are a number of state and federal rebates that offer a reduction in the initial costs of solar products. However, consumers should be wary of the less-than-reputable and unqualified contractors that come into town offering such services at discount prices.

The BBB offers the following tips when investing in solar energy:

- **Discuss with the electric company.** Due to the high costs associated with the initial investment of solar power, it is important to conduct a self-energy audit to determine if solar energy is even right for a home. If a monthly bill, for example, is less than \$100, there may be other ways to save energy that costs less.

- **Also, be sure to ask about the local, state and federal laws concerning the standards and codes of the solar panels.**

- **Solar energy requires sun.** Find out an average how many sunny days a home sees annually. As with every product or service, comparison shop with several businesses to ensure getting the best deal.

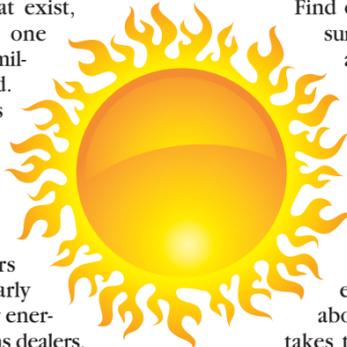
- **Inquire about tax credits.** Found out the amount of tax credits offered for the amount of energy that is generated. Ask about the length of time it takes to receive the tax credits, and if the credits themselves will be taxed.

- **Settle the details.** Be cautious of installers that promise no out-of-pocket costs prior to reviewing specific situations. Be wary if an installer suggests obtaining credit for the full amount of the system, even though they are promising very low or no costs due to rebates.

- **Ask what will happen if the business promises a certain percentage of savings from a utility bill, but the amount of savings is not achieved.**

- **Make sure the roof is equipped to sustain a solar panel system.** Even though a properly installed solar system will not damage a roof, making sure the roof is in good condition before beginning the installation can help avoid any future problems.

- **For more about the Better Business Bureau, visit BBB.org.**



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

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