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Pasco revamps active threat procedures

By Kevin Weiss
kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

The Pasco County School District has made a major change to its crisis response plan — should an active shooting threat arise on campus.

The Active Threat Response Plan has replaced the lockdown plan, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, which started on Aug. 14.

The traditional, passive lockdown approach — where students huddle in a dark room — has been the district's protocol for active threat incidents since safety plans were first implemented decades ago.

"We're realizing in some cases (lockdown) still may be the best option and the best response, but in others, students and staff need to have different options that they can use in that situation," Pasco County Superintendent Kurt Browning said, during an Aug. 7 press conference.



KEVIN WEISS

During an Aug. 7 media conference, Pasco County Superintendent Kurt Browning said the Active Threat Plan "is a huge shift in the way we think about school and safety."

The new procedure, designed with the help of the Pasco Sheriff's Office, is a multi-tiered, proactive approach that incorporates effective communication, self-evacuation and self-defense techniques — also referred to as the ABCs of surviving an active threat.

'A' stands for alert and avoid, where school faculty alerts 911 of an active threat, and then evacuates students — particularly those in common areas like gymnasiums, cafeterias and media rooms.

'B' stands for barricade. This method enhances the lockdown option, where students and teachers can pile desks and other heavy items against classroom doors or another secure place.

'C' stands for counter. This method empowers students to try to distract and disarm an active threat by throwing items in his or her direction. This is designed as a last resort option, if students are cornered by

See THREAT, page 11A



Parents and students stream toward Bexley Elementary School, a school that had its first 'first day of school' on Aug. 14.

Ring in a new school year in Pasco County Schools

Pasco County public school students began a new school year on Aug. 14, and some of those students headed to schools that were opening for the first time.

At Bexley Elementary, in Land O' Lakes,

parents and children appeared eager to begin a new year, in a new school.

The message on the school's marquee was summed up in three words: "Believe. Engage. Succeed."



B.C. MANION

Kate and Sean Cancelliere are in line with their son, Maxx, waiting for the first day of school at Bexley Elementary. Maxx was excited to be heading to kindergarten, in a class taught by Sarah Johansen.

Send us your First Day photos

We know that you took them, so why don't you share them?

If you would like your photo to be considered for publication in The Laker/Lutz News, please email us a digital copy. Include the name or names of the student, the grade of the student or students, and what school they attend. Also include contact information, in case we need to get back to you.

Please submit the photos by Aug. 18 to bc.manion@lakerlutznews.com.



B.C. MANION

Malfunctioning railroad crossing arms on State Road 54, at the intersection of U.S. 41, pose a public safety hazard and an inconvenience, according to the Pasco County Sheriff's Office and U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis. Efforts have begun to address the problem.

CSX studying fix for malfunctioning crossing arms

By B.C. Manion
bcmalion@lakerlutznews.com

CSX Corporation is looking into how to repair the malfunctioning railroad crossing arms on State Road 54, at U.S. 41, said Kris Carson, spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Transportation's District 7 office.

Once a repair plan is developed, "the state will participate in funding the repair," Carson said.

It is not known yet what will be required to fix the problem, how much it will cost or when it will be completed — but there's no doubt the issue has generated calls for action.

Jeremiah Hawkes, of the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, outlines the problem in a

June 5 letter to Ellen M. Fitzsimmons, a vice president with CSX Corporation.

"The crossing arm has become a major safety concern as there have been 16 malfunctions of the crossing signal in the previous year," wrote Hawkes, bureau chief in the management services bureau for the sheriff's office.

"During each malfunction, the crossing bar lowers when there is no approaching train. These events frequently occur after a rainstorm, which is a frequent occurrence in this area."

Hawkes also noted the importance that State Road 54 plays in Pasco County's transportation network.

"State Road 54 is one of the only two ex-

See CSX, page 11A

Commission on the Status of Women sets up task forces

By Kathy Steele
ksteel@lakerlutznews.com

The Commission on the Status of Women is ready to begin drilling down into issues that affect women and their families.

The task force met on Aug. 7 to finalize appointments to three task forces that will spend the next months on fact-finding and prioritizing issues.

The task forces will study health and safety; education; and, economic prosperity and its promotion.

Commission members will meet again in October to hear reports from the task forces and decide where to focus their efforts.

In its first year, the women's commission likely will narrow issues to one or two that are manageable.

The goal is for the women's commission to make recommendations to the Pasco County Commission on actions it can take to improve women's lives.

"We have to be realistic about our focus," said Amanda Colon, chairwoman of the group. "We won't accomplish much if we spin off into 80 different directions."

Pasco County commissioners created the 15-member Commission on the Status of Women in 2016 as an advisory board.

Some issues raised at prior meetings include domestic and sexual violence, mental health, financial literacy, grandparents as caregivers for grandchildren, homelessness,

See WOMEN, page 11A

B

INSIDE, PAGE 1B

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The Laker/Lutz News wins 10 Florida Press Association awards

By B.C. Manion

bcmajian@lakerlutznews.com

The Laker/Lutz News received 10 awards during the 2017 Florida Media Conference on Aug. 11 at The Ritz-Carlton Naples.

The newspaper garnered three first-place, six second-place and one third-place prize in the Florida Press Association's Better Weekly Newspaper Contest.

The contest drew 1,154 entries from 59 newspapers. Winners were selected by judges in Arizona, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York. Work receiving recognition was completed in 2016.

Fred Bellet, a regular contributor to the newspaper, received first place for a Photo Series in One Issue for "Cueing up for a good time," a full page section front photo essay on a pool tournament at the Lutz Senior Center.

The judge noted that every photo showed expressions of emotion.

"Good photos deserve big play, and the deep page-width shot of the 91-year-old eventual tourney winner bending over to line up his shot qualified for that play. Laughs to grimaces to concentration displayed in the six photos told the story."

Richard Riley, another regular contributor to the newspaper, received top honors for his Feature Photo entry, "Sister Helen Lange turns 103."

"Moment captured. Emotion. Action. The picture is worth at least 10,000 words," the judge wrote.

A column by Tom Jackson, a former contributor to the newspaper, received top honors in the Serious Column category.

The judge extolled the quality of Jackson's entry, "Appreciating Joe Hancock's Legacy."

"Community columnist Tom Jackson is a master craftsman of the language and the ability to create impactful images," the judge wrote. "His tribute to a local man killed when his bicycle was struck by a car begins at the burial ceremony at a cemetery, works backwards to show what kind of man the victim was, and concludes with this idea of a tribute to him: 'And, near the spot of the crash, a suitable plaque, affixed to a German Focus (bicycle). So, we remember, always, and drive, or cycle, accordingly.'"

Staff writer Kevin Weiss received second place in the Sports Feature Story category for his entry, "Player returns to soccer, after 17 broken bones." The story chronicled the impressive battle of Carrollwood Day School soccer player Spencer Peek's to get back on the field after undergoing four surgeries and extensive rehabilitation following a serious car accident.

The judge summed up the entry this way: "Great story of overcoming the odds."

B.C. Manion, the newspaper's editor, received five second-place awards.

She was honored in the Community History category for her entry, "Telling Wesley Chapel's Story."

The judge wrote: "The black and white pulled me in. The words



FRED BELLET

This image of 91-year-old Pat Caldwell competing in a billiards tournament at the Lutz Senior Citizen was one in a series of photographs that yielded top honors from the Florida Press Association for photographer Fred Bellet. Bellet is a regular contributor to The Laker/Lutz News.

kept me reading. Good use of photos."

She also was honored in the Faith and Family Reporting category for her entry, "Finding Hope in the Heart of Darkness," for a story about Immaculee Ilibagiza, a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Ilibagiza detailed her ordeal and the power of faith during two talks at St. Timothy Catholic Church in Lutz.

The judge remarked: "The details of this subject's gripping story made for a compelling read."

Manion's other winning entries were for Education Reporting, "Guiding Pasco Schools is a Big Job;" Local Government Reporting, "Tampa Bay Express Aims to Address Region's Congestion;" and Feature Story Profile, "Sister Helen's Secrets to a Good Life: Work Hard, Love People."

Staff writer Kathy Steele received third-place in the Business Reporting category for her entry, "Residential Building Momentum in Pasco."

The judge described the entry this way: "Detailed story about a housing boom in Pasco County, with the additional touch of featuring one family who moved from

Michigan for sunshine and a small-town feel. And one set of their parents will soon make the move as well. There were 116 homes being built in the subdivision in 2016. Bigger picture reporting showed 1,900 permits to contractors by mid-2016, matching all of 2015. Story contrasts current boom with 2005's 7,252 permits and 2011's 884. Story also notes that starter homes are in short supply, so apartments are taking over the market. Good information for those considering if and where to relocate and for those living there to assess the boom and what it might mean to them."

The Laker and Lutz News are free community weekly newspapers delivered every Wednesday to homes and businesses in the suburban north Tampa communities of Lutz, Odessa, Land O' Lakes, Wesley Chapel, Zephyrhills, Dade City and San Antonio.

The newspapers are independently owned by Publisher Diane Kortus, a resident of Land O' Lakes. The Laker has been published in Pasco County since 1981. The Lutz News has been published in Hillsborough County since 1964.



RICHARD RILEY

This prize-winning photo by Richard Riley shows paramedic John Ward helping Sister Helen Lange blow out the candles during her 103rd birthday celebration at Heritage Park in Dade City.

Junk for Everyone

AT THE BLOOMING HOUSE

By CHERYL MICHEL

The Laker/Lutz News Account Manager

You may be surprised to learn that The Blooming House in Land O' Lakes is not a flower shop, but rather a clever play on the owner's name, Laura Bloomer.

However, if you do love plants, you'll want to stop by because The Blooming House has a variety of planting pots, garden art, nesting boxes and even wagon wheels in the yard behind this eclectic "junk shop."

It's been over a year since Laura set up shop in a little old house and a small church next door at 5821 Ehren Cutoff, located just east of U.S. 41. Today, you'll find both buildings stocked with hundreds of unique items offered by nearly 20 consignors, who come together as one big family at The Blooming House.

Laura and her consignors work alongside each other showcasing their various collections, which include shabby chic decor, antiques, primitives, used furniture and even a vintage boutique. During my visits, I've discovered large driftwood pieces, decorative shelving and inquisitive wooden signs with witty messages perfect for displaying on a front porch or pool deck.

In addition to exploring the one-of-a-kind items at the shop, customers are also encouraged to check out The Blooming House on Facebook, where they will get a glimpse of new arrivals and have a chance to win freebies. Whether you visit in-store



or online, you'll never know what you'll see, since items change daily.

Adding to The Blooming House's uniqueness is a bible study session held every Thursday at 10 a.m. These provocative sessions are led by Gena Duran and are open to anyone interested in exploring their Christian faith.

Looking ahead, Laura hopes to soon host furniture and window painting classes at her shop. Another soon-to-come addition for artsy customers is an assortment of chalk paint and brushes, which should be available in the fall.

From old junk to new junk, rusty to cool junk, The Blooming House has something for everyone. And, that's why Laura calls this "The Best Junk Shop Around."

For more information, call Laura at (813) 541-9234, or go to Facebook at The Blooming House or The Blooming House Sales Page.

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What's Happening

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FRIENDSHIP SINGERS

The Friendships Singers, a volunteer group that performs in local nursing homes, assisted living facilities and senior centers in Pasco and Hillsborough counties, is looking for members. There are two practices and two concerts each month. Practices are on Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon, at the Pasco County Senior Center, 6801 Wisteria Loop in Land O' Lakes. Florida residents and seasonal guests can join. There are no auditions and no prior singing experience is required. For information, all Charlotte Kalish at (813) 486-7096 or Joe Berling at (813) 997-1454.

CARROLLWOOD TOASTMASTERS

The Carrollwood Toastmasters will meet Aug. 16, Aug. 23 and Aug. 30 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., at the Jimmie B. Keel Regional Library, 2902 W. Bearss Ave., in Carrollwood. For information, visit Carrollwood.toastmastersclubs.org.

SENIOR GAMES

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will host Senior Games Aug. 17 from 10 a.m. to noon, for adults. There will be card playing, board games and challenging video games. Refreshments will be provided by Friends of the Land O' Lakes Library. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

OPEN HOUSE

Keystone Place at Terra Bella, under construction on Livingston Road in Land O' Lakes, will host an Open House Aug. 17, Aug. 24 and Aug. 31, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The independent living, assisted living and memory care community will welcome guests at its information center, 24140 State Road 54, Suite 104, in Lutz. For information, call (813) 388-2121, or visit KeystonePlaceAtTerraBella.com.

GIRLS' NIGHT OUT

Belle ame Day Spa & Salon, 21758 State Road 54 in Lutz, will host a Girls' Night Out Aug. 17 from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., with complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres. Guests can learn about the spa treatments and services. For information, call (813) 949-8400.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BASH

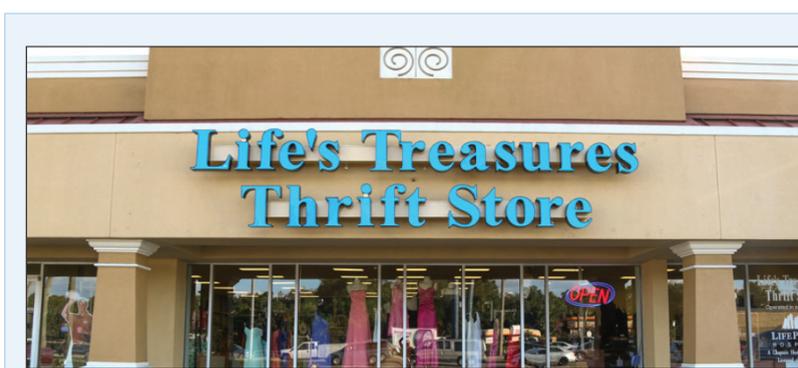
Brooksville Main Street will host a Back-to-School Bash Aug. 18 from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., in Hernando Park in downtown Brooksville. The free event will include games, music, food and a movie in the park, "Monster Trucks," provided by Friends of the Children Inc. For information, contact Ryan Malloy at (352) 540-6409 or Director@BrooksvilleMainStreet.org.

AUDITIONS FOR ANNIE

Arts in Motion will host open auditions for "Annie" Aug. 18 and Aug. 19 at the Alliance Church in Zephyrhills. The show will be performed at Pasco Middle School Nov. 10 to Nov. 12. For information, visit ArtsInMotionPasco.com.

MOVIES AND POPCORN

The Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St.,



Craft workshops

Life's Treasures Thrift Store will host three free craft workshops Aug. 19 at these locations:

- 4802 Gunn Highway in Carrollwood from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Guests can make a recycled sweater throw pillow. To sign up, call (813) 969-2049, or visit the store.
- 4910 S. Allen Road in Zephyrhills from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The craft will be thumbprint art, for kids and adults. To sign up, call (813) 355-4830, or visit the store.
- 6528 Massachusetts Ave., in New Port Richey from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Guests can turn an old picture frame into a decorated frame using scrap jewelry, bric-a-brac, beads, stones and other craft supplies. To sign up, call (727) 841-7356, or visit the store.

Life's Treasures operates in support of LifePath Hospice and HPH Hospice. For information on either organization, visit ChaptersHealth.org.

Volunteer training

Life's Treasures Thrift Store, operated in support of LifePath Hospice and HPH Hospice, conducts orientation sessions for prospective thrift store volunteers. Adults and teens (age 14 and older) can join the team. Teens can earn community service hours required by the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. For information or to register for a session, contact Anne Ferrell at (813) 357-5321 or ferrela@chaptershealth.org.

in Dade City, will host a senior movie and popcorn Aug. 18 at 2 p.m., and a free family movie and popcorn Aug. 19 at 2 p.m. (for kids 12 and younger with a parent or guardian). Call (352) 567-3576 for movie titles.

FREE DANCE CLASSES

The Suncoast School of Arts, 16449 U.S. 41 in Spring Hill, will offer free dance classes Aug. 19 from noon to 4 p.m., for all age groups and levels. The school has classes for ages 2 and older. For information, call (352) 544-1001.

KIDS CRAFT

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will offer a "Camping Under the Stars" kids craft Aug. 19 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., for kindergarten through fifth grade. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

MEET THE ARTIST

The Jimmie B. Keel Regional Library, 2902 W. Bearss Ave., in Carrollwood, will present Gallery@2902: Meet the Artist on Aug. 19 at 12:30 p.m. Guests can meet artist Miriam Zimms, and hear stories about the Zentangle art method, India black string art and other artwork she has created. Refreshments will be provided. The program is for adults. For information, call (813) 273-3652, or visit HCPLC.org.

SENSORY FRIENDLY FILM

Cobb Grove 16 Theatres, 6333 Wesley Grove Boulevard in Wesley Chapel, will host a sensory friendly film, "Nut Job 2," Aug. 19 at 10 a.m., for families with varying

abilities. Auditorium lights will be brighter, and the sound level will be turned down. The audience can interact with the movie, and dance and sing. For information, call (813) 948-5444.

CHRIST'S CAFÉ

Christ's Café now serves free hot meals every Saturday at 5 p.m., at Harvester United Methodist Church, 2432 Collier Parkway in Land O' Lakes. For information, call the church between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday, at (813) 948-2311.

PICKUP THE PARK

Andy Warrenner, Independent candidate for Florida House District 64, will host a "Pickup the Park" campaign event Aug. 20 from 10 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., at Al Lopez Park, 4810 N. Himes Ave., Shelter 312, in Tampa. There will be a meet-and-greet, and a short program with a question-and-answer session, followed by volunteers helping to pick up litter in the park. For information, email andywarrenner@yahoo.com.

GREASE SING-ALONG

The Tampa Theatre, 711 N. Franklin St., in downtown Tampa, will host a "Grease" sing-along Aug. 20 at 3 p.m., as part of its Summer Classics movie series. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for theater members. For information, visit TampaTheatre.org.

KOL AMI OPEN HOUSE

Congregation Kol Ami, 3919 Moran Road in Tampa, will host an Open House/Kickoff

Event Aug. 20, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., to celebrate its 40th birthday. Guests can meet the Kol Ami family and committees, meet Rabbi Howard Siegel, check out the newly renovated school, learn about new curriculum, sign up for youth groups, visit the Kol Ami Kids Corner, and have free hot dogs, fruit and cookies. Steve Turner, owner of Giving Tree Music, will lead an interactive, community-building, drumming workshop. For information, call (813) 962-6338.

ECLIPSE 2017 PARTY

The Museum of Science and Industry, 4801 E. Fowler Ave., in Tampa, will host a free Eclipse 2017 Party Aug. 21 from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., for all ages. There will be hands-on science activities, viewing of the eclipse with specialized telescopes and a space talk. MOSI educators will be on hand to answer questions and ensure safe viewing. If cloudy skies prevent firsthand viewing of the eclipse, MOSI will air a live-stream video of the event from NASA. Tampa residents should be able to experience an eclipse with the moon blocking slightly more than 80 percent of the sun from 1:17 p.m. to 4:14 p.m., with maximum coverage taking place at 2:49 p.m. For information, contact Kenyetta White-Johnson at (813) 987-6304 or Kenyetta@mosi.org.

ART IN THE AFTERNOON

The Zephyrhills Library, 5347 Eighth St., will offer "Art in the Afternoon" Aug. 22 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bring your own supplies or borrow a few. The group is open to all levels of art enthusiasts, teens to seniors. For information, call (813) 780-0064.

TAMPA ORCHID CLUB

The Tampa Orchid Club will meet Aug. 22 at 10 a.m., at the Northdale Recreation Center, 15550 Spring Pine Drive in Tampa. The documentary film, "In Search of Florida's Ghost Orchid," featuring Stig Dalstrom's trek in the Fakahatchee, will be shown. Doors open at 9:30 a.m. A potluck lunch will follow the meeting. There also will be a bloom table and a silent auction. For information, call Sharon Hartley at (727) 202-8505, or visit TampaOrchidClub.shutterfly.com.

LIBRARY CLUBS

The Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St., in Dade City, offers these clubs:

- Knitting Club on the first and third Tuesday; next meeting is Aug. 22 at 12:30 p.m., bring your own supplies and a bag lunch.
- Canasta Club Aug. 22 from 2 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., for adults and seniors
- Chess Club Aug. 23 from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., for all levels. Bring your own time clock if necessary.

For information, call (352) 567-3576.

LGBT SOCIAL GROUP

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will host an LGBT Social Group Aug. 23 at 5 p.m., for allies and anyone in the LGBT community who wish to mingle and get to know others. For information, call (813) 929-1214.



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PUBLISHER & OWNER: DIANE KORTUS, dkortus@lakerlutznews.com

EDITORIAL

B.C. MANION Editor bcmanion@lakerlutznews.com
 KEVIN WEISS Staff Writer kweiss@lakerlutznews.com
 KATHY STEELE Staff Writer kstele@lakerlutznews.com
 MARY RATHMAN Editorial Assistant mrathman@lakerlutznews.com

ADVERTISING

TERRI WILLIAMSON Senior Account Manager twilliamson@lakerlutznews.com
 ANNE KIBBE Account Manager akibbe@lakerlutznews.com
 CHERYL MICHEL Account Manager cmichel@lakerlutznews.com
 RACHEL THOMPSON Classified & Directory Sales rthompson@lakerlutznews.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

CAROLYN BENNETT cbennett@lakerlutznews.com

DESIGN

MATTHEW MISTRETTA Art Director mmistretta@lakerlutznews.com
 STEFANIE BURLINGAME Graphic Designer sburlingame@lakerlutznews.com

ACCOUNTING

MARY EBERHARD meberhard@lakerlutznews.com

LOCATION: 3632 Land O' Lakes Blvd., Suite 102 • Land O' Lakes, FL 34639
 MAIL: P.O. Box 479 • Lutz, FL 33548
 PHONE/FAX: ph: 813.909.2800 • fax: 813.909.2802
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 EMAIL: news@lakerlutznews.com • sales@lakerlutznews.com

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Local man receives French Legion of Honor medal

By B.C. Manion

bcmajian@lakerlutznews.com

There were times during World War II when Francis Xavier O'Connell wasn't sure he'd live to see another sunrise.

To this day, the 93-year-old feels certain it was his mother's prayers that kept him alive during dangerous times on the battlefield and through his captivity as a prisoner of war.

He still has the rosary beads she gave him, and some of the letters she wrote to him during the war.

Recently, he was inducted into the French Foreign Legion of Honor by the French government for his contributions during World War II.

The distinction is France's way to express gratitude to American veterans who fought alongside France during the Second World War.

French Brig. Gen. Thierry Ducret presented the award to O'Connell during a July 14 ceremony in St. Petersburg, said Carolyn Matthews, O'Connell's niece.

Ducret, France's representative to MacDill Air Force Base's Central Command International Coalition, was just one of several high-ranking military officers at the event, she said.

O'Connell graduated from Brown University after his stint in the U.S. Army, and then rejoined in 1949, going on to have a lengthy military career.

The Lutz man was astounded when he heard the French government wanted to honor him.

Like so many others during World War II, O'Connell joined the Army in 1943, right after graduating from high school in Cranston, Rhode Island.

It was the thing to do, said O'Connell, the youngest in a family of six boys — four of whom served in the Army.

After enlisting, O'Connell trained at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and then was shipped to Casablanca where he joined Company F in the 179th Infantry, the 45th Division.

From there, his division went by ship to Sicily to be part of an amphibious assault landing.



B.C. MANION

Francis Xavier O'Connell had just graduated from high school when he enlisted in the U.S. Army to fight in World War II. He was recently honored by the French government for his contributions during the war.

O'Connell worked as a forward observer — scouting out enemy locations and reporting the targets he found.

After Sicily, the 45th Infantry moved into Salerno for another assault. His unit then was pulled offline briefly before heading to Anzio for another amphibious assault landing.

The Battle of Anzio was a bitter campaign — with fighting nearly all of the way to Rome.

After a brief rest period, the unit was shipped to Southern France, where it went ashore at St. Tropez and fought its way inland to Meximieux.

In the heat of the battle, his unit relieved another forward observer group and got too far ahead of the battalion. They were captured.

Despite being a prisoner of war, O'Connell considers himself fortunate. "Two-thirds of the regiment were killed," he said, noting there are 1,800 in a regiment.

After he was captured, he and the other prisoners were moved in boxcars from Frankfurt Germany, over to Munich. And, while that was happening, he said, "our own (American) aircraft would bomb and strafe everywhere the Germans moved."

They were taken to a prisoner of war camp in a town called Moosburg, about 40



Francis Xavier O'Connell holds a medal he received as an expression of gratitude from the French government during a July 14 ceremony in St. Petersburg.

some-odd miles north of Munich, he said.

In the morning, he and other prisoners would be trucked to Munich to fill in bomb craters in the railroads, he said.

The Germans would make sure the American prisoners saw the civilian casualties of war.

"They had their bodies lined up on either side of the street. Then they would march us through the streets to see them," O'Connell said.

He said he caught a lucky break when he and group of men were chosen to go to a work camp at Vilshofen, a small town in northern Germany, near the port town of Passau.

"We worked in a forest, cutting down trees," O'Connell said.

The prisoners slept on straw-lined mattresses in a barn, and there wasn't much to eat.

"We ate boiled cabbage and potato dumplings. It was just two meals a day," he said.

He was at the work camp for several months before the Germans forced the pris-

oners to begin marching toward Austria.

"They knew the Americans were coming," O'Connell said. "They were trying to clear us out of there and bring us somewhere else."

They were liberated during that forced march.

"We were freed by the 16th armored division," O'Connell said. "They were coming through southwest Germany."

After being freed, O'Connell and the other soldiers walked to Bremerhaven where they were processed at a tent city before catching a ship back to the United States.

At the time, O'Connell weighed 80 pounds.

He was sent to a country club that had been converted to a medical facility, to recuperate. It was three months before the Army would allow his family to see him.

Reuniting with his mother is a moment that O'Connell will never forget.

"You won't believe how happy it was," he said. "She almost fell over, when I put my arms around her."

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Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE

A Family On The Cutting Edge

Special to The Laker / Lutz News

Every hair salon is a bit different, be it in the services they offer, the product lines they carry, or even the personalities within the shop. Opened since May, Salon Zed is a family-owned, full-service salon that offers their guests the latest trends in hair styling and body care.

They feature Redken and Pureology hair care lines and have also partnered with Eminence Organic Skin Care to ensure the best quality products and results for their guests. That combined with skin, spray-tan, message and natural mani-pedi services make Salon Zed a one-stop shop for any beauty needs.

The shop is co-owned by the mother-daughter partnership of Jay and Sawyer Zurkan. "It's been our dream for quite sometime to open our own full service salon," said Jay.

"Not all parents are able to work so closely with their children, but she truly is my best friend and I love working with her every day," beamed Sawyer.

The family ties at Salon Zed run even deeper, as Sawyer's father built the reception area and her brother put together the studio's website. "So much of what's gone in to this place is a reflection of the people we cherish. It's been quite the family affair," she added.

Another interesting aspect of Salon Zed is their leading-edge hair replacement services. Cancer patients and those dealing with genetic hair-loss issues will take com-



Mother and daughter, Jay and Sawyer Zurkan, are the co-owners of Salon Zed.

fort in the knowledge that Salon Zed can create a hair replacement solution for just about any lifestyle or budget.

This is truly a labor of love, as Jay has dealt with her own hereditary hair-loss for many years. As the voice of experience, she will candidly discuss the subject with prospective clients in complimentary, one-on-one consultations. These are done discreetly to keep clients at ease, and the end results are often remarkable.

With a full range of professional hair services, expert color application and techniques, color correction and the latest trends for men and women, customers can expect to come away looking and feeling their best. "Nothing makes us happier than to see our clients walk out of here beaming with confidence," concluded Jay.

Salon Zed is conveniently located at the intersection of Lutz Lake Fern Rd. and N. Dale Mabry Hwy. in the Lutz Lake Crossing center.



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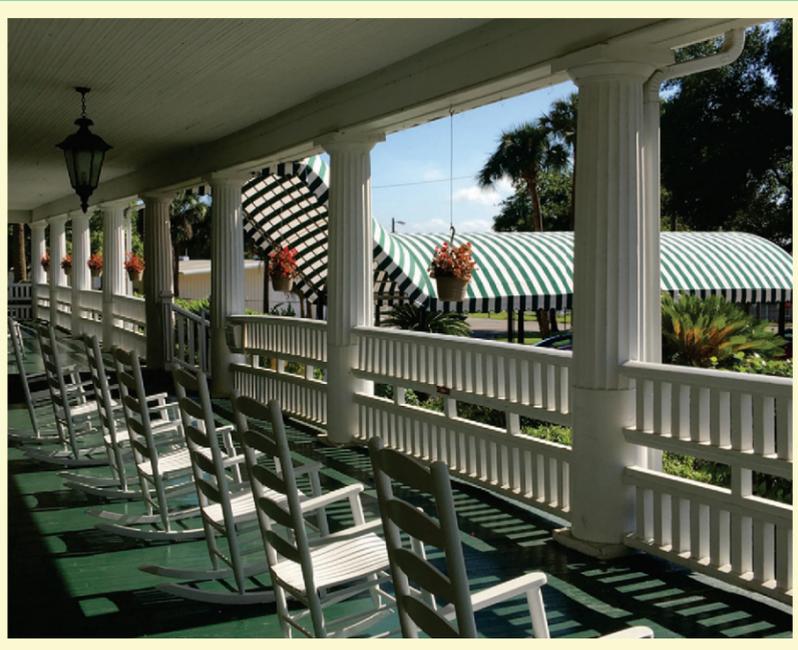
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HEALTH & WELLNESS

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GRIEF SUPPORT
Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, 2348 Collier Parkway in Land O' Lakes, will offer "GriefShare," a grief support group Aug. 16, Aug. 23 and Aug. 30 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., in Immaculata Hall, Room D. For information, call (813) 949-4565.

MEDICARE 101
The New River Library, 34043 State Road 54 in Zephyrhills, will host a SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) representative Aug. 17 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., to answer Medicare enrollment questions. For information, call (813) 788-6375.

LUNCH & LEARN
Premier Community Healthcare and Moffitt Cancer Center will host a Lunch & Learn health session on "How Medications Are Developed for Us" Aug 17 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Zephyrhills Library, 5347 Eighth St. A community education specialist from Moffitt will lead the discussion. A light lunch will be served. Registration is required. For information, call (813) 780-0064.

DISCUSSION ON STRESS
Florida Hospital Zephyrhills will present "Stress: The Underestimated Assassin" Aug. 17 at 1 p.m., at the CREATION Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road in Zephyrhills. The discussion will be on the impact



Healthier and safer
Premier Community Healthcare Group's fourth annual Back-to-School Health & Safety Fest handed out approximately 600 backpacks stuffed with school supplies, gave 18 free school physicals, and completed nearly 50 dental screenings. Dr. Reda Awad provided the physicals during the event.

stress has on the body and techniques to minimize it. Reservations are required. For information, call (813) 779-6476.

CAR SEAT INSPECTIONS
St. Joseph's Children's Hospital will sponsor car seat inspections Aug. 17 starting at 9 a.m., at the AAA Auto Club, 14755 N. Dale Mabry Highway in Tampa. Inspections are free, but reservations must be made for a time slot. For information, call (813) 443-2046.

MEDICARE ASSISTANCE
The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will offer SHINE Turning 65: Medicare Assistance on Aug. 19 from 10 a.m. to noon, to educate elders regarding Medicare insurance. Information can be found online at FloridaShine.org, or call (813) 929-1214.

NEWBORN CARE
St. Joseph's Hospital-North, 4211 Van Dyke Road, in Lutz, will offer a newborn care class Aug. 19 from 9 a.m. to noon, in Garden Classroom A. The interactive class covers various aspects of infant care, including feeding, diapering, bathing safety, signs of illness and newborn characteristics. The cost of \$25 covers the expectant mother and a support person. For information and to register, call (813) 443-2046.

MEDITATE FOR HEALTH
The Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St., in Dade City, will host a free information session on how to meditate for good health Aug. 19 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The session is for adults only. For information, call (352) 567-3576.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
Natural Family Planning, an umbrella term for the natural, healthy, morally acceptable methods of family planning recommended by the Catholic church, aims to help couples space, achieve or avoid pregnancy. A session on NFP will take place Aug. 21. For information on location or to preregister, email Matt and Jenene Peterson at jmipetefamily@gmail.com.

MEMORY LOSS SEMINAR
The Alzheimer's Association will host "10 Warning Signs of Memory Loss" Aug. 22 at 3 p.m., at The Legacy at Highwoods Preserve, 18600 Highwoods Preserve Parkway in Tampa. The guest speaker will be Kim Schaub from the Alzheimer's Association. Participants can learn what to look for, how to handle situations, and covering health care costs. For information, call (813) 375-9858.

MEDICATIONS AND DANGERS
Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel will a free seminar on over-the-counter medications and the dangers Aug. 22 at noon, in the fourth-floor classroom. A light lunch will be provided.

Continued on next page

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For information and to register, visit FloridaHospital.com/Wesley-chapel.

HEARTBEAT SUPPORT

Florida Hospital Zephyrhills will host a free Heartbeat Support Group Aug. 23 at 3 p.m., at its CREATION Health Wellness Center, 38233 Daughtery Road in Zephyrhills, for anyone affected by heart disease and/or atrial fibrillation.

Light refreshments will be served. No reservations are required.

For information, please visit FloridaHospital.com/Zephyrhills.

CRISIS CENTER FUNDRAISER

The third annual Beer and Bow Ties event to benefit the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay will take place Aug. 25 at 6 p.m., at The Cuban Club in Tampa.

The event aims to raise awareness and assist outreach programs for suicide prevention.

There will be beer and beverage tastings, and small-plate tastings.

Tickets are \$40 for general admission, and \$100 for VIP, and can be purchased online at BeerAndBowtiesTampaBay.com.

Sponsorships also are available.

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Chalk Talk

Send school news to news@lakerlutznews.com

Correction:

The District School Board of Pasco County approved the 2017-2018 school calendar.

High school graduations will take place May 18 through May 27. Incorrect dates were published in the Aug. 9 edition of The Laker.

YOUTH ART CONTEST

The Medical Center of Trinity announced its sixth annual "Expressions of Thanks" youth art contest, which started Aug. 14.

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade are asked to celebrate the service of all U.S. military veterans, those who currently serve our great nation and their families, by submitting artwork, poetry or an essay, by Sept. 15.

Each participant will receive a recognition certificate.

First-place winners in each grade level will receive a \$25 gift card.

The grand-prize winner will have a choice of a bicycle or iPod nano.

Participants and their families can attend a reception Nov. 5 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., when prizes will be awarded and all artwork will be on display.

For complete details and rules, visit MedicalCenterTrinity.com.

For information, call (727) 834-4868.

Olympics Holiday Party, attended the Friendship Ball, attended legislative week to advocate for inclusion, and participated and raised funds for the Friendship Walk.

To support the school's mission for the 2017-2018 school year, John Long Middle is looking for sponsors for its Best Buddies chapter.

To find out how to make a tax-deductible donation before Sept. 1, call Andi Walker at (813) 346-6200.

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FREE VPK PROGRAM

Primrose School at Collier Parkway, 23021 Weeks Blvd., in Land O' Lakes, will offer Fall VPK (voluntary prekindergarten) programs for eligible families and their children.

The program is free for children who have not yet used a VPK voucher and turned 4 or 5 years old before Sept. 1, 2017.

There are three time options available: VPK Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.; VPK Monday through Friday from noon to 3 p.m.; and VPK (K4) and VPK (K5) Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

For information or to enroll your child, call Angella Hart at (813) 242-7800.

SCHOOL SUPPLY LISTS ONLINE

Parents from local schools can access their school's supply lists online at TeacherLists.com, and find the exact supply list and click over to pre-filled shopping carts on Target, Walmart, Jet.com or Amazon to purchase their list, and have it shipped right to their home.

Target and Walmart also offer in-store pickup.

More than 50,000 schools now have lists posted on TeacherLists. Lists for more than 1 million classrooms are live on the site, and include required and requested items, as well as specific notes and clarifications from teachers and school staff.

For complete details and all the lists, visit TeacherLists.com/parents.

SUMMER ABROAD TRIPS

Belmont University, in Nashville, Tennessee, sent its largest group of students across the world for study abroad experiences.

With more than 650 students participating in 34 programs, including "Maymester" trips, students have spent time in Greece, Brazil, England, France, Switzerland and Haiti, among other locations.

Katie Wynn, of Lutz, traveled to Ireland and Northern Ireland, and Kyle McCann, also of Lutz, traveled to Israel.

Studying abroad encourages students to expand worldviews and deepen their understanding of themselves and the world, according to Dr. Thandi Dinani, Belmont's director of study abroad.

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BE A BEST BUDDIES SPONSOR

Students at Dr. John Long Middle School in Wesley Chapel have been volunteering as part of Best Buddies, a club that provides students with and without disabilities the opportunity to be part of a global volunteer movement, which positively impacts the school and the Wesley Chapel community.

Best Buddies is a nonprofit organization dedicated to create opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

During the 2016-2017 school year, John Long Middle student volunteers and leaders inaugurated the Best Buddies Chapter at the school. The chapter members formed friendships, hosted a Special

LOCAL STUDENTS MAKE DEAN'S LIST

Abigale Pflugsten, of Lutz, was named to the Dean's List in her freshman year at Carnegie Mellon University, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Pflugsten carried a full load of seven classes. Emily Schwitzgebel, of Lutz, made the spring Dean's List at The College of Wooster, in Ohio. Schwitzgebel is a junior music therapy major.

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COURTESY OF PASCO-HERNANDO STATE COLLEGE

Students place at competition

Students of the Pasco-Hernando State College Phi Beta Lambda business organization competed in the Future Business Leaders of America National Leadership Competition in Anaheim, California. PHSC student John Vann placed third in the Future Business Executive category. Other students included: Leslie Barnwell and Sidney Onstad, fourth place in Hospital Management Team category; Casey Cox, sixth in Organizational Behavior & Leadership; Emily Brocks and Simona Rivero, ninth in Small Business Management Plan Team; and, Michael Bradley II, 10th in Public Speaking. From left: Emily Brock, John Vann, Sidney Onstad, Michael Bradley II, Giselle Perez, Leslie Barnwell, Shannon Phillips, Victor Miller and Casey Cox. Not pictured: Simona Rivero.

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THREAT, from page 1A

such threat. The three-pronged plan, Browning said, follows new guidance from safety and education experts who have spent the past two decades analyzing school shootings.

It also aligns with best practices for kindergarten through 12th grade education as recommended by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Education, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Before the school year began, administrators, teachers and staff were required to complete an eight-part webinar course that identifies response options to help save lives from the time 911 is called to when law enforcement arrives on site.

Early in the school year, middle and high school students will be taught about how to act during a crisis situation — through videos and corresponding practice drills, under the guidance of law enforcement officers. Students and staff will be warned before drills are hosted, to avoid causing fear or panic.

The response plan, Browning said, represents “a huge shift in the way we think about school and student safety.”

Browning noted: “Although it is very unlikely that we’re faced with a violent attack in one of our schools — such as an active shooter — we must be prepared in a way that we will save lives and prevent serious injury to our students.”

Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco said the plan puts the district “on the cutting edge” for preparation and school safety.

“It’s sad that in the world we live in we have to do this, but we do,” Nocco said. “God forbid if that worst-case scenario happens...the first response from people will be, ‘What did you do to prepare?’”

Meantime, a separate, ‘Stranger Danger’ video package has been designed for elementary students, in the case of an active threat.

The softer video approach contains a friendly animated lion and Cpl. Jennifer Rongo, a school resource officer at Fivay High School, explaining what to do in case of ‘Stranger Danger’ situations.

“We all understand this is a little uncomfortable for some parents out there,” Nocco said. “But...we have to be realistic; we have to have that plan in place.”

Browning stressed self-defense techniques will not be taught to elementary students or special needs students, who may not possess the physical abilities to defend themselves. For older students, Browning said the decision to defend oneself — or counter — will not be required as part of the active threat response training.

“(We) won’t require anybody to do anything if they’re not capable of doing anything, or if they choose not to do it,” Browning said.

Nationwide there have been 233 cases of gun violence on school campuses since 2013, according to gun control advocates Everytown for Gun Safety.

About 40 of those incidents, however, meet the common perception of a school shooting, where someone comes to a school campus to shoot faculty, staff or students.

Besides active threat situations, the school district’s 12-point crisis response plan outlines various protocols for medical emergencies, fires, hazardous materials, bomb threats, fights and violence, and missing and endangered students, among others.

The Active Threat Response Plan comes on the heels of a new state law stiffening penalties for students who threaten to shoot up a school.

The Anti-Terroristic Threat and Public Servant Protection Law, which went into effect last October, makes false reports about using firearms in a violent manner a second-degree felony.

The Pasco County School District experienced three incidents of students making gun threats in the first six weeks of the 2016-2017 school year, before the law went into effect.

CSX, from page 1A

isting east-west arterials traversing Pasco County,” he wrote. “State Road 54 also provides connections to several major regional north-south routes, including U.S. Highway 19, the Suncoast Parkway, U.S. Highway 41, U.S. Highway 301 and U.S. Highway 98.”

U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, who represents Florida’s 12th congressional district, weighed in on the issue in a July 19 letter to Cindy Sandborn, chief operating officer of CSX Corporation.

“These roads (State Road 54 and U.S. 41) serve as an important hub for commuters with approximately 100,000 vehicles traversing the intersection on a daily basis,” Bilirakis wrote.

He also noted that State Road 54 “serves as one of only two existing east-west evacuation routes that carry the county’s over 218,000 coastal evacuation area residents to I-75 in the event of an emergency.”

Bilirakis also noted, “if these crossing arms were to malfunction during a severe weather threat, tens-of-thousands of Pasco residents could be trapped on the roads during an emergency evacuation.”

When the malfunctions occur, the sheriff’s office must respond to manage traffic until a repair can be made, Hawkes noted.

“I am sure you agree this is a serious safety concern for citizens traveling through this intersection and the surrounding area,” Hawkes added.

Both letters urge a swift response to solve the problem.

“The safety of our residents is of the upmost concern,” Bilirakis states.

Capt. Eric Seltzer, District 2 field operations commander in the sheriff’s office, noted other problems posed by the malfunctioning crossing arms.

They prevent the sheriff’s office from being able to respond to calls.

“It could be a crime in progress. It could

be a crisis,” he said.

The malfunctioning arms also block first responders from reaching fires, accident victims and other medical calls, he noted.

“Our No. 1 priority is the safety of our citizens,” Steltzer said.

Beyond potential public safety issues, the malfunctioning crossing arms also pose an inconvenience to thousands of motorists who are using the roads, Seltzer said.

Garrick Francis, who works in federal affairs for CSX, responded to Bilirakis’ letter.

An internal CSX team coordinated a diagnostic review at the crossing on July 11 to determine what steps could be taken to correct the issues brought to CSX’s attention by the Pasco Sheriff’s Office letter, Francis wrote.

Representatives at that review included representatives from CSX, the Florida Department of Transportation, the Pasco County Sheriff’s Office, Pasco County’s Traffic Control, and RW Summers Inc. Railroad Construction.

Francis explained that a state project was done in July 2016 to install a new road surface using the TUB system, which is essentially 10-foot-long or 20-foot-long concrete panels that are installed to provide a suitable highway surface.

Prior to the installation of the TUBs, there were not false or partial activations of the crossing gates, Francis wrote.

The focus of the review “was to determine how to correct this crossing as quickly and reliably as possible, but also what could be done to mitigate the occurrences such as these at other locations on future installations,” Francis explained.

A team is working to find a solution, he wrote.

“We recognize the inconvenience that this problem has caused and are working collaboratively with the state and other key stakeholders to develop a permanent solution,” Francis wrote.



COURTESY OF PATRICK BOODY OF HENRY SCHEIN INC.

Filling backpacks, and a need

Team members from Ortho Technology, a Henry Schein company in Lutz, visited Joshua House Inc., to deliver 40 backpacks filled with school supplies for the abused, abandoned, and neglected children living there. The team also spent one-on-one time with the children playing games, talking and eating lunch. Ortho also delivered an additional 20 backpacks to Everyday Blessings Inc., in Thonotosassa. The back-to-school fundraiser is a flagship initiative of Henry Schein Cares, the company’s global social responsibility program, supported by the Henry Schein Cares Foundation, which works to foster, support and promote dental, medical and animal health by helping to increase access to care.

WOMEN, from page 1A

affordable housing, and the epidemic of drugs, pills and alcohol.

County commissioners appointed five of the women’s commission members, with 10 selected from area agencies, schools and nonprofits. They are African-American Club of Pasco County Inc., Hispanic Professional Women’s Association Inc., Metropolitan Ministries, Pasco Economic Development

Council, Pasco-Hernando State College, Saint Leo University, Sunrise of Pasco County Inc., the United Way of Pasco County Inc., Pasco County Sheriff’s Office, and Women Lawyers of Pasco Inc.

Meetings are open to the public.

The next meeting is scheduled for Oct. 2 from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., at the county’s Utilities Administration Office, at 19420 Central Blvd., off U.S. 41, in Land O’ Lakes.

For information on the women’s commission, visit PascoCountyFL.net.

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Wiregrass Ranch High loses top rusher

By Kevin Weiss

kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

One of Pasco County's top running backs is taking his talents south — to Hillsborough County.

Senior 1,000-yard rusher Da Da McGee has transferred from Wiregrass Ranch High School to Hillsborough High School, just weeks before the start of the 2017 prep football season.

McGee was one of seven tailbacks in Pasco County to eclipse the 1,000-yard mark last season, rushing for 1,063 yards and 11 touchdowns on 180 carries.

And, he was one of just three tailbacks in east Pasco to accomplish the feat, joining Wesley Chapel's Dexter Leverett (1,249 rush yards, 10 touchdowns) and Bishop McLaughlin's Luis Valentin (1,072 rush yards, 11 touchdowns).

The 5-foot-9, 180-pound McGee also led Wiregrass Ranch in rushing his sophomore year (333 yards, three touchdowns), despite missing five games with a shoulder injury.

Losing McGee, a 2016 SAC (Sunshine Athletic Conference) East All-Conference First-Team Selection, marks a significant — and the latest — blow to the Wiregrass Ranch football squad.

In June, the Bulls saw two other top players — cornerback Shamaur McDowell and athlete Raymond Woodie III — exit the program.

McDowell — a three-star prospect and University of Minnesota commit — transferred to IMG Academy in Bradenton, while Woodie III — a four-star prospect boasting over 20 scholarship offers — moved to Eugene, Oregon, with his family.

Yet, Wiregrass Ranch — coming off its best season in school history (7-3, District 7A-8 runner-up) — still remains a solid team, under third-year coach Mark Kantor.



COURTESY OF TOM KETCHUM, PASCOCOUNTYFB.COM

Senior running back Da Da McGee, pictured far left, has transferred from Wiregrass Ranch High to Hillsborough High. McGee was one of the top rushers in Pasco County last season, totaling 1,063 yards and 11 touchdowns on 180 carries. He is the latest high-profile transfer from Wiregrass Ranch, joining cornerback Shamaur McDowell and athlete Raymond Woodie III, who left the program in June.



COURTESY OF HILLSBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

At Hillsborough, McGee will play for Earl Garcia, the winningest active coach in Hillsborough County with 236 victories. Garcia has produced more than 200 scholarship student-athletes. He's also coached 15 players who went on to make NFL active rosters.

The Bulls return senior cornerback Jordan Miner, a Penn State University commit and four-star prospect regarded as one of the premier players in the Tampa Bay area.

The Bulls also appear to have a promising starting quarterback in junior Grant Sessums.

With McGee's departure, senior fullback Chase Oliver (443 yards, 7 touchdowns in 2016) figures to garner additional carries, as a between-the-tackles power runner.

McGee, meanwhile, joins a Hillsborough High program steeped in tradition since head coach Earl Garcia took over in 1993.

Garcia, the winningest active coach in Hillsborough County with 236 victories, has produced more than 200 scholarship stu-

2017 Kickoff Classic schedule

Schedules for the 2017 Statewide Kickoff Classic preseason football games have been released. All kickoff classics are scheduled for 7 p.m. Here's a list of games involving Pasco County teams in the The Laker/Lutz News coverage area:

AUG. 17

- Land O' Lakes High School at Wesley Chapel High

AUG. 18

- Bishop McLaughlin Catholic High at Superior Collegiate High
- Cypress Creek Middle High at Fivay High
- Mitchell High School at Zephyrhills High
- Ridgewood High School at Pasco High
- Wiregrass Ranch High at Clearwater Central Catholic High
- Gulf High School at Zephyrhills Christian Academy
- Lakewood High School at Sunlake High

dent-athletes. He's also coached 15 players who went on to make NFL active rosters.

Hillsborough High went 8-2 last season, but lost several key playmakers, including defensive end Zachary Carter (University of Florida signee) and running back Duran Bell Jr. (University of South Florida signee).

Besides Bell Jr., Hillsborough High graduated its other top two rushers in Drequn McCullough (494 rush yards, four touchdowns) and Russell Booth (192 rush yards, four touchdowns), giving McGee the inside track to become the team's starting tailback.

—Stats compiled by MaxPreps.com

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COURTESY OF SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Former Land O' Lakes High linebacker Shaheed Salmon, now

FORMER LAND O' LAKES PLAYER NAMED PRESEASON ALL-AMERICAN

Shaheed Salmon, a former Land O' Lakes High School football standout and current Samford (Homewood, Alabama) University senior linebacker, has been named to the STATS FCS Preseason All-America Team.

Salmon, a second-team choice, is one of 97 players selected to the All-America squad.

The 6-foot-2, 232-pound Salmon, who earned All-Southern Conference honors last season, is Samford's leading returning tackler with 93, including 50 solo stops. He also had one interception and seven pass breakups in 2016. Salmon had four games in which he tallied 10 or more tackles, including a career-high 18 in a win at Central Arkansas.

Salmon graduated from Land O' Lakes High in 2014.

In his senior prep season, Salmon led the Gators in tackles (117), tackles for loss (21.5) and sacks (8.5). He also competed in basketball and track.

SOCCER TEAM FUNDRAISER

The West Pasco Futbol Club's U12 Soccer Team will host a flapjack fundraiser at Applebee's, on State Road 54 in Wesley Chapel, Aug. 26 from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

The cost is \$7 for three pancakes, sausage and a beverage.

Members of the team will greet guests, serve breakfast and bus the tables.

The team practices at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Complex on Collier Parkway.

To purchase a ticket by Aug. 21, contact Nancy Griffis at (813) 391-3120 or ngsmiley-face@verizon.net.

YOUTH SOFTBALL REGISTRATION OPEN IN LUTZ

Registration is open for the Lutz Softball Inc., 2017 fall fast pitch season. The league is for girls, ages 4 to 18. Six divisions, including t-ball, are being offered. For information, visit LutzSoftball.com, or call (813)-949-9580.



COURTESY OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

The 37th annual Hillsborough County Senior Games runs from Oct. 2 through Oct. 20.

Senior Games opens registration

Registration is open for the 37th annual Hillsborough County Senior Games. The competition, for participants age 50 or older, the games begin Oct. 2 and run through Oct. 20.

The three-weeklong affair, which serves as a qualifier for the Florida Senior Games, typically draws hundreds of participants who compete in more than 40 sports and leisure activities, such as tennis, pickleball, track and field, softball, cycling, powerlifting, golf and more.

Entry fee is \$30 and includes unlimited

participation in most of the games, one ticket to the awards luncheon, opening ceremony breakfast and a T-shirt.

The Tampa Bay Senior Games are hosted by the Hillsborough County Parks and Recreation Department, Hillsborough County Aging Services, City of Tampa Recreation Department, The City of Temple Terrace Leisure Services, and Friends of the County Parks and Recreation Inc.

To register, visit HCFLGov.net/seniorgames.

Wiregrass Wobble set for Nov. 23

The fifth annual Wiregrass Wobble Turkey Trot 5K and Fun Run is slated for Nov. 23 at The Shops at Wiregrass, 28211 Paseo Drive in Wesley Chapel. The 5K Run starts at 7:30 a.m., while the 1-mile Fun Run/Walk starts at 8:15 a.m. Post-race awards and festivities will be from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m., at the start/finish line area.

Preregistration cost is \$25 through Sept.

30. The cost jumps to \$30 from Oct. 1 to Oct. 31, and \$35 from Nov. 1 to Nov. 22. Race day registration is \$40.

To register, please visit WiregrassWobbleTurkeyTrot.com. Proceeds from the event will support the Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel Foundation, FITNiche Foundation and the Rotary Club of New Tampa charities.



COURTESY OF SAINT LEO ATHLETICS

SAINT LEO WOMEN'S SOCCER RANKS 17TH IN PRESEASON POLL

The Saint Leo women's soccer team, the Sunshine State Conference (SSC) defending champions, open the 2017 season up as the 17th ranked program in the United Soccer Coaches Division II preseason poll.

The Lions went 13-4-1 last season on their way to capturing both the SSC regular season and tournament titles before hosting the first and second round of the NCAA

Division II Women's Soccer South Regional. Saint Leo and Barry (Miami Shores) University (No. 16) are the lone SSC teams in the preseason poll.

The Lions kick off the 2017 season with a road trip to Memphis, Tennessee to take on Christian Brothers University on Sept. 1 and University of West Alabama on Sept. 3.

Saint Leo returns home on Sept. 16 to

Saint Leo women's soccer ranks 17th in the United Soccer Coaches preseason poll. Their first game is Sept. 1, when the team travels to Memphis, Tennessee to play Christian Brothers University.



COURTESY OF WHARTON HIGH SCHOOL

Wharton High's A.J. Hampton has verbally committed to the University of Toledo.

GRIDIRON STANDOUT COMMITS TO TOLEDO

A.J. Hampton, a rising senior cornerback at Wharton High School, has verbally committed to play football at the University of Toledo, a Division I FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) program. A consensus three-star prospect, Hampton (5-foot-11, 170 pounds) is ranked among the state's top 150 players for the 2018 recruiting class per 247Sports.

Hampton also fielded scholarship offers from Marshall University, University of Nebraska, North Dakota State University and University of South Florida, among others.

One of Hampton's high school teammates, offensive lineman Lavel Dumont, is also a Toledo commit. Toledo running backs coach Marquell Blackwell was the primary recruiter for the Wharton High duo. Blackwell, a former USF quarterback, coached at Freedom High School in Tampa from 2006 to 2008.

Besides football, Hampton is a track star. He finished fourth in the 400 meters at the Class 4A state meet last spring, running a personal-best 48.98.

OTHER LOCAL ATHLETE COMMITMENTS

Carrollwood Day School senior Jack Pironti has committed to play soccer at Wesleyan University, a Division III program in Middletown, Connecticut. Pironti, a forward, tallied 13 goals and 31 points in nearly 700 minutes of action last season. He's played varsity soccer since the seventh grade at Carrollwood Day.

Pasco High School junior Garrett Hester has committed to play baseball at the University of Alabama, a Division I program. As a sophomore, last season, the 6-foot-1 lefthander posted a 2.45 ERA and 69 strikeouts in 48.2 innings. Also, a standout hitter, Hester batted .361 with three doubles and 12 RBIs.

open their home slate and Sunshine State Conference play with Embry-Riddle at 7 p.m.

Mario Rincon, a longtime Division I assistant, was named Saint Leo's head coach in March. He replaces Ged O' Connor, who left for Troy University, a Division I program in Alabama.

Get your 'Greek' on in Tarpon Springs



Worth the Trip

By B.C. Manion
bcmanion@lakerlutznews.com

If you're looking for a quick getaway that offers a chance to experience Greek culture without leaving the Sunshine State, you may want to check out Tarpon Springs.

Besides having a chance to sample sweets from Greek bakeries, or dine on more substantial fare at Greek restaurants, you can learn about the sponge-harvesting industry that played a starring role in this community's history.

The Sponge Docks, situated on Dodecanes Boulevard, is a great place to get a taste of what Tarpon Springs has to offer.

You can get a feel for the community's history at the Spongeorama Sponge Factory, at 510 Dodecanese Blvd., which offers a free movie and museum about sponge diving.

And, while the sponge industry isn't what it once was, you can still see men tossing sponges on the docks, or take a boat ride to see a sponge diver in action.

For those with other interests, there are dolphin cruises available, and sport fishing, as well.

And, there are scores of specialty shops, too.

The Spiceman's Kitchen, at 815 Dodecanese Blvd., for instance, offers more than 300 hot sauces, 50 barbecue sauces and marinades, and a variety of seasonings, rubs, pickled vegetable, jams, jellies and other items.

And, not far from there, you'll find The Spice & Tea Exchange of Tarpon Springs, at 824 Dodecanes Blvd. It offers a selection of spices, custom blends, loose-leaf teas, sea and mineral salts, and other goods.

There also are a number of shops selling soaps and skin care products, including Katherine's Gifts Natural Skin Care, at 628 Athens St.

If you're seeking spiritual refreshment, there's St. Michael's Shrine, at 113 Hope St., a small chapel built by a family in thanksgiving for the recovery of a young son who was near death.

Many linger in the serene setting, where they light candles for their intentions and gaze at the icons covering its walls.

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, at 36 N. Pinellas Ave., offers another sacred place in the city. It was designed as a replica of St. Sophia of Constantinople.



This statue of a sponge diver provides a sense of history at the marina.

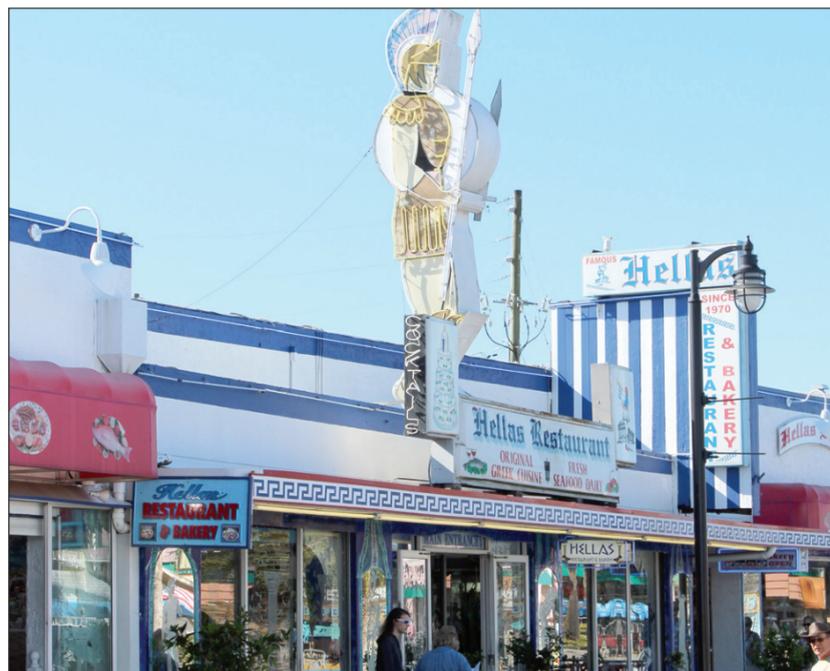
B.C. MANION



Visitors to Tarpon Springs can take a boat ride, which features a sponge diver diving into the water to retrieve a sponge.



Greek bakeries and restaurants abound in Tarpon Springs.



If you enjoy short trips, which offer plenty of opportunities to learn and have fun, add Tarpon Springs to your list of future destinations.



This is the exterior of St. Michael Shrine, at 113 Hope St., in Tarpon Springs.



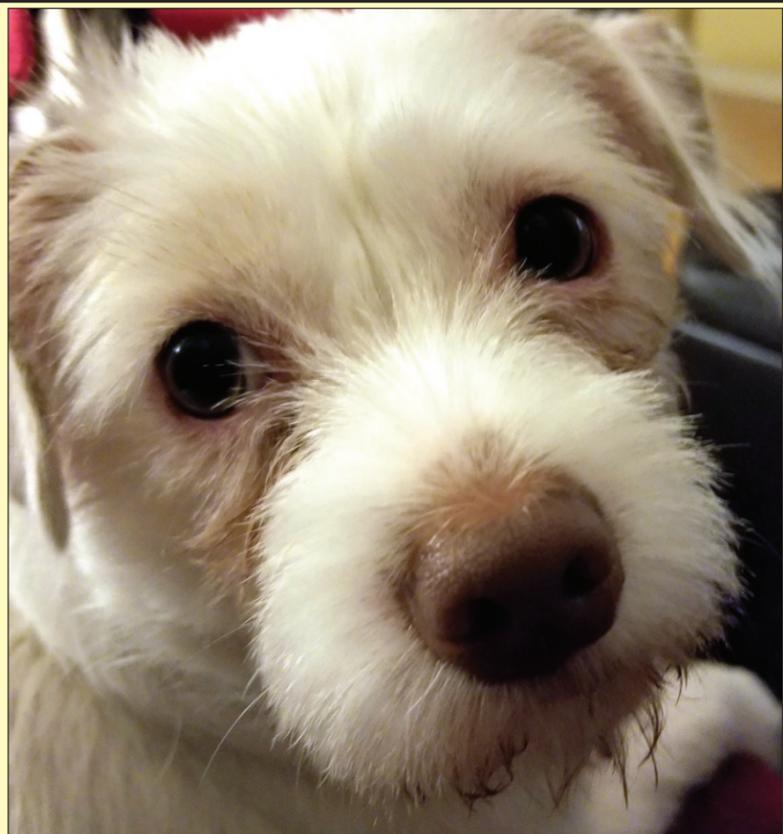
Sorting sponges at the Sponge Docks is a regular activity in Tarpon Springs.

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Khaleesi is all personality

This is Khaleesi, named after the Mother of Dragons in the Game of Thrones. She is part Jack Russell and part wire-hair terrier. Khaleesi was adopted a little over a year ago from a no-kill shelter called CARE. She is a funny little dog that thinks she is human. Khaleesi tries to talk with little growls and whines, especially around the time she is supposed to get her evening treat. Although she can be quite a pest, she has really found her way into the hearts of her proud owners, Dena Gaeta and family, of Lutz.

PET OF THE WEEK FAMILIES RECEIVE A \$25 SHELL'S FEED & GARDEN GIFT CERTIFICATE TO USE IN ITS STORE FOR TREATS, TOYS, COLLARS, LEASHES & HOME GROOMING PRODUCTS.

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 mrathman@lakerlutznews.com, ATTN: Pet of the Week
PLEASE NOTE: OWNERS NAME AND ADDRESS MUST BE INCLUDED FOR YOUR PET TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PUBLICATION.

PET PAWS

CLEAR THE SHELTER

Pasco County Animal Services, 19640 Dogpatch Lane in Land O' Lakes, will host a Clear the Shelter event Aug. 19 from noon to 6:30 p.m.

Clear the Shelter is a nationwide event geared toward placing as many pets in their forever homes as possible, and clearing out the shelter population. More than 50,000 pets were placed in 2016 nationwide.

Animal Services is participating and will have the help of NBC and Telemundo at the event.

Come out and meet a pup or kitty that needs a home.

Adoption fees will be waived for the day. Also, the shelter is in need of linens, and is accepting donations of blankets and towels.

For information, call (813) 929-1212.

LOW-COST SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM

Pasco County Animal Services has introduced the SNIP Program (Spay/Neuter in Pasco) due to the growing stray population. Shelters are struggling to find pets homes, and many are euthanized.

The SNIP Program consists of two elements.

First is the Low Income Program. The shelter partners with veterinary hospitals in Pasco County to provide low-cost spay/neuter for applicants. To qualify, applicants must reside in Pasco County and meet the income eligibility guidelines or be receiving government assistance from one of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, WIC, or SSI (Supplemental Security Income). The cost is \$10 per cat or \$20 per dog (up to three pets per household).

The second component is TNVR (Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, Return). This is a procedure in which entire colonies of stray and

feral cats are humanely trapped, vaccinated for rabies, spayed/neutered by a veterinarian, ear-tipped and returned back to the outdoors. All cats must come from Pasco County, be healthy and dropped off in a humane trap (no carriers).

The cost is \$10 per cat; a refundable \$75 deposit per trap rented is required until traps are returned.

To find out more, please visit PascoCountyFL.net/pas.

PET-FRIENDLY CITIES

WalletHub took an in-depth look at 2017's Most Pet-Friendly Cities. WalletHub's analysts compared the creature-friendliness of the 100 largest cities across 21 key metrics. The data set ranges from minimum pet-care provider rate per visit to pet businesses per capita to walkability.

The top 10 cities where furry companions can enjoy the best quality of life without breaking the bank are: Scottsdale, Arizona; Phoenix, Arizona; Tampa; San Diego, California; Orlando; Birmingham, Alabama; Austin, Texas; Cincinnati, Ohio; Atlanta; and, Las Vegas.

To view the full report and the least pet-friendly cities, visit tinyurl.com/j9wdq2e.

SHARE YOUR PET NEWS

If you have pet news about adoptions, walks or other events for pet owners and their pets, you can let us know by sending us an email. We just need the basics: who, what, when, where and why.

The information should be submitted two weeks prior to the desired publication date. We also need a contact name and number; in case we have questions.

There is no guarantee of publication, but we consider each item we receive.

If you'd like to make a submission, send it to news@lakerlutznews.com.

Adopt A Friend FOR LIFE



These kittens love to cuddle

The shelter has two kittens that are awaiting names and forever homes. They came to the shelter with a few other cats, and they absolutely love the company of their friends. The kittens are currently living in the Feline Freedom room and waiting to meet you. Both are females, and will be microchipped and spayed by the time they are ready to leave.



Buttercup is a happy pup

Buttercup is about 2½ years old and came to the shelter in May. She was originally very scared and had a rough time adjusting to shelter life. Fortunately, Buttercup was able to take advantage of the decompression room for a few weeks and started to come out of her shell. She likes to play fetch and cuddle. Buttercup can still be a little shy about new people moving toward her too quickly. She is up to date on vaccines, microchipped and is heartworm negative.

If you would like to adopt Buttercup, or one or both of the kittens, be sure to visit Pasco County Animal Services at 19640 Dogpatch Lane in Land O' Lakes. The adoption center is open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 6:30 p.m. All adoption fees include spay/neuter, microchip and vaccines. For more information, email adoptionpartners@pascocountyfl.net.



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Dog Neuter:		Dog Spay:	
up to 11 lbs	\$50	up to 11 lbs	\$60
12 - 33 lbs	\$55	12 - 22 lbs	\$65
34 - 66 lbs	\$65	23 - 44 lbs	\$70
67 - 88 lbs	\$80	45 - 66 lbs	\$80
89 - 132 lbs	\$95	67 - 88 lbs	\$100
		89 - 132 lbs	\$120

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- Feline Leukemia 2 yr \$25.00
- Canine Distemper Combo 3 yr \$30.00
- Feline Distemper Combo 3 yr \$30.00
- Bordetella/Kennel Cough \$18.00

www.gentlecarepethospital.com

[Facebook.com/Gentlecare Pet Hospital](https://www.facebook.com/GentlecarePetHospital)

LOCAL WILDLIFE



A few ruffled feathers

Mary Rathman snapped a photo of this hawk as it attempts to dry out after one of Land O' Lakes' afternoon rainstorms.

PUT YOUR PET IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

We are looking for photos and information on your favorite pet. Include in your short story your pet's name, age, breed, and anything else you would like to mention.

Don't forget to include the owner's name and city of residence!

Send photo and information to:

The LAKER/Lutz NEWS

Email to: mrathman@lakerlutznews.com, SUBJECT: Pet of the Week
Mail to: Pet of the Week, c/o The Laker, P.O. Box 479, Lutz, FL 33548



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ZEPHYRHILLS ANNUAL AWARDS

The Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce is seeking nominations for the 56th annual Membership Appreciation & Community Awards Banquet Sept. 28 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., at St. Joseph's Parish Center, 38750 Fifth Ave., in Dade City.

Florida Hospital Zephyrhills is the event's premier sponsor.

Award nominations can be made until Sept. 18.

Individual banquet tickets are \$50. Table sponsors are available for \$350, \$500 and \$600.

For more information, call the chamber at (813) 782-1913, email info@zephyrhillschamber.com, or visit ZephyrhillsChamber.com.

LUNCH N LEARN

A Lunch N Learn Business Forum is scheduled for Aug. 17 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at The Greater Wesley Chapel Chamber of Commerce Don Porter Boardroom, at 6013 Wesley Grove Blvd., Suite 105.

Guest speaker will be Kelly Mothershead, of Fitness Transformation Studio & Salon. She will teach a CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) class. Students will receive an American Heart Association certification card.

The cost is \$20 including lunch. Registration is needed, as seating is limited.

For information, please visit WesleyChapelChamber.com, or call (813) 994-8534.



FILE

The Edwinola offers independent living

The Edwinola is a senior living community that is now accepting applications for its independent living apartments. Assisted living accommodations will be available soon.

The Edwinola, with a wraparound veranda and a balcony, was closed down, but has been renovated and reopened. It is lo-

cated at 14235 Edwinola Way in Dade City.

The Edwinola is a historical icon in Dade City. It was built in 1912 to replace the Dade City Hotel, which burned down in 1907. At various times, it served as a hotel, a private residence, a boarding house, a restaurant and an assisted living facility.

The Edwinola offers studios, one bedroom/one bath apartments, and two-bath suites. It is pet-friendly.

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For information, call (352) 567-6500, visit TheEdwinola.com, or email sdavis@edwinola.com.

ZEPHYRHILLS MIXER

The Greater Zephyrhills Chamber of Commerce will have a member mixer Aug. 17 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., hosted by Skydive City, at 4241 Skydive Lane, in Zephyrhills.

For more information, please visit ZephyrhillsChamber.org, call the chamber

at (813) 782-1914, or send an email to roxxxy@zephyrhillschamber.org.

ROTARY BREAKFAST

The Rotary Club of New Tampa will have its weekly breakfast Aug. 18 at 7:15 a.m., at the Tampa Palms Golf & Country Club, 5811

Tampa Palms Blvd., in Tampa.

Guest speaker will be Janet Zink of the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority. She will talk about renovations at Tampa International Airport.

See BUSINESS DIGEST, page 7B

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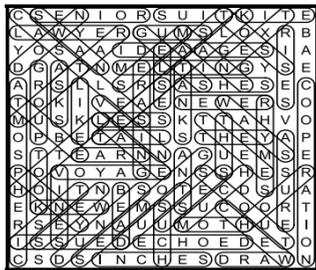
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7	8	1	6	4	2	9	5	3
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The cost is free for first-time guests, and \$12 thereafter.

For information, contact Jennifer Cofini at (813) 907-7800, ext. 212, or jcofini@parksmotorgroup.com.

SCORE WORKSHOP

Pasco Hernando SCORE will have a workshop on "How to Really Start Your Own Business" Aug. 22 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at the Land O' Lakes Branch Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, Land O' Lakes.

The free workshop will provide information on how to start a business, key issues of starting a business, insurance, legal requirements and information sources.

For information, contact William Gelbach at William.gelbach@scorevolunteers.org or (727) 842-4638.



ME HOBBIES MOVES

ME Hobbies is staying put in Eagle Plaza. But, customers can now find it relocated to a store twice as large as its former storefront.

The move took place in May to a location in the plaza across from Ferman car dealership, at the intersection of State Road 54 and Oak Grove Boulevard,

in Lutz.

The store is stocked with Traxxas RC parts and vehicles, pro boats, planes, quadcopters, models, hobby tools, and more fun hobby items for adults and children.

ME Hobbies is open seven days a week.

For information, call the store at (813) 949-3500.

HILTON GARDEN INN OPENING

The Hilton Garden Inn Tampa Suncoast Parkway will have a grand opening Aug. 30 from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at 2155 Northpointe Parkway in Lutz.

The event is free. Please RSVP by Aug. 23.

There will be food samples from the hotel's menu from Chef Robert, cocktails and more.

For more information, please visit CentralPascoChamber.com, or call the chamber at (813) 909-2722.

WELLS FARGO DONATION

The Wells Fargo Foundation donated \$10,000 to the Pasco Economic Development Council Inc.'s microloan fund.

The fund is available to small business owners who have for-profit companies in Pasco County, but have trouble securing traditional financing. Loan amounts of up to \$35,000 may be used for working capital, inventory, supplies, furniture, fixtures, machinery and equipment. The funds can't be used to buy real estate or to refinance an existing debt.

In the past year, the Pasco EDC has collected \$21,000 from private donations and the business community. In 2016, the Pasco County Commission contributed \$400,00 from the Penny for Pasco Jobs and Economic Opportunities Trust Fund.

In less than six years, the Pasco EDC's Microloan Program has awarded 33 microloans, resulting in creation or retention of 180 jobs in Pasco.

For information about becoming a contributor for the microloan fund, call John Walsh, vice president of the Pasco EDC, at (813) 926-0827, ext. 223.

Additional information about the program can be found in the Grow Your Business section of the Pasco EDC website at PascoEDC.com.

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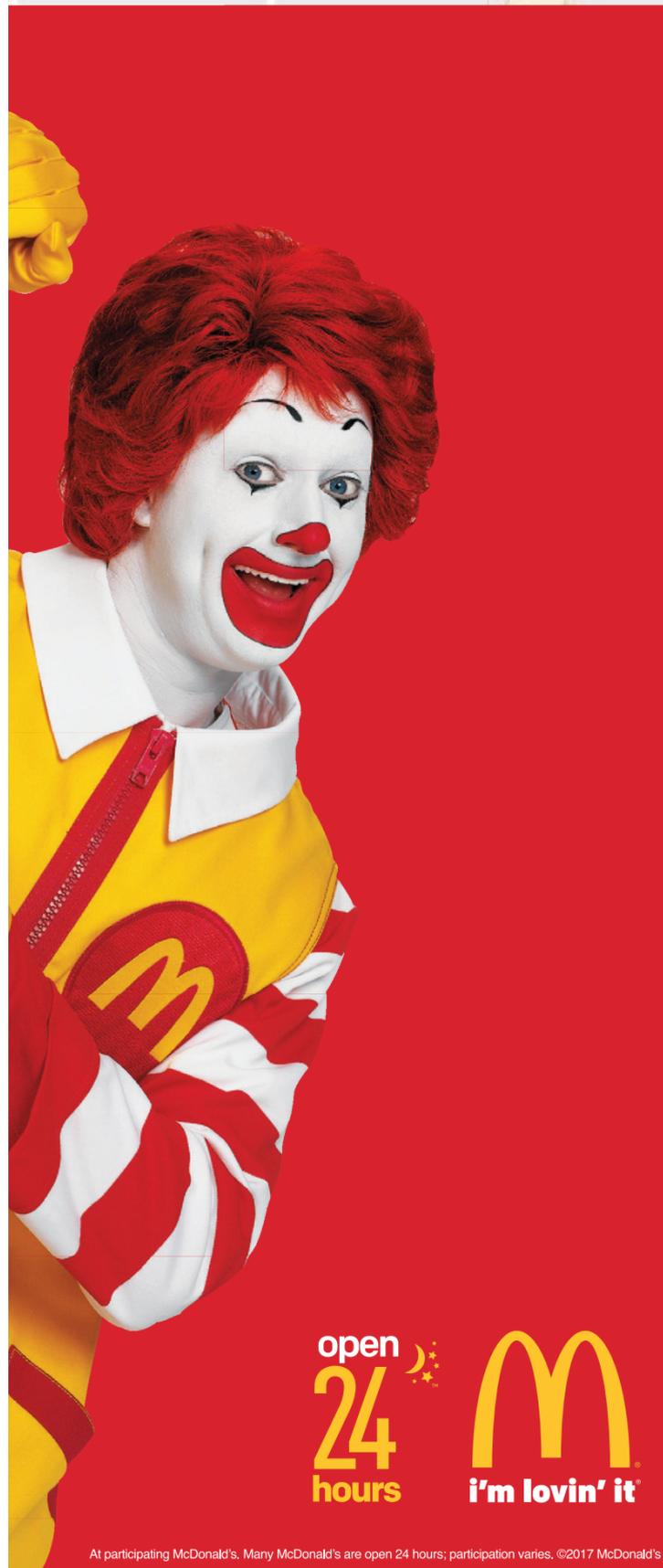
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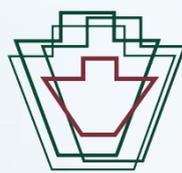
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Dr. Buck earned her medical degree from Michigan State University. She was Board Certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 2009 and specializes in robotic-assisted gynecological surgery. For the past 10 years, Dr. Buck practiced at Hackley Hospital - Mercy Health, near her hometown of Muskegon, Michigan.

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