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## Bond issue for jail expansion?

By Kathy Steele  
ksteel@lakerlutznews.com

Pasco County commissioners are considering a possible referendum to see voter approval for a 30-year bond issue that would pay for a jail expansion, four new fire stations, and the expansion of five existing fire stations.

The \$185 million bond issue, earmarked for public safety, would be placed before voters on the November ballot.

County commissioners got preliminary data on the bond at a Jan. 30 workshop in Dade City. The matter will be discussed again at a Feb. 13 workshop in New Port Richey.

If approved, households on average could expect to pay about \$22.50 a year, based on

a home value of about \$100,000.

Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco and Pasco Fire Chief Scott Cassin made their cases for why the bond is needed.

"We're between a rock and a hard place now," Nocco said.

The county's detention center, in Land O' Lakes, is over-crowded, and the situation is getting worse. The facility was built to house 1,432 inmates, but on Jan. 29 held 1,842 inmates, according to county jail records.

By 2020, projections peg inmate population at nearly 2,400 a day.

The bond issue would pay for a 1,000-bed expansion.

At the present time, some inmates sleep

See BOND, page 11A



KATHY STEELE

Station 22, at 9930 Land O' Lakes Boulevard, is on a list of Pasco County fire stations that need to be upgraded, and potentially could benefit from a proposed bond.



FRED BELLET

**B**

INSIDE, PAGE 1B

Visiting from Nashville, Tennessee, 4-year-old Cosby Turner finds himself in a tight spot, between his dad Brice Turner and a baby alligator, at GatorWorld Parks of Florida's petting area. The baby alligator's snout is taped shut because young teeth tend to be sharp.



B.C. MANION

Buttons at the 'Get Loud!' event helped spread the message of the problems of sexual assault and domestic violence.

## 'Get Loud!' takes aim at sexual assault, domestic violence

By B.C. Manion  
bcmansion@lakerlutznews.com

Cheers normally reverberate through Wiregrass Ranch High School's gymnasium when a boys basketball player on the home team scores.

That didn't happen though during the initial minutes of the varsity team's Jan. 30 game against Sunlake High School.

Instead, spectators remained silent, in response to signs being shown to them that said "Shhh" and "Be Quiet."

The crowd kept quiet until the ninth point was scored and then — responding to signs that said "Break the Silence" — spectators roared.

Obviously, there was a lot more going on than just a routine basketball game.

In fact, a full-fledged public awareness campaign was being staged, too.

Wiregrass Ranch High School's basketball game was the venue for "Get Loud!"

The event was presented by the high school, in Wesley Chapel, in conjunction with the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and Sunrise of Pasco County Inc. Domestic and Sexual Violence Center. It also was supported through a Tampa Bay Lightning Foundation Community Heroes grant.

Staying silent for nine points was intended to call attention to the fact that every 9 seconds in the United States a woman is as-

See LOUD, page 11A

## Raising awareness about drugged driving

By Kevin Weiss  
kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

A case of drugged driving forever changed the lives of parents Joey and Tammy Leonard.

Now their mission is to ensure other families don't experience the same anguish they must handle every day.

On Oct. 12, 2015, the Leonards lost their daughter, Cassidy Leonard, her husband, William Griggs, and their 12-day-old baby granddaughter, Kimberlynn Dawn Griggs, after a horrific head-on collision with an impaired driver in Tennessee.

The driver, Benjamin Franklin, then 28, had crossed over the road into the oncoming lanes and struck Grigg's vehicle on State Highway 13 in Houston County, Tennessee.

The young family was instantly killed.

Franklin, who was under the influence of oxycodone, methamphetamine and amphetamines at the time of the crash, survived.

He was later sentenced to 36 years in prison for vehicular homicide.

"We say we received a life sentence, because of a senseless, preventable act of a grown man. It's difficult for us to understand," said Joey Leonard, associate dean of academic affairs and retention services at PHSC's East Campus.

The Leonards shared their personal story during a panel discussion on drugged driving prevention at the Pasco-Hernando State College East Campus in Dade City.

Topics centered on the consequences of impaired driving, along with the risks of illegal and prescription drug use while operating a motor vehicle. Law enforcement and medical professionals weighed in.

The Jan. 30 event was part of the college's ongoing Community Awareness Series available to community members, students, faculty and staff.

### THE ISSUES

The National Institute of Drug Abuse says the use of illicit drugs or misuse of prescription drugs can make driving a car unsafe — just like driving after drinking alcohol — putting the driver, passengers and others who share the road at risk.

The effects of specific drugs differ de-



COURTESY OF JOEY AND TAMMY LEONARD

Kassidy Leonard, her husband, William Griggs, and their 12-day-old baby daughter, Kimberlynn Dawn Griggs, were killed by a drug impaired driver in October 2015.

pending on how they act in the brain, according to the organization.

For example, marijuana can slow reaction time, impair judgment of time and distance, and decrease coordination. Drivers who have used cocaine or methamphetamine can be aggressive and reckless when driving. Certain kinds of sedatives, called benzodiazepines, can cause dizziness and drowsiness.

Drugged driving is widespread nationally.

According to the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 11.8 million people age 16 drove under the influence of illicit drugs in 2016, the latest data published on the topic.

Approximately 21 percent of the 31,666 fatal crashes in the U.S., in 2015 involved at least one driver who tested positive for drugs after the incident, according to federal data released to USA TODAY and interviews with leaders in the field.

In Florida, there were 281 drug-related crash fatalities in 2015. That figure has risen every year since 2010, when 109 drug-related crash fatalities reported.

Panelists extensively pinpointed the use of marijuana.

Each warned students about the risks, es-

See AWARENESS, page 11A

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# Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE

## Specialized and Personalized

By **Tobi Karch**  
 Special to The Laker / Lutz News

Specialized and personalized are two words that best describe Margaret Hassani and her business, Lightning Realty, a residential real estate business based in Carrollwood.

Hassani bravely launched Lightning Realty in 2008, right before the real estate market crashed. She began listing homes for sellers who owed more to their lender than the value of their home, and successfully negotiated many short sales.

Hassani began her real estate career working for a Tampa homebuilder for 12 years. In addition, she and her husband began to buy and manage their own rental properties in 2001. With this comprehensive background, Hassani began to realize that there was a better way to sell homes.

"Do you realize that the process for selling homes hasn't changed in probably 50 years — throw a sign up, upload it to the MLS and hope it sells!" said Hassani. "I use a different, multi-step process for selling homes—one that builds excitement and anticipation before a home is ever allowed to be shown."

Specializing in high-quality homes, Hassani employs a unique "home-launch

formula," which Forbes and USA World News have both touted.

"As the number of days on the market increase, the value of a home decreases. However, there are ways to make it sell more quickly," she explains.

Hassani refers to what large retailers such as Apple call a higher-price frame of mind. "What I do ensures that the seller will have a higher probability that their home will sell for more money," she says.

"I am a high-quality Realtor, rather than a high-quantity one," Hassani continues. She works on strategizing and introducing new types of marketing and advertising, in much the same way large corporations do prior to launching a new product.

"My goal is to always get the highest possible price for my client's home in the shortest amount of time," says Hassani. "I build curiosity and interest before buyers can see the home. Plus, I only focus on selling my client's listing."

Hassani is optimistic about the health of the North Tampa market.

"The outlook is excellent for sellers this year. Builders have started to ramp up, which means we can expect to see more inventory for sale in 2018, and buyers will have more choices than they did last year," she says. "Until builders are at full capacity, prices will continue to rise, though at a slower rate than last year."



Margaret Hassani



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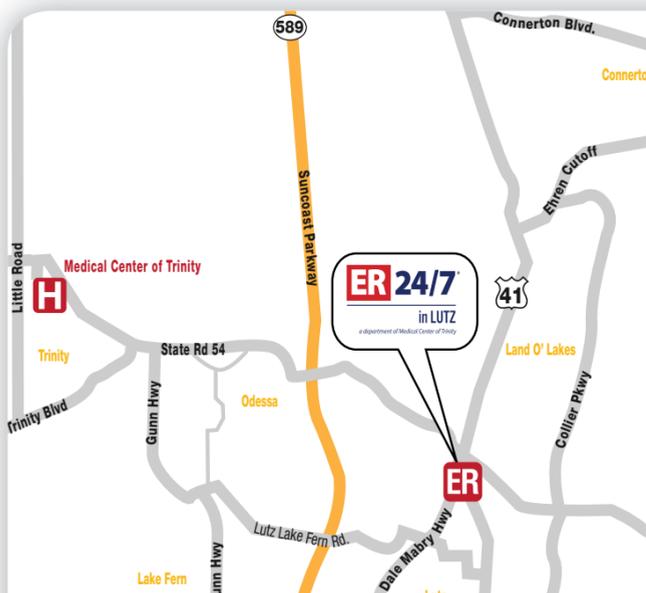
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# Horses, quilts and homespun skills

The Laker/Lutz News Staff Report

Pioneer Florida Museum & Village put the spotlight on farm life, and the homespun skills passed down through generations at its annual Farm Festival and Quilt Show.

The event was held on museum grounds in Dade City on Feb. 4 and Feb. 5.

Large crowds gathered during the Draft Horse Pulling Competition to cheer their favorite teams. The contest pitted 20 horse teams against each other, each demonstrat-

ing horse power and strength.

Local quilters exhibited their sewing skills, with displays of quilts in all colors, sizes and designs. Quilts, clothing remnants and supplies also were available for purchase.

Festival-goers could watch cane grinding and syrup-making, stroll through an arts and crafts show, shop with vendors and enjoy folk musicians.

A 1914 Ford Model T was among several antique cars on display.



Attendees snapped open lawn chairs to settle back and watch festivities at the annual Farm Festival and Quilt Show at the Florida Pioneer Museum & Village in Dade City.



RICHARD K RILEY

Two horses went head-to-head in the horse pulling contest.



Bill Scaife makes adjustments on a quilting machine that is for sale at his business, Itching for Stitching.



Joyce Duncan, of Dade City, sat in her husband's 1914 Ford Model T at an antique vehicle show.



Linda MacDonald, of Zephyrhills, inspects the stitching on a quilt being judged at the Farm Festival and Quilt Show in Dade City.



Dulcimer Connection entertained with classic and folk music.

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## DRIVE-THRU PRAYER

Atonement Lutheran Church, 29617 State Road 54 in Wesley Chapel, offers Drive-Thru Prayer under its portico every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Stop by, stay in your car, and ministry partners will share your cares and concerns in prayer.

## COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

The Pasco Alliance of Community Associations will host a workshop Feb. 8 at 7 p.m., at Land O' Lakes Heritage Park (formerly the Land O' Lakes Community Center), 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. There will be a discussion on the 2018 program schedule, as well as changes to CDDs, HOAs, condos and co-ops in Pasco County. For information, visit [MyPACA.org](http://MyPACA.org), or call Wayne Mooney at (352) 467-9808.

## MAKE A KITE

The New River Library, 34043 State Road 54 in Zephyrhills, will celebrate National Kite Flying Day on Feb. 8 from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Participants can design a kite and see if it will fly. For information, call (813) 788-6375.

## REPUBLICAN CLUB

The Wesley Chapel Republican Club will meet Feb. 8 at 6:30 p.m., at Lexus of Wesley Chapel, 5350 Eagleston Blvd., in Wesley Chapel. The guest speaker will be Ashley Moody, candidate for attorney general. There will be coffee and desserts. Admission is free. For information, contact Peter Cracchiolo at (813) 360-9813 or [peterzbear@aol.com](mailto:peterzbear@aol.com).

## CIRCUS PERFORMANCE

Fantazia Circus will appear Feb. 9 at 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Feb. 10 at 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., at All Sports Arena, 7716 Rutillio Court in New Port Richey. Doors open an hour prior to show time. Tickets are \$15 for adults and include two free admissions for kids. A dollar from each ticket will benefit the M.U.C.H. Foundation that provides costumed superhero and character visits with youngsters. For information, visit [CircusFantazia.com](http://CircusFantazia.com) or [Facebook.com/fantaziacircus](http://Facebook.com/fantaziacircus).

## PAPER CRAFT

The Zephyrhills Public Library, 5347 Eighth St., will host a craft-making session Feb. 9 at 10 a.m. Participants can create a keepsake box using the art of quilling. The box, quilling paper and tools will be provided. Class size is limited to 20 participants. Registration is required by calling (813) 780-0064.

## ANTI-VALENTINE DANCE

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will host its annual Teen Anti-Valentine's Day Dance Feb. 9 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., for ages 13 to 18. This year's theme is "Emo," a style of rock music. Admission is free, but VIP access with pizza, drinks and video games is \$5. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

## BOOK BAZAAR

The Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St., in Dade City, will host a book bazaar Feb. 9 and Feb. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be a selection of books, audio and video media, magazines, and related materials available for a modest cost. For information, call (352) 567-3576.

## SHABBAT SERVICES

Congregation Kol Ami, 3919 Moran Road in Tampa, will host family Shabbat services Feb. 9 at 6:30 p.m. There will be guitar music, dancing in the aisles, singing, stories and more. For information, call (813) 962-6338.

## POMEGRANATE GROWERS

The Florida Pomegranate Association will host the Pomegranate Growers meeting Feb. 9 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center, 14625 County Road 672 in Wimauma. Topics will include nutrition management, disease control and preparing orchards for the season. Advance registration for FPA members is \$15 or \$25 for non-members. Tickets will be available at the door for \$20 and \$35, respectively. For information, call (863) 604-3778.



## Hugs and Kisses

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will host a Valentine's Day-themed Little Makers program Feb. 10 at 10:30 a.m., for toddlers and preschoolers. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

## Valentine treats

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will host "Karen's Kitchen" Feb. 12 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., for ages 9 to 15. There will be a demonstration on how to make Valentine-themed treats. Proper dress code, registration and signed liability waivers are required. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

## Group wedding ceremony

The Pasco Clerk & Comptroller's Office of Paula S. O'Neil will facilitate its 10th annual group Valentine's Day wedding ceremony Feb. 14, at the Pasco County Historic Courthouse in Dade City. Couples that want to tie the knot can exchange vows in a group setting. Judge Kemba Lewis will officiate. Couples can register for the ceremony when applying for a marriage license no later than Feb. 9. A certified marriage certificate will be mailed to couples the day after the ceremony, accompanied by the official certificate of marriage. Couples should arrive at the courthouse by 1 p.m. For information, call (352) 521-4408, or visit [PascoClerk.com](http://PascoClerk.com).

## Musical comedy

Dreamhouse Theatre in Lutz will present the romantic musical comedy, "She Loves Me," opening on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14 at 8 p.m. Other show dates include Feb. 15, Feb. 16, Feb. 17, Feb. 23 and Feb. 24 at 8 p.m., and Feb. 18 and Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$23 each at [DreamhouseTheatre.com](http://DreamhouseTheatre.com), or by calling Bryan D'Onofrio at (813) 997-7146.

## Valentine Vows

Tampa Theatre, 711 N. Franklin St., will host the return of "Valentine's Vows" Feb. 14 prior to the screening of "When Harry Met Sally." At 7 p.m., the Right Reverend John Bell, president and CEO of the theater, will invite married couples to a wedding vow renewal and champagne toast. Participants can also get married that evening by bringing their marriage license and ID. The film will show at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for general admission and \$7 for theater members. For information, call (813) 274-8287.

## STAMPFEST WINTER

The 21st annual Stampfest Winter will be Feb. 10 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the New Port Richey Recreation & Aquatic Center, 6630 Van Buren St. This is a rubber-stamping, card-making, scrapbooking and paper arts convention, with giveaways. Admission is \$8; children age 12 and younger are free. There will be classes available Feb. 9. All proceeds will go to Florida Hospice of the Suncoast. For information, call Debby Drabik at (727) 376-6289, visit [StampFest.com](http://StampFest.com), or email [info@stampfest.com](mailto:info@stampfest.com).

## NORTH TAMPA MARKET

The Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Road, will host The North Tampa Market Feb. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This is an outdoor, fresh market. Admission is free. For information, visit [TampaBayMarkets.com](http://TampaBayMarkets.com).

## BIG BAND MUSIC

The Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Road, will host the Carrollwood Jukebox Big Band on Feb. 10 at 8 p.m. The band will perform dance music, including swing, hip-hop, Latin, waltz, pop and contemporary, to celebrate Valentine's Day. Free dance lessons will be offered to ticket holders starting at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$12 to \$18. For information, call (813) 922-8167.

## RANCH DAYS

Florida Ranch Days will take place Feb. 10 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Feb. 11 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., at Little Everglades Ranch (U.S. 301 and Gould Road) in Dade City. There will be ranch activities, entertainment, a food round-up, a trading post, artists, crafters, vendors and more. For information, visit [RanchDays.com](http://RanchDays.com), call (352) 521-3661, or email [LERevents@gmail.com](mailto:LERevents@gmail.com).

## COMMUNITY CAR SHOW

Harvester United Methodist Church, 2432 Collier Parkway in Land O' Lakes, will host its second annual Harvester Community Car Show Feb. 10 from noon to 3 p.m. All makes, models and years can participate. There will be food trucks on site and music provided by the Harvester UMC Contemporary Praise Band. Registration is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (\$10 per vehicle), the show from noon to 3 p.m., and trophies will be awarded at 3 p.m., for first, second and third place. For information, email Shawn Smith at [shawncarshows@gmail.com](mailto:shawncarshows@gmail.com).

## MICHIGAN POTLUCK PICNIC

The 2018 Wisconsin-Upper Peninsula Michigan Potluck Picnic will take place Feb. 10 at the First Methodist Church Hall, 38635 Fifth Ave., in Zephyrhills. Registration will start at 10 a.m., with activities at noon. Guests should bring a dish to share and their own place setting. Meat, coffee and dessert will be provided, as well as entertainment and door prizes. No alcoholic beverages will

be allowed. The cost is \$4 per person. For information, call Vicki Arndt at (608) 790-1210.

## MUSIC AT THE MONASTERY

The Benedictine Sisters of Florida will host Music at the Monastery Feb. 11 at 2 p.m., at Holy Name Monastery, 12138 Wichers Road in St. Leo. The Ringtones, members of the Toast of Tampa Show Chorus, will perform. There will be refreshments after the concert. Donations will be accepted. For information, call (352) 588-8320.

## SURVIVING DIVORCE

Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, 2348 Collier Parkway in Land O' Lakes, will offer a 6:30 p.m. Sunday healing ministry for 12 weeks running, in two parts, on Feb. 11 and April 8. Signup for the spring session by Feb. 25. A video presentation and group discussion will highlight each session, and each meeting opens and closes with a short prayer and light refreshments. For information, call Cathy Moreland at (913) 485-7076.

## DANCERS AND DRUMMERS

The Jimmie B. Keel Regional Library, 2902 W. Bearss Ave., in Carrollwood, will celebrate Black History Month Feb. 11 at 2 p.m., with a performance by the Kuumba Dancers and Drummers. There will be traditional African music, dance, storytelling and audience participation, for all ages. For information, call (813) 273-3652, or visit [HCPLC.org](http://HCPLC.org). Groups must register in advance.

## LECTURE AND BRUNCH

Congregation Kol Ami, 3919 Moran Road in Tampa, will host a lecture and brunch Feb. 11 at 10 a.m. The guest speaker will be Andrew Warren, state attorney of the 13th Judicial Court in Hillsborough County. The topic will be criminal justice reform. For information, call (813) 962-6338.

## COUNTRY MUSIC CONCERT

Grace Lutheran Church, 3714 Linebaugh Ave., in Carrollwood, will host the Redhead Express, an American country music band of four sisters, Feb. 11 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The quartet consists of the fiddle, guitar, banjo, bass and other acoustical instruments, covering a range of genres from gospel, blues, jazz, bluegrass, folk and country. To register for the free concert, call (813) 961-8747, ext. 204, and leave a message with your name, email address and the number of guests, or email [redheadconcert@gmail.com](mailto:redheadconcert@gmail.com).

## CLASSIC MOVIE

Tampa Theatre, 711 N. Franklin St., will show the movie "Stand by Me" Feb. 11 at 3 p.m., as part of its Retro/Rewind Mashup of Totally '80s Classic Movies. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for theater members. For information, visit [TampaTheatre.org](http://TampaTheatre.org).

## CANTORS AND SOLOISTS

The Bay Area Cantorial Association will present its 15th annual concert, "American Jewish Voices!" with cantors and cantorial soloists, Feb. 11 at 3 p.m., at Congregation Beth Am, 2030 W. Fletcher Ave., in Tampa. Tickets are \$18 and available at the door. All donations will be accepted. Proceeds will benefit scholarships for cantorial students of Reform and Conservative Sacred Music Study and publication of sacred Jewish music. For information, call (813) 968-8511.

## DECIPHERING HANDWRITING

The Lutz Branch Library, 101 W. Lutz-Lake Fern Road, will offer a program on "Genealogy: Deciphering Handwriting" Feb. 12 at 11:15 a.m., for adults. The guest speaker will be Kelly Whitelock of Tampa Bay Roots. For information, call (813) 273-3652, or visit [HCPLC.org](http://HCPLC.org). Groups must register in advance.

## DONATE TO FLEA MARKET

The GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Women's Club will accept donations for its annual Old Lutz School Flea Market every Monday and Wednesday, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., starting Feb. 12 at the Old Lutz school, 18819 U.S. 41. Donations of books, clothing, shoes, household items, small appliances, kitchen wares, accessories, décor items, tools, toys and more, will be accepted in clean and working order. Larger furniture can be dropped off the last week of February. No large appliances, TVs or sleeper sofas. The flea market is scheduled for March 2 and March 3. For information, call (813) 598-6945.

## 'FLYING DRAGONS' SEMINAR

The Lutz Branch Library, 101 W. Lutz-Lake Fern Road, will offer "Master Gardener: Dragonflies and Damselflies" Feb. 12 at 6:30 p.m. The guest speaker will be Virginia Overstreet on the common dragonfly and damselfly species in the area, fun facts about the insects, and ways to attract them to a garden. For information, call (813) 273-3652.

## TEEN PHOTOGRAPHY

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will offer a monthly teen photography program for ages 13 to 18. Participants can learn new aspects of photography and create something. The next meeting is Feb. 12 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., in the Foundry. Registration and a completion of all forms is required. Call (813) 929-1214.

## PARTY WITH THE PRESIDENTS

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will offer a Tinkering Tuesday program called "Party with the Presidents" Feb. 13 at 6:30 p.m., for kindergarten through fifth grade. There will be activities and experiments with a Presidents' Day theme. For information, call (813) 929-1214.

## NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

The Nature Coast Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will meet Feb. 13 at 7 p.m., at Land O' Lakes Heritage Park (formerly Land O' Lakes Community Center), 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd. The guest speaker will be Sid Taylor on the topic of "Habitat Diversity in the Withlacoochee State Forest." The presentation will include an overview of recreational opportunities, with a sampling of critters and plants within the habitats. There will be light refreshments and a native plant drawing. For information, call Sandy Vanno at (727) 207-1853.

## PLANNING MEETING

The planning committee for Appreciate Pasco (scheduled for April 14) will meet on Tuesdays at the Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway. The next meeting is Feb. 13 at 5 p.m. For information, call (813) 956-8661, or email [pascoactivists@gmail.com](mailto:pascoactivists@gmail.com).

## ART SALE

The Friends of the Hugh Embry Library, 14215 Fourth St., in Dade City, will host a Friends' Art Sale Feb. 14 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. For information, call (352) 567-3576.

## CITIZEN'S ACADEMY

The Zephyrhills Public Library, 5347 Eighth St., will host a Citizen's Academy Feb. 14 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Zephyrhills City employees will make presentations on various departments within the city. For information, call (813) 780-0064.

## TEEN GAME ZONE

The Lutz Branch Library, 101 W. Lutz-Lake Fern Road, will offer a Teen Game Zone Feb. 14 at 3:30 p.m. There will be games such as Super Smash Brothers Brawl, Just Dance, Wii Sports and more. For information, call (813) 273-3652.

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# Mission 22 helps fight the war on veteran suicides

By B.C. Manion  
bcmanion@lakerlutznews.com

U.S. military personnel are trained to go into combat and face deadly dangers, but it turns out that adjusting to life after leaving active duty can sometimes pose greater perils.

That was the message that Shawn Huber brought to the Jan. 23 luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club of Lutz at the Heritage Harbor Country Club.

Huber, an ambassador for Mission 22, talked about that organization's efforts to reduce the number of veterans who lose their lives to suicide.

An estimated 20 veterans die by suicide each day, according to research by the department of Veterans Affairs.

It's a problem that led to the creation of Mission 22, said Huber, noting that he went to high school with one of the group's original founders.

"What Mission 22 is looking for is financial donations to get these guys through treatment," he said. It also needs ambassadors to help organize local events.

So many wounded warriors have injuries that cannot be seen, Huber said.

"People are like: 'How do you know when people are going through this?'"

"You don't."

"If you're missing an arm or a leg, I know you've been injured, right? But, if you don't show any outward sign of injury — it's all internal — people pass it off as if there is nothing wrong with you," Huber said.

"The thing about military families — the wives and children know that Dad comes and goes. 'What happens when Dad comes



Shawn Huber, an ambassador for Mission 22, talks about the problem of military veteran suicides during a Rotary Club of Lutz meeting on Jan. 23. An estimated 20 veterans die by suicide each day, according to research by the department of Veteran Affairs.

B.C. MANION

home and stays home. They don't know how to handle them. They try to 'fix' them," Huber said.

Veterans leave the service, where they were part of a team and had a specific role, to return to society, where they are no

longer part of that team and can't find a job that correlates with the one they left, Huber said.

"You were trained to do a job, and that job doesn't exist," Huber said.

Many are suffering from PTSD, too.

"They start drinking. They're doing drugs," he said.

"There are people that I've talked to — who have been on between 25 and 47 different drugs at once," Huber added.

Some people who end their life by suicide choose that route, he said, because "in their minds, sometimes, this is the easiest way for them not put a burden on their friends and their family," Huber added.

When someone ends his or her life, people often wonder: "What is the one thing that pushes them over the edge?" Huber said. "It's not one thing."

And, it's often not easy to tell who might need some help, Huber added.

"You very rarely will find out who in your neighborhood is coming back from the military, unless they're damaged physically and they're missing a limb," he said.

"We want to create awareness," Huber added.

"What I've volunteered to do is that when people are ready and they want to make a change in their lives, I take them from where they are, to better, he said.

Mission 22 has two treatment programs that focus on Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The goal is not to medicate and mask the problems our veterans are facing, but to heal them. The creation of these Mission 22 Healing Projects will allow us to support even more veterans through groundbreaking treatments.

One program can be done at home, and the other is done at a treatment facility in North Carolina.

For specifics about each program, visit Mission22.com.

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# Florida and Tampa Bay have bright prospects, economist says

By Kevin Weiss

kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

Florida and Tampa Bay will be in good economic shape for 2018 and beyond, an economist for Florida Taxwatch predicts.

Kyle Baltuch, who also is director of development at Florida Taxwatch, offered that assessment during a Feb. 2 luncheon hosted by the Pasco Economic Development Council.

He said his optimism stems in part from strides made last year.

He pointed to Florida's gross domestic product growth of 3.1 percent in 2017. That made Florida sixth in the nation and outpaced the state's main competitors of New York, California and Texas.

A low unemployment rate (3.6 percent in 2017), combined with a strong housing and rental market (permit activity increased by 14.8 percent) and growth in industries like construction and management, are other positive indicators for the state going forward, Baltuch explained.

"Looking at the state as a whole we had a pretty strong 2017," he added.

Florida's economy is expected to reach

the \$1 trillion mark sometime this year.

To put that in perspective, Florida would rank as the 16th largest economy in the world, if it was a country.

Florida is a major player, he said, adding that he believes confidence in the economy will continue to have a positive effect on its growth.

Tampa meanwhile, is expected to have the second highest Gross Metro Product in all of Florida's Metropolitan Statistical Areas in 2018.

Baltuch suggested one of the region's largest and growing industries — the financial, insurance, real estate and leasing sector — is a positive indicator for at least the next few years.

"You want to be strong in those fields," he said. "If you're doing strong in real estate, you're doing strong in rental. That means you have people that want to live in your area, and you have the jobs to pay for those."

Other industries, including construction and phosphate mining, also have helped diversify Tampa's economy, Baltuch said.

Some of Tampa's major developments

are another encouraging sign, he said.

For example, MetLife is expanding its Tampa operations with 430 additional high-wage jobs.

Strategic Property Partners, a real estate development company owned by Tampa Bay Lighting owner Jeff Vinik, is designing an innovation hub in downtown Tampa. And, downtown Tampa is also the top pick for the new Tampa Bay Rays stadium.

"Tampa is absolutely on the upswing," Baltuch said.

Elsewhere, the economist specifically praised Pasco County for creating jobs in the advanced manufacturing and information technology arenas. He expects the percentage of Pasco residents to live and work in the county to increase over the next five years to 10 years.

"Everybody, for years, thought of Pasco as a bed county for Tampa, but what we're seeing here is more and more jobs created in the right area, and in the right fields," Baltuch explained.

As for improvements, Baltuch said investing in infrastructure must be Florida's top priority, particularly for attracting

major corporations.

The state received a "C" grade on its infrastructure report card for 2017.

"Infrastructure is an issue here in Florida, an issue here in Tampa. The more we can get ahead of that curve, the stronger you're going to better prepare yourself for the future," he said.

Other priorities include improving the state's education system at the kindergarten through 12th grade level, as well as the state college level, he said.

While Florida personal income grew 3.1 percent in 2017, per capita personal income growth ranked in the bottom 20 among all states, according to Florida Taxwatch.

Baltuch explained much of that personal income gain is by transients from other states moving to Florida for jobs.

"We really need to work on that education gap because that will help us keep some of the jobs in the state. You'd love to be filling those jobs by people that are already here," he said.

Florida Taxwatch is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit taxpayer research institute located in Tallahassee.

## Sinkhole response: Fence and landscaping?

By Kathy Steele

ksteele@lakerlutznews.com

Pasco County likely will opt to close off a sinkhole that swallowed two houses in Lake Padgett Estates with a fence and landscaping, to mimic, as much as possible, the appearance of a retention pond.

Consultants say that other options, including rebuilding Ocean Pines Drive, would risk additional environmental damage.

Consultants also recommend against building cul-de-sacs near the sinkhole, which Pasco County officials had hoped garbage trucks and emergency vehicles could use.

Instead, the county will determine if a "hammerhead" turn-around would be feasible if it is placed on an easement next to a

residence, but at a safe distance from the sinkhole.

Kevin Guthrie, assistant county administrator for public safety, outlined those recommendations at a recent workshop with the Pasco County Commission.

No decision has been made yet, and Guthrie plans to meet with area residents to review the consultant's report.

If the county installs the fence and landscaping, Ocean Pines would remain closed off at the site of the sinkhole.

On one side of the sinkhole, it would retain its current name. The other side would be renamed.

Estimates on fencing and landscaping were pegged at about \$50,000 during an October workshop to review options.

According to consultants, rebuilding the

roadway with sheet piles driven underground would create strong vibrations and risk unsettling the sinkhole and surrounding areas.

At any time, even 20 years into the future, the road could collapse, Guthrie said.

"We may put people in danger by doing so," he said. "Even to put a cul-de-sac, we may do more harm to the environment."

The sinkhole opened on July 14, 2017, at 21825 Ocean Pines Drive. It eventually swallowed two houses, a motorcycle and a boat.

Seven additional houses have been condemned as unsafe.

The county approved \$1.3 million for initial cleanup and stabilization of the site.

At an October workshop, county commissioners had reviewed a range of options.

• Build a fence around the sinkhole with



FILE  
A sinkhole on Ocean Pines Drive in Lake Padgett Estates opened up in July 2017 and swallowed two houses.

a cul-de-sac on each side, at an estimated cost of \$1.7 million

• Connect the sinkhole to Lake Saxon with a cul-de-sac to each side of the lake, at a cost of \$2.5 million

• Rebuild Ocean Pines Drive, which runs between the sinkhole, at a cost of \$800,000

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For information, all (813) 929-1214.

### SERTOMA FAMILY SUPPORT

Sertoma Speech & Hearing Foundation of Florida will host a free Family Support Group meeting Feb. 8 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at the New Port Richey Public Library, 5939 Main St.

The meeting will have a Valentine's Day theme, and will include an informational speaker and fun activities for the kids.

Virtual attendance will also be available.

Participants will be entered to win a four-pack movie ticket bundle. Go to [Facebook.com/SertomaFL](https://www.facebook.com/SertomaFL) and like to page to be eligible.

To RSVP, call (727) 312-3881, or email [info@familyhearinghelp.org](mailto:info@familyhearinghelp.org).

### HEALTHY EATING

The Zephyrhills Public Library, 5347 Eighth St., will offer "Healthy Eating Produces Healthy Living," Feb. 8 from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

This is a series of book reports followed by informative discussions.

For information and to RSVP, call (813) 780-0064.

### ALZHEIMER'S FUNDRAISER

Dementia Redefined will host "The Family Fun Scoop," a family fundraiser and mountain bike race, Feb. 10 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Alafia River State Park, 14326 S. County Road 39 in Lithia.

The event aims to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

There will be open trail riding before and after races, face painting, balloon figures, a picture booth, picnic food for sale, raffle giveaways, bike rentals on site, a children's playground and more.

The park opens and registration begins at 8 a.m. A regular park admission fee applies: \$4 per person or \$5 per vehicle of 2 people to 8 people.

For race details and information, visit [DementiaRedefined.com](http://DementiaRedefined.com).

### EXERCISE AND WEIGHT

Access Health Care Physicians, 5382 Spring Hill Drive in Spring Hill, will offer a lecture on exercise and weight management Feb. 12 at 1 p.m., for anyone diagnosed with diabetes mellitus and family.

Reservations are required. For information, call (352) 200-2190.

### HEART-SMART OILS

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will host "Heart Smart Essential Oils" Feb. 13 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., to promote cardiovascular health, for ages 16 and older.

Participants can make an anxiety-reducing mist and take it home.

Proper dress code, registration and signed liability waiver are required.

For information, call (813) 929-1214.

### PROSTATE SUPPORT

Florida Cancer Affiliates, 3611 Little Road in Trinity, will offer the "Man-to-Man" prostate cancer support group meeting Feb. 13 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Continued on next page



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Dr. Colon-Rivera earned her medical degree from Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara, Mexico. Active member of the Puerto Rico, Florida & American Medical Associations; American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology; American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. "I want my patients to know that I care for them, that I'm part of their team and that their health & concerns are my priority."

Obstetrics and Gynecology of Trinity is pleased to welcome Dr. Colon-Rivera to our team of physicians.

Our skilled and friendly team provides high quality, comprehensive and personalized medical care for women in all stages of life. Services include routine gynecological and pregnancy care, family planning and surgical procedures.

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### CHAIR YOGA

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will offer a new chair yoga program Feb. 8 at 11:30 a.m.

The fitness goal for the program is to improve balance and increase endurance, flexibility and range of motion.

The class is taught in seated and standing positions.

Participants should bring water, wear comfortable clothing, and bring a yoga mat, towel or blanket if you want to relax on the floor for the final pose.

For information, call (813) 929-1214.

### TAI CHI CLASSES

The Land O' Lakes Library, 2818 Collier Parkway, will offer Bonnie's Tai Chi class Feb.

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Topics will include early detection, signs and symptoms, prognosis, disease stages, incontinence, impotence, treatment options, and the latest research and treatment modalities.

Refreshments will be served.

For information and reservations, call Dennis Brown at (727) 203-6713.

### HEART FAILURE SYMPOSIUM

The Heart Institute at Oak Hill Hospital will present its Heart Failure Symposium on Feb. 13 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at the Silverthorn Country Club, 4550 Golf Club

Lane in Brooksville.

The symposium, "Living with Heart Failure," will feature Dr. Mowaffak Atfeh, board certified in cardiovascular disease, interventional cardiology and internal medicine; and, Dr. Salman Muddassir, board certified in internal medicine.

There also will be a question-and-answer session.

Doors open at 5 p.m. A complimentary healthy, hot meal will be served.

Reservations are required.

For information or to register, call (352) 597-6333, or visit OakHillHospital.com.



Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel had a ribbon cutting to celebrate the opening of its Central Pasco ER in Land O' Lakes.

COURTESY OF FLORIDA HOSPITAL-WEST FLORIDA DIVISION

The Medical Center of Trinity's new ER 24-7, in Lutz, is now open at 1430 Dale Mabry Highway.



COURTESY OF MEDICAL CENTER OF TRINITY

## New ER services available for local residents

By Mary Rathman

[mrathman@lakerlutznews.com](mailto:mrathman@lakerlutznews.com)

Two new emergency rooms have opened in Pasco County, giving local residents more convenient choices in times of need.

Florida Hospital Wesley Chapel opened the doors to its new free-standing Florida Hospital Central Pasco ER in Land O' Lakes, located offsite from the hospital, on State Road 54, just east of the Suncoast Parkway. The hospital expanded its health services in order to serve more residents in the growing area of central Pasco County.

Construction began last spring, and the new 18,000-square-foot facility features a year-round full-service emergency department with 24 beds and state-of-the-art on-site imaging, such as X-ray, ultrasound, CT scan and onsite laboratory services.

The new emergency room is staffed with board-certified emergency medicine

physicians, as well as nurses who specialize in emergency care.

Ambulance services also will be offered for patients who come to the Central Pasco ER and need to be admitted to the hospital.

The offsite emergency room officially began to treat patients on Jan. 29.

The Medical Center of Trinity's new free-standing emergency department, ER 24-7, in Lutz, is now open at 1430 Dale Mabry Highway, next to Walmart.

The facility offers access to emergency care 24-hours a day, seven days a week, with a multitude of resources for acute care of a serious illness or injury.

The full-service ER provides more advanced emergency services than an urgent care center and will accept patients via ambulance. It also has onsite CT scan, ultrasound and laboratory services, and is staffed by physicians board-certified in emergency care and nurses with emergency care experience and certifications.

## The Many Benefits of a Woman-Owned Business

Behind every successful business there is a leader whose vision has shaped the company as it overcame the challenges of growth. Dana Spears is that leader at Cornerstone Air Conditioning, Plumbing & Electrical, one of Pasco's most successful family businesses.

Dana has lead Cornerstone for the past 12 years. Her determination and never-give-up attitude has resulted in the company growing from six to sixty employees, and serving more than 40,000 customers. It is also evident by Cornerstone's new 6,000-square-foot warehouse that is currently under construction at its Land O' Lakes location on U.S. 41.

Dana attributes much of her company's success to being a woman-owned business.

"Women understand that nothing is more important than being customer centered. It's the little things that we do in the first 30 seconds that sets the tone for exceeding customer expectations," said Dana.

"When people call, they assume we have the technical expertise to solve their problem," she continues. "What they remember is how they felt when they first talked to our customer service rep, or first meet our technician at their door. It's the kind, helpful voice, the clean uniform, the shoe covers, that set us apart."

Every Cornerstone employee is trained to the company's high customer service standards.

"As a wife and mom of five, I know how it feels to allow someone into your home," Dana explains. "When we send a tech to a customer's home, I feel just like I am sending them to my own home. Over two-thirds of our calls come from the woman in the family, and as a woman, I fully understand her concerns and expectations when she allows someone into her home."

Cornerstone was founded in 2006 as an air conditioning service company. In 2012, it expanded into plumbing services, and two years later added electrical services.

"We expanded because our customers kept asking if we could provide other home improvement services," said Dana. "They trusted us and were comfortable having us in their homes, and we wanted to accommodate them."



Dana Spears

All of Cornerstone's technicians are specialists who have specific training in their field. "This means our A/C guys are experts at air conditioning, and do not go out on plumbing and electrical calls," said Dana. "We have certified plumbers and electricians for those calls."

Cornerstone warranties all of its work, and has a dedicated team of experienced technicians who follow up on any warranty problem. There is no charge for this service, and techs keep coming back until the problem is 100 percent resolved.

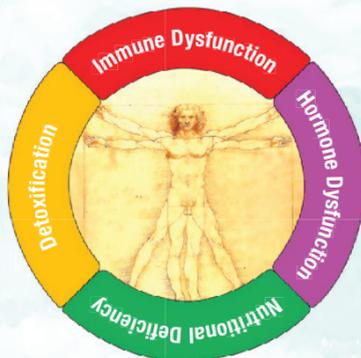
Cornerstone also maintains a separate maintenance department for customers who want regular cleaning services and preventative checkups. These technicians focus on service only, and do not promote additional services or products during their visits.

"We are successful because we've built our business on reputation and trust," said Dana. "We always stand behind the work of our employees, and go above and beyond customer expectations. Every one of our employees strive to make this happen every day."

Cornerstone phones are answered 24/7, and technicians are available around the clock, including weekends and holidays. Call (813) 949-4445 anytime, day or night. For more information, visit their website at [CornerstonePros.com](http://CornerstonePros.com).

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## Chalk Talk

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

### SAINT LEO HONORS HOMETOWN HEROES

Saint Leo University will host a Hometown Heroes Night Feb. 24, welcoming veterans and first responders from the community and Saint Leo student-veterans, military students, and faculty and staff members who served in the military to the evening's basketball games.

Saint Leo will honor the heroes during the games.

The women's basketball game against Rollins College starts at 5:30 p.m.

The men's game will be at 7:30 p.m., taking on the Tars.

Both will be played at the Marion Bowman Activities Center, 33701 State Road 52 in St. Leo.

Admission is free for veterans, active duty military, and first responders, including law enforcement, emergency medical, and fire personnel.

For information or special accommodations, email Franck Bayebanen at [franck.bayebanen@saintleo.edu](mailto:franck.bayebanen@saintleo.edu).

### FOUR-YEAR SCHOLARSHIPS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

Saint Leo University is looking for college-bound high school seniors who want to study computer science or mathematics for a special four-year scholarship and academic program the school has underway.

Saint Leo plans to admit eight high-achieving students as Emerging Math and Computer Science Scholars in the fall at University Campus in east Pasco County.

Recurring scholarships of up to \$10,000 will be available to each admitted scholar, as long as academic standards are met.

The EMACS program scholarships were made possible through a grant from the National Science Foundation.

Applications for fall acceptance are due March 1.

For information, email Vyas Krishnan at [vyas.krishnan@saintleo.edu](mailto:vyas.krishnan@saintleo.edu).

### MENTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

Each January, Take Stock in Children celebrates Mentor Appreciation Month, a month devoted to the dedicated men and women in the Pasco County community who volunteer time while playing a vital role in their mentee's success.

Take Stock in Children, which provides scholarships, mentors and hope, has more than 10,000 mentors contributing more than 2 million volunteer hours across the state since 1995.

There are currently 130 individuals within Pasco County who volunteer and provide motivation, encouragement and friendship to scholars.

The statewide program gives Pasco County students, whose families meet income eligibility guidelines, an opportunity to receive up to a four-year college scholarship in partnership with the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

For information, visit [TakeStockPasco.org](http://TakeStockPasco.org).

### LOTTERY CELEBRATES EDUCATION CONTRIBUTIONS

The Florida Lottery celebrates its 30th year in operation, marking three decades of achievement and contributions to education.

Since 1988, the Lottery has contributed more than \$32 billion to education, including more than \$1 billion annually for each of the past 15 consecutive fiscal years.

The Lottery is also the primary funding source for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

### STUDENTS EXPERIENCE OPERA

Hillel Academy students experienced opera on stage at the Opera Tampa dress rehearsal of Gioachino Rossini's comic opera, "The Barber of Seville," at the Straz Center for the Performing Arts.

Students also had the chance to participate in a workshop by Opera Tampa members, where they learned the operatic art form, opera etiquette, and various operatic voices.

Select academy students will be interviewed for a video to be presented at the Opera Tampa Gala in April at the Straz Center.

Hillel Academy is Tampa's only accredited Jewish day school.

For information, call (813) 963-2242.



COURTESY OF JONATHAN SHOEMAKER, SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY

### Students focus on community service

Saint Leo University students package meals for Feeding Children Everywhere, to help eradicate hunger and poverty, in memory of Martin Luther King Jr. King's legacy of accepting others' differences, raising people up, and helping the less fortunate, which was recognized during the school's A Day On, Not Off. The school's goal was to package 70,000 meals for the Tampa area.

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## BOND, from page 1A

on the floor or on cots, as jail cells routinely are filled to capacity, Nocco said.

"The rate of growth is tremendous," he said. "The need for public safety is there."

Sheriff's officials have looked at two options to relieve overcrowding.

One would involve agreements with other counties to house Pasco's inmates. Of nine counties contacted, Polk and Seminole counties responded.

Polk would house up to 200 inmates daily at a cost of about \$8.2 million a year. Seminole would house 50 inmates daily at a cost of about \$1.4 million.

Those costs don't include transportation or medical costs, Nocco said.

The second option would be to lease stainless steel trailers to place on jail property. More than 100 inmates could be housed in six trailers. A three-year lease would cost about \$1.9 million.

Fencing, camera security systems, food, and additional staff would be needed as well, for an estimated cost of about \$900,000, the sheriff said.

Both options would be temporary solutions until the existing jail could be expanded, Nocco said.

Pasco's fire rescue department also has challenges in responding to emergency calls as the county's population explodes.

"We're responding to more calls every day as a result of population growth," said Pasco Fire Chief Scott Cassin.

Currently, there generally are no new stations being built "where people are moving," Cassin said.

One exception is a new fire station at Overpass Road in Wesley Chapel in an area booming with new development, including master-planned communities of Epperson and Mirada. Construction is slated to begin in May or June, Cassin said.

The need for more fire stations is apparent from current data, he added.

On Jan. 22, Cassin said there were 265 emergency calls. Response time for 90 percent of those calls was under 15 minutes, but he said, "The (call volume) is going off the chart."

In 2017, fire rescue responded to about 71,000 emergency calls. That is expected to increase to about 100,000 in the next eight years.

To cover the county, about 65 percent of the time, fire trucks are sent to locations outside their assigned zones, which impacts response times, said Cassin.

In the next four years, Cassin said four new stations should be built.

They would be located at Suncoast Parkway and State Road 52; State Road 52 and Majestic Parkway; Meadow Pointe, by State Road 56; and Bexley, off State Road 54. In addition, five stations need to be expanded and upgraded, he said.

They would be at U.S. 41 and Central Boulevard; Seven Springs Boulevard; U.S. 19 and Cross Bayou Boulevard; Shady Hills; and, Crystal Springs.

If the bond were approved, the county would still need to find money for operational costs.

"That is something we'd have to figure out how to do," said Pasco County Administrator Dan Biles.

County commissioners also face funding needs for necessary repairs and upgrades at county parks, and improvements to county libraries.

Pasco County Commissioner Kathryn Starkey would like to include parks and libraries in the same bond as the jails and fire rescue.

"Can't we get revenue for capital repairs for a few more dollars?" Starkey said.

During the economic recession, funding for parks and libraries were repeatedly cut.

"There's no doubt the parks have been stripped and stripped," said Pasco County Chairman Mike Wells Jr.

Biles said he would provide additional information on funding parks and libraries at the Feb. 13 workshop.

## LOUD, from page 1A

saulted or beaten.

Besides making people more aware of the problem, the event aims to spread the message that it's time to break the silence about these forms of violence, which are sometimes deadly.

Wiregrass Ranch senior Gabby Azzolina led the efforts to bring the event to her school. She said people don't realize the extent of the problem, and survivors don't know where to turn for help.

"So many people don't know there are facilities to help and numbers to call," Azzolina said. "I want them to know that it's

OK to get loud about it, and break the silence. The Crisis Center's number is 2-1-1."

Mathematics teacher Amy Munroe helped Azzolina to organize the event at Wiregrass Ranch.

Munroe said she was happy to help when she was asked. She hopes that more people will begin talking about the problem, as a result of the event.

"Just to be able to talk about it, is a big deal," Munroe said.

Dottie Urbanek Nash, director of education and prevention for Sunrise, said these kinds of events are important.

"Awareness campaigns like this are wonderful. They do a lot to get the word out about what's happening, locally.

Unfortunately, we tend to think that domestic violence doesn't happen here," she said.

It's also important for people to know there are ways to help prevent these types of violence, she said.

The Wiregrass Ranch event evolved out of a conversation between Gabby's mom, Madeline Azzolina, and Denise Cassidy, whose daughter, Katie, initiated the first "Get Loud!" event at Robinson High School two years ago.

After Katie graduated, her sister, Carolina, got involved, and now — Robinson, Plant and Hillsborough high schools in Tampa have "Get Loud!" events.

Wiregrass Ranch intends to make this an annual event, Munroe said.

### Some sobering statistics

- One of every three women have been victims of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner within her lifetime. The same is true for one in every four men.
- One in five women has been sexually assaulted.
- One in seven women has been stalked. The same is true for one in 18 men.
- Nearly two-thirds of all sexual assaults are not reported to the police.
- Do you need help? Call 2-1-1

Source: The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

## AWARENESS, from page 1A

pecially when operating a vehicle.

"Marijuana alters your judgment, and it's something you shouldn't be doing before you get behind the wheel of a car," said panelist Jessica Boh, who's in her final year at the University of Florida's College of Pharmacy.

Pasco Sheriff deputy Barry Nixon, another panelist, many times has witnessed the effects of those driving under the influence of marijuana.

Nixon explained many of his marijuana-related DUI arrests have been those traveling over 100 miles per hour, usually in a 45 mph zone.

"When you smoke marijuana, your heart rate goes up, your pulse goes up," Nixon said.

"The impairment effects can last in your body for 24 hours. Just like with pain medication or anything, you don't know how long

it's going to affect you or what it's going to do. ... You don't know what it does for you."

Recreational drugs aren't the only problems, however.

Drugged driving can also extend to over-the-counter medications and prescription medications, Boh explained.

"The reality is, any medication can affect your ability to drive," she said.

Her advice is to read prescription labels and consult a pharmacist on how different drugs can affect driving and how it may interact with other medications.

"It's your responsibility to know whether or not those medications impair you," Boh said.

"If it makes you dizzy or lightheaded, it's probably not a good idea to take it and then get behind the wheel of a car. There's a lot of dangerous interactions that can happen with over-the-counter medications and prescription medications."

## SEEKING SOLUTIONS

The topic of drug culture also was discussed during the event.

Panelist James Lear set the blame on pop culture, particularly for negatively influencing millennials by glamorizing drug use.

Lear is a medical consultant at Becton Dickinson and has worked in the pharmacy industry for nearly 30 years, with expertise in a drug diversion programming.

"Shun pop culture," Lear said. "Find somewhere else to find your values from."

Lear also urged students to look out for each other and not fall into the peer pressure of abusing drugs and alcohol.

In the event of drug or alcohol use, he advised students to call a cab or ride-sharing service, like Uber or Lyft, instead of getting behind the wheel. "There's no excuse to not make sure you have a safe way home," he said.

Lear also encouraged students to get in-

involved in their community and local politics to influence regulatory measures on public safety issues.

"Change your world. Change the way you live in it, and be an influence for good," Lear said.

Since that tragic day in 2015, the Leonard family created a website, StopDruggedDriving.net, to educate and raise awareness about drugged driving and drugged driving fatalities, as well as provide resources for those struggling with addiction. They've also been advocates for strengthening penalties for drugged driving.

"Our prayer is that one day drugged driving will cease to exist and other families will never have to put up with the tragic loss of loved ones that we have," Tammy Leonard said.

For more information, visit StopDruggedDriving.net.



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## Zephyrhills a hotbed for shuffleboard

By Kevin Weiss

kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

The Betmar Acres community customarily hosts one of the state's largest three-day shuffleboard tournaments every January, and this year was no different.

The Florida Shuffleboard Association (FSA) Betmar Winter Open Tournament drew 50 men's doubles teams and 34 women's teams — 168 players total — all competing for a state championship and point positioning.

Tavares, Deland, Leesburg, Sebring, Fort Pierce, Bradenton and Hawthorne were just some of the many cities represented by professional and amateur shufflers alike.

But, it was locals who reigned supreme.

Zephyrhills residents Bonnie Collins and Sue Dick claimed the women's championship, out-dueling Glenna Earle and Diane Beardsley, another Zephyrhills-based team.

On the men's side, the Zephyrhills duo of Henry Strong and Earl Ball ousted Bradenton's Dave Kudro and Ron Nurnberger in the finals.

The tournament ran from Jan. 29 to Jan. 31.

Ball, 73, was the center of attention throughout, sporting his signature green jacket and medallions for the many championships he has won regionally and internationally.

Ball, a resident of Betmar, recently became just the third player to amass 1,000 career points within the Florida Shuffleboard Association (FSA) — joining Clearwater's Glen Peltier (1,364 points) and fellow Betmar resident Joan Cook (1,049 points).

Besides employing varied shuffleboard tactics, Ball had another weapon on his side — home-court advantage.

"Being home I know all the courts," he said, "so playing 'kitchen' becomes easier."

Having an established longtime partner didn't hurt, either. His cohort, Strong, currently ranks 12th in the state with nearly 600 career points. "My partner's an outstanding player. He's a Hall of Fame player," Ball said.

Glenn Monroe has served as the Florida Shuffleboard Association's head tournament director since 2005.

Of the countless shufflers Monroe's witnessed, he said Ball and Strong "are probably some of the best strategists in the game right now."

"They're just very good at what they do. They know what the right shot is to take to put pressure on their opponent. They know what their opponents' tendencies are — and they'll play against those tendencies," Monroe explained.

Shuffleboard, or floor shuffleboard, is a game in which players use cues to push weighted discs, sending them gliding down a narrow court, with the purpose of having them come to rest within a marked scoring triangle-shaped area — where different parts of the triangle have varied point values. Matches can be played in singles or doubles.

"The strategy of the game is keeping your opponent from scoring while scoring yourself," Monroe said, "and this is one of the few games where you can take points off your opponent's score, in what's called the 'kitchen.'"

"It's a very easy sport to learn, but very difficult to master because of the strategy involved in it. Anybody can learn to make a good shot, but the strategy involved in the

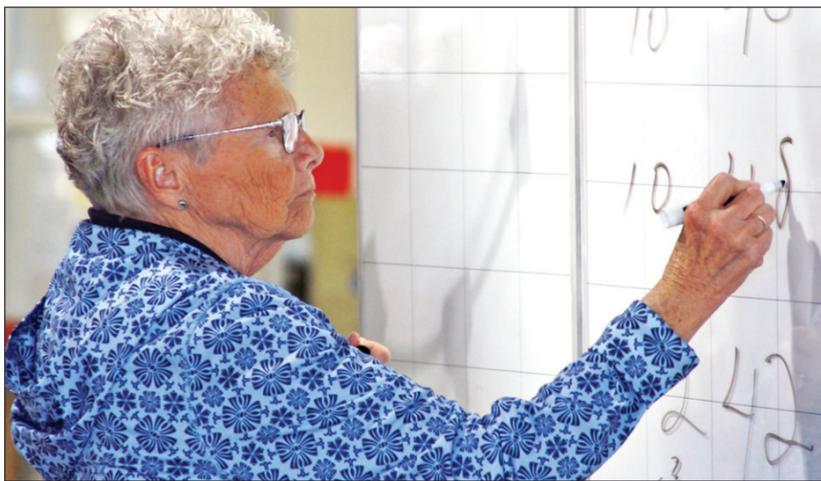


FRED BELLET

Bill Everett, left, a winter resident from Maine, shuffles off a disc during an elimination match at the Florida Shuffleboard Association, Betmar, Winter Shuffleboard Tournament. Visiting opponent Phil Reholz, of Fort Pierce, waits his turn.



Waiting her turn, Jan Metzger, a winter resident from Ohio, stands by with her cue and sizes up her strategy for her next turn during the Florida Shuffleboard Association, Betmar, Winter Shuffleboard Tournament held in Zephyrhills.



Linda Marshman, a winter resident from upstate New York, marks down the score of a match. Her husband, Bob, also played in the tournament.



Art Carlen holds a picture of his daughter, Brenda Carlen Zellner, who lost her battle with cancer. The tournament is named in her honor.

prosecution of the game is challenging," he said.

Kudro, current president of the FSA, likens the game to a combination of pool and chess.

"It's a multiple-facet game," he said.

"You make a move, they make a move, and you're trying to get 'checkmate' basically or just trying to score. There's much more than just shooting it down there and knocking it off," he added.

Shuffleboard is taken seriously in Zephyrhills, particularly among retirement communities like Betmar, which alone has 24 courts devoted to the game.

"It's the shuffleboard mecca for Florida — there's no question about that," Monroe, a resident of Lakeland, said.

"There are more players in the Zephyrhills area than anywhere else in the state. It's to the point where people will just move into this area to play shuffleboard."

Zephyrhills is situated in the central district, the largest in the FSA. The district, which also includes Lakeland and Sebring, encompasses more than 3,000 players between 58 clubs and about 580 courts.

"Downtown Zephyrhills and Betmar are probably the two best clubs in this district," said Lee Hutchins, a Betmar resident originally from Michigan.

"A lot of these people — this is all they do," he said.

Hutchins first got interested in the game about 10 years ago, picking it up from his father. He's been hooked ever since. "It kind of got in my blood," he said.

Hutchins and his shuffle partner won three matchups before running into the Ball-Strong world-beaters.

"People have been playing a long time, like Earl and Henry. They just stick together all the time," Hutchins added.

Glenna Earle, 73, described the Zephyrhills shuffleboard community as a "big, giant family."

Earle is a longtime member of the Zephyrhills Shuffleboard Club who recently was inducted into the FSA Hall of Fame after surpassing 200 career points.

"The thing that keeps us coming back is the people — the camaraderie and the people," she said.

"If anybody has problems, health issues,

or someone dies, everyone rallies around them and are there for each other. They're close-knit with this common interest — the shuffleboard game. But, when you get old like this, it's nice to have company when you're in trouble or whatever, and so it's a really rewarding experience."

That's the case for 87-year old Art Carlen.

For 12 years running, the Betmar Winter Open Tournament has been named in honor of his late daughter, Brenda Carlen-Zellner.

She lost her battle with cancer in 2005 at the age of 40 in Pennsylvania.

The elder Carlen started shuffling when he moved to Betmar in 1990. He continues to play regularly, appreciating its strategy and social aspects.

"First of all, it's excellent for exercise," he said, "and I've met so many nice people."

After an early elimination, Carlen stuck around to view the conclusion of the tournament.

He kept a watchful eye on Ball, pointing out he was one of his first instructors nearly 20 years ago. "He went way beyond me," Carlen said. "Gotta give him credit."

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### AATL SOFTBALL STANDOUT NAMED BEST 2019 RECRUIT

Academy at the Lakes softball pitching sensation Alexis Kilfoyl has been named the top prospect for the 2019 recruiting class, according to one website.

FloSoftball.com recently ranked Kilfoyl the No. 1 player in its "2019 Hot 100" rankings.

In its player evaluation of Kilfoyl, the website wrote the following:

"Kilfoyl brings a presence to the in-field when she steps into the circle and has established herself as one of the nation's most dominant pitchers. Selected to the USA Junior National Team last year, she was the youngest player at the tryout — and she was the youngest-ever selected to Team USA. She was clocked at 68 mph (miles per hour) consistently last fall and commands a devastating arsenal of pitches. The most lethal pitch could be her outstanding drop ball, which some feel is the best in the nation."

Kilfoyl, a University of Alabama verbal commit, returns to a Wildcats team that went 20-3 and reached the Class 2A region-



Alexis Kilfoyl

### FHSAA approves football playoff expansion

An expanded playoff format is coming to Florida high school football next season, as the Florida High School Athletic Association's (FHSAA) Board of Directors voted unanimously to add two teams per region to the Class 1A-4A playoffs.

The action was made during a meeting on Jan. 29.

Beginning with the 2018 season, six teams will qualify from each region for football's 1A-4A state series, increasing the playoffs from 16 to 24 teams.

In the first round the tournament's third seed will host its sixth seed; and the fourth seed will host the fifth seed. The top two seeds will receive byes.

The change affects three schools in The Laker/Lutz News coverage area: Carrollwood Day School (Class 2A), Zephyrhills Christian Academy (Class 2A) and Cypress Creek Middle High School (Class 4A).

The expanded playoff format gained a green light earlier this month by the FHSAA's Athletic Director Advisory

Committee and Football Coaches Advisory Committee.

The FHSAA passed the original playoff system in September 2016, as a measure to base football postseason berths on a points system in Classes 1A-4A, rewarding teams for winning records and strength of schedule; Classes 5A-8A are still in districts and eight teams in four regions get into the playoffs.

Also of note: The board unanimously voted to make the golf season a 16-contest regular season, up from 14 contests.



Committee and Football Coaches Advisory Committee.

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Also of note: The board unanimously voted to make the golf season a 16-contest regular season, up from 14 contests.

### SHANNON SAILE NAMED PRESEASON PITCHER OF THE YEAR

Former Land O' Lakes High softball standout Shannon Saile, now a sophomore pitcher at Florida International University, has been named 2018 Conference USA (C-USA) Preseason Pitcher of the Year and to the Preseason All-Conference Team. Saile is a year removed from C-USA Freshman of the



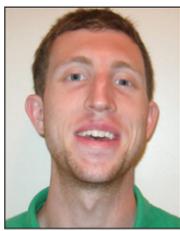
FILE  
Former Land O' Lakes High standout Shannon Saile is now generating buzz at Florida International University.

Year, First-Team All-C-USA and All-Freshman recognition.

In her 31 starts in 2017, Saile topped league pitchers with a 1.51 ERA, a .151 opponent batting average, 3.49 hits allowed per game, four saves, and 8.1 strikeouts per seven innings. Her eight shutouts, the most among the country's freshman, tied the conference lead, while her 240 strikeouts were good for second, tying the school's single-season record. Her presence in the circle, meanwhile, helped FIU set the school record for wins (46), win percentage (.754) and fewest losses (15) in a season en route to its third postseason appearance.

While at Land O' Lakes, Saile was a four-year softball and three-year volleyball standout. As a senior, she earned Third-Team All-America honors by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association.

## Reptiles rule at GatorWorld



### Worth the Trip

By Kevin Weiss  
kweiss@lakerlutznews.com

At this Central Florida tourist attraction, there are hundreds of alligators — to be seen, fed, and in some cases, touched.

GatorWorld Parks of Florida opened its gates to visitors of all ages last fall, in Wildwood, on State Route 44 in Sumter County.

The 15-acre park, off Interstate 75, is a family friendly attraction.

Visitors can drive through the park and have prime viewing of more than 400 alligators in their natural Florida habitat.

When they enter the park through the main gateway on Highway 44, visitors drive onto a gravel roadway that snakes through the front end of the park. As they drive along, visitors get close-up views of full-grown alligators lounging in roadside pools — behind protective fencing, of course.

Specially constructed pools surround the enclosed common areas for alligators to wander, simulating their natural habitat.

In another section of the park, visitors can feed smaller alligators from a raised platform by dangling poles — specifically built for that purpose — which often have a morsel of turkey sausage for the alligators.

For those who want a bit more adventure, it's even possible to hold and pet some of the baby alligators. These alligators, which are about a year old, have their snouts taped shut, to allow them to be safely caressed.

Just a handful of the park's alligators can be touched, since they've become socialized over time, said Gavin Courterier, a 17-year-old guide and alligator handler at GatorWorld.

"At first they were trying to not be held at all, but they get used to it. They stay pretty calm," Courterier said, as he gently held a baby alligator for guests to pet.

He noted, these young creatures grow about 2 inches to 3 inches a year, in their new, stable habitat. "They can control their heart rate and metabolism so that they don't grow too quick," he said.

Gavin's father, Casey Courterier, is also an alligator handler at the park.

He became comfortable with the reptilian species after several months of studying their tendencies, watching videos and learning to handle farm-raised alligators. The job now comes second nature to him.

"They're like dogs," Casey Courterier said, as he used the butt end of a rake to calmly direct a full-grown alligator in a pen. "They all have their own personalities. They'll let you know how close you can get. They talk just like a dog would. They hiss instead of growl. They'll get angry if I get into my feeding position with my bell and don't feed them. They'll make funny noises at you, like, 'Come on, get with the program.'"

Besides its unique offering to tourists, GatorWorld Park has created a sanctuary for alligators, young and old.

Park officials work with a network of



Young alligators wait on a platform for visitors to feed them from above with morsels of turkey sausage.

FRED BELLET

trappers, including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, to acquire its alligator stock.

The 400-plus alligators come from Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana, and even South America and northern Mexico.

The largest alligator on the property measures almost 13 feet. Countless others measure between 7 feet and 9 feet.

Some are rescued alligators. Others are nuisance alligators removed — which would have been sold for their hide and meat.

"They get to retire here peacefully, instead of being a nuisance to all of the golfers around the state at night, especially in The Villages," said Mary Wymer, who handles marketing and communications for GatorWorld.

In the secure environment, where they are fed and cared for, these alligators can live up to 80 years, compared to 40 years to 45 years in the wild.

"You can tell by their behavior a farm-raised (alligator) versus a nuisance," Casey Courterier said. "But, it only takes a short amount of time for them to calm down and enjoy the resort habitat they have."

GatorWorld was founded and developed by Don Buckner, an entrepreneur credited with starting Vac-Tron Equipment. That company, headquartered in Okahumpka, designs

and manufactures a brand of portable environmental vacuum clean-up equipment.

Buckner's idea for "building a business around alligators" has been in the works for years.

Buckner was part of a trade delegation to South America, back in 2000, accompanying Jeb Bush, who was then Florida's governor.

The Orlando Tourism Commission was on the trip, too, and Buckner took part in discussions about tourist interests in Florida. He soon learned that "seeing an alligator" ranks up there with visiting theme parks and the beach by out-of-state tourists visiting Florida.

Buckner developed the GatorWorld trademark around 2004, then decided to finally make it a reality after investing some capital in recent years.

"There's 110 million tourists that come to Florida every year," Buckner said, "so why not capitalize on some of that?"

Thinking outside the box, he conceived of a "drive-through" alligator park, where visitors could get a comprehensive experience



Founder of GatorWorld Parks of Florida Don Buckner said the time was right for GatorWorld Park.

### GatorWorld Parks of Florida

**DETAILS:** Park hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. GatorWorld Parks of Florida is closed Sundays.

**COST:** Entry fee for the drive-through park is \$22 per adult, with various discounts for veterans, children and seniors.

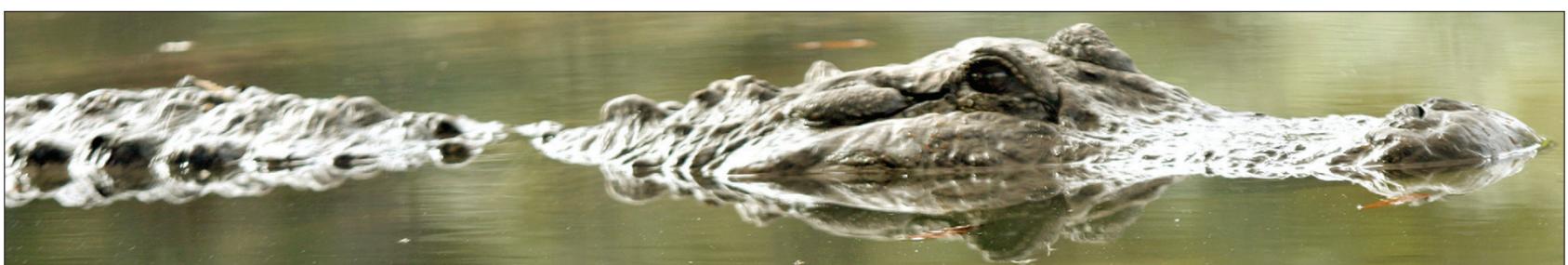
**INFO:** GatorWorldParks.com



GatorWorld Parks of Florida guide and alligator handler, Inverness resident, Gavin Courterier, 17, taped the mouth shut of a baby alligator before visitors were permitted to pet the creature. His father, Casey Courterier, handles the larger alligators.



Casey Courterier knows his alligators. Feeding and maintaining the alligator's environment, Courterier has no problem with the 7-foot, 8-foot and 9-foot alligators.



The eyes of an alligator appear as a mirror image in the still water, in one of the specially constructed areas where the alligators reside at GatorWorld Parks of Florida in Wildwood.

**CANINE RESCUES**

Carter's Canine Rescues will host a dog adoption event Feb. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Quality Pet Market, 1408 N. Dale Mabry Highway in Lutz.

There will be two 5-month-old puppies, as well as the father, up for adoption.

For information, call (813) 909-1767 or (813) 235-6366.

**TAIL WAGON STOPS**

Pasco County Animal Services' Tail Wagon will make these adoption stops:

- Feb. 17 from noon to 6:30 p.m., at the shelter, 19640 Dogpatch Lane in Land O' Lakes
- Feb. 24 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Rural King, 7422 Gall Blvd., in Zephyrhills

For information, call (813) 929-1212.

**ANIMAL RESCUE FESTIVAL & FUN-RAISER**

Gulfport's Get Rescued will host its 14th annual Animal Rescue Festival & Fun-raiser Feb. 24 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., on Beach Boulevard.

There will be more than 50 participating rescue groups with more than 1,000 pets ready to find a forever home.

There also will be pet-related activities, including pet care education, a food and supplies drive, animal training demonstrations, contests, the Florida Weiner Dog Derby, a Bark-B-Que, food, music and more. Admission and parking are free.

For more information, you can visit their facebook page at Facebook.com/GetRescued, GulfportsGetRescued.com or contact Suzanne King at (727) 322-5217 or SuzFest@gmail.com.

**SPONSOR WOOFSTOCK**

Pasco County Animal Services' fourth annual Woofstock is scheduled for May 19 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Land O' Lakes Heritage Park (formerly Land O' Lakes Community Center), 5401 Land O' Lakes Blvd.

The proceeds and entrance fees will benefit a fund for the sick and injured animals admitted to the shelter.

There are several options for sponsorships available.

For information and sponsorship packets, visit tinyurl.com/y8bsnsab.

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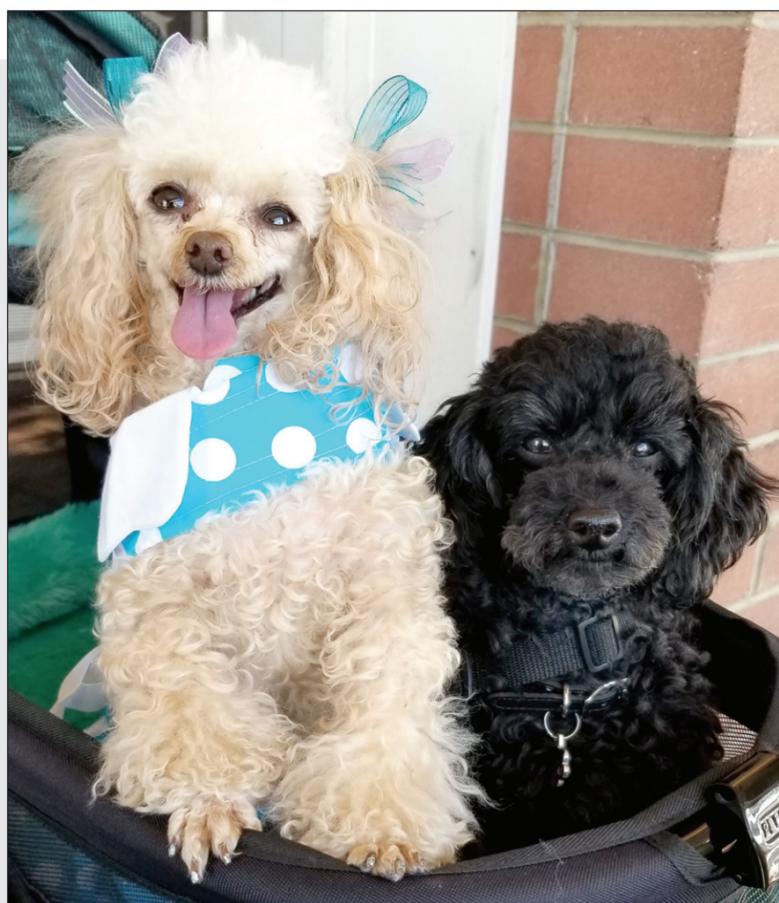
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The information should be submitted two weeks prior to the desired publication date. We also need a contact name and number, in case we have questions.

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.

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**Hippo celebrates 58th birthday**

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park celebrated the 58th birthday of Lu, its resident hippopotamus, with two birthday parties. Lu, an African hippo, was born at the San Diego Zoo on Jan. 26, 1960. Hippos typically live from 40 years to 50 years, which makes Lu the oldest hippo in North America at the age of 58.



STEFANIE BURLINGAME

Lu catching a melon back in June 2009.

**LOCAL WILDLIFE**



**Roaming the groves**

During a January cold snap (as evidenced by the icicles hanging from the orange trees), Lillian Cucuzza, of Land O' Lakes, spotted this deer in the orange tree grove near her office.

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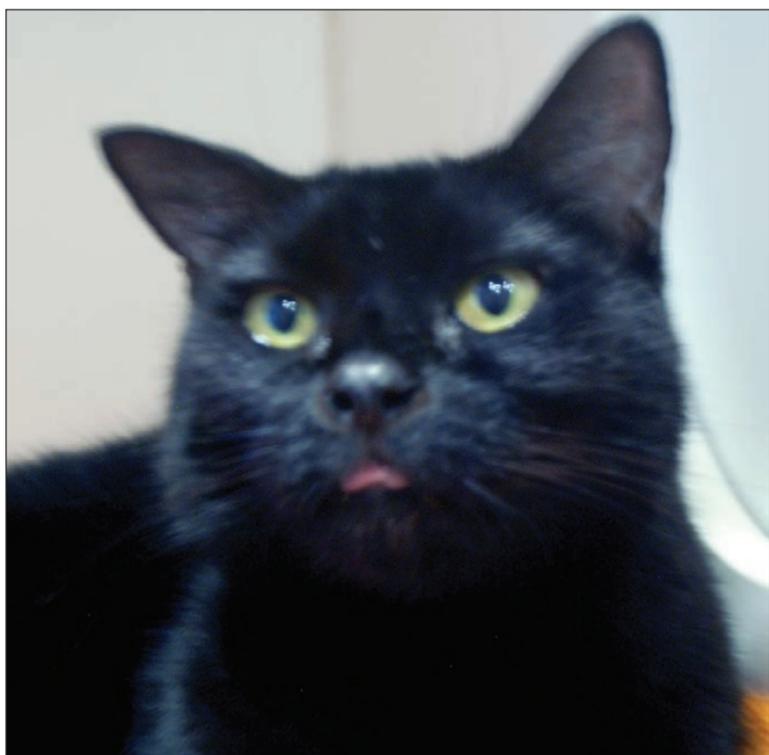
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Roxy came to the shelter as a stray in November, and she has been nothing but a sweet, laid-back lady. She may be a little worried the first time she meets your pup, but a meet-and-greet is encouraged. Roxy did well on her assessment with kids and cats, but a slow introduction is recommended with all family members. At the time of her adoption, Roxy will be spayed, microchipped and vaccinated. She has a couple lumps that will need a follow-up with a veterinarian. The bumps do not seem to impede her activity or love of life.



## Come and meet Josie

Josie is a 7-year-old girl that was abandoned in a park and has been at the shelter since December. She seems to have been someone's pet, and her favorite pastime is being hand-fed by the staff. Josie eats on her own, but does enjoy the extra attention of being offered her food by her human 'servants.' Josie loves to curl up in a blanket while eating.

If you would like to adopt Josie or Roxy, 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](mailto:adoptionpartners@pascocountyfl.net).

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# BUSINESS DIGEST

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

## NORTH TAMPA LUNCHEON

The North Tampa Chamber of Commerce will have its February 2018 Momentum Thursday on Feb. 8 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at St. Joseph's John Knox Village, at 4100 E. Fletcher Ave., in Tampa.

Guest speaker will be Clinton W. Babcock of Sandler Training.

For early bird registration, RSVP online with credit card or to the chamber office at [Contact@NorthTampaChamber.com](mailto:Contact@NorthTampaChamber.com) by 5 p.m., Feb. 7, at the discounted rate of \$15 (whether you eat or not).

After that date, the cost is \$20 (whether you eat or not), payable at the door by cash, check or credit card.

For information, call the chamber at (813) 563-0180.

## METRO PLACES JOB FAIR

Metro Places, which is developing master-planned communities of Epperson and Mirada, will have its second annual job fair Feb. 13 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Pasco

Continued on next page



Connerton holds many events during the year for residents and the public.



FILE

# Connerton wins gold

Connerton, Pasco County's largest master-planned, mixed-use community, won the 2018 Gold Award for Best Lifestyle Program for a Community at the National Association of Home Builders' National Sales and Marketing awards gala, according to a news release from Connerton.

The gala was held at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando on Jan. 10. More than 1,000 real estate professionals from the International Builders' Show attended the event.

The awards honor the best in the building industry for determination, integrity,

creativity and endurance.

Over three days, a panel of seven industry professionals from across the country picked winners from more than 1,300 entries.

"Our Connerton staff works hard to provide our resident adults and their children with the exciting and rewarding activities that set us apart from the rest and make our community such a special place to live," Stew Gibbons, Connerton's general manager, said in a written statement.

Community events held annually at

Connerton include Eggstravaganza, Nation Celebration, Hometown Harvest, and Winter Wonderland. Weekly and monthly events for adults include Parents Night Out, Pops on the Patio, and Doggie Dress Up Pawty. Connerton has a resort-style water park and splash pool where children can enjoy Wiggles and Giggles fitness classes, and poolside snow cones and cotton candy.

In 2017, Connerton and Lennar Homes awarded a veteran and his family a mortgage-free home.

Connerton is a 4,800-acre community, located off U.S. 41 in Land O' Lakes, about 30 miles north of Tampa.

For information, visit [Connerton.com](http://Connerton.com).

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Hernando State College Porter Campus at Wiregrass Ranch, 2727 Mansfield Blvd., in Wesley Chapel.

Epperson and Mirada are part of a special development district for the Connected City corridor, located in northeast Pasco County.

More than 30 employers, involved in developing these communities, will be at the job fair looking for applicants who want to be part of the Connected City development.

For more information, please visit JobFair.MetroPlaces.com.

#### NETWORKING GROUP

The East Pasco Networking Group will meet Feb. 13 at 7:30 a.m., at the IHOP, 13100 U.S. 301 in Dade City.

Guest speaker will be Paula O'Neil, Pasco County Clerk and Comptroller of the Circuit Court.

For information, contact Chairman Nils Lenz at nilslenz@gmail.com or (813) 782-9491; or Vice Chairwoman Vicky Jones at donlvic1@yahoo.com or (813) 431-1149.

#### MEMBERSHIP LUNCH

The North Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce will have its monthly membership lunch Feb. 14 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Fox Hollow Golf Club, 10050 Robert Trent Jones Parkway in Trinity.

Guest speakers will be from the Pasco Economic Development Council. They will discuss the council's SMARTstart Microloan Fund.

The cost is \$20 in advance for members who register online by 3 p.m., Feb. 9. Thereafter, the cost is \$25 at the door for members and non-members.



FILE

Bexley is an award-winning master-planned community off State Road 54 in Land O' Lakes, and the playground at Bexley is one of many amenities provided.

## Bexley best in living

Bexley by Newland Communities received a Best in American Living Award from the National Association of Home Builders, according to a news release from The Leytham Group.

Bexley won the highest honor of a Platinum Award in the category for Best Single-Family Community having more than 100 homes.

The Best in American Living Awards

For information, call the chamber at (813) 994-8534.

#### UNCLE MADDIO'S HAPPY HOUR

The North Tampa Chamber of Commerce

recognizes outstanding achievement by builders and designers in the housing industry, including single-family production, custom-built, apartments, affordable, remodeling and interiors.

Bexley opened in November 2016 off State Road 54, east of the Suncoast Parkway. It offers a variety of home designs, including single-family, town homes and villas, as well as luxury homes by six builders. The community's amenities include Avid multi-modal trails, outdoor fitness stations, pools, a BMX bicycle

pump track and dog parks.

The Twisted Sprocket Café is a restaurant open to residents and the public.

Bexley also received two Grand Aurora Awards from the Southeast Building Conference for Best Master-Planned Community and Best Recreational Facility in the Southeast.

Metro Study ranks Bexley as one of the Top 10 communities for New Home Starts in the Tampa Metropolitan Service Area.

For information, call (813) 425-7555, or visit BexleyFlorida.com.

will host Uncle Maddio's February 2018 Happy Hour on Feb. 21 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., at Uncle Maddio's, at 3949 Van Dyke Road in Lutz.

The restaurant will offer \$1 off any pizza,

and buy-one, get-one free deal for house wine and draft beers.

The event is free, but RSVP by Feb. 20.

For information, call the chamber at (813) 563-0180.

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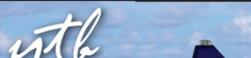
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## Metro Job Fair

2nd Annual Event for the New Connected City in Pasco County

FEBRUARY 13TH FROM 9AM - 1PM

Pasco-Hernando State College Porter Campus at Wiregrass Ranch

### Looking for your next opportunity?

Metro Places, who proudly brings you the area's best communities is expanding in Pasco County in a big way!

All of this growth means new jobs, so Metro Places is hosting its annual Job Fair on Tuesday February 13, 2018 9AM to 1PM at Pasco-Hernando State College Porter Campus at Wiregrass Ranch. Meet over 30 employers looking for people just like you to be part of this ground-breaking project.

For more information, please visit [www.JobFair.MetroPlaces.com](http://www.JobFair.MetroPlaces.com)

Join us at Pasco-Hernando State College Porter Campus at Wiregrass Ranch.



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A Tampa-based company founded in 2003, Metro Development Group is committed to bringing some of the most innovative technologies and amenities to home builders and home buyers. With the introduction of Metro Places, Metro Lagoons by Crystal Lagoons and ULTRAM, Metro Development Group continues to be the gold standard in the development of master planned communities. For more information please visit [www.MetroPlaces.com](http://www.MetroPlaces.com) and [www.MetroDevelopmentGroup.com](http://www.MetroDevelopmentGroup.com).

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# New Chamber of Commerce makes debut

By Kathy Steele

ksteele@lakerlutznews.com

A new chamber came into view last summer with the merger of The Greater Wesley Chapel Chamber of Commerce and The Greater Pasco Chamber of Commerce.

Now a new name is launching representing the combined chambers, which will now be known as the North Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce, according to an email sent to chamber members from Zack Kalarickal, the chamber's board chairman.

The name brings "renewed focus on the broader geography that is home to those we serve and consistent with the momentum of this evolving community," the email states.

National and international businesses are seeking to invest in Pasco County's growth, and the new name provides "a readily identifiable location," as well as describing the inclusive nature of the merged chamber, according to the email.

The North Tampa Bay chamber has about 830 members and is the largest in Pasco County. It serves Wesley Chapel, New Tampa, Lutz, Land O' Lakes, Trinity, Odessa and New Port Richey.

"We happen to be in a great part of the county with so much dynamic growth," said

Kalarickal, a dentist and owner of Wesley Chapel Dentistry.

The North Tampa Bay name acknowledges that growth, but Kalarickal said the chamber will "co-brand" the uniqueness of every community within its membership.

In his email, he cites the long history of Wesley Chapel and its chamber, which began in 1998 with only a small group of business owners.

It had grown in recent years to nearly 600 members prior to merging with the Greater Pasco chamber in July.

In January, the chamber moved to a new location at 1868 Highland Oaks Blvd., Suite A. The office is in the Highland Oaks Medical Center, off State Road 54.

In the next months, more transition work is needed, Kalarickal said.

The board of directors went from 17 to 24 members.

A day-long planning session was held to discuss an overall strategic plan. Standing committees were formed.

And, North Tampa Bay members were invited to participate in a logo design contest. The winning entry will be announced on March 8.

For information, call the chamber at (813) 994-8534.



FILE

## Bilirakis named to religious freedom caucus

U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis has stepped up as the Republican co-chair, along with Democratic co-chair Juan Vargas, to spearhead the Congressional International Religious Freedom Caucus. The IRF Caucus, founded in 2006, seeks to keep members of Congress informed about religious freedom issues and to keep in contact with non-governmental organizations working in the field.

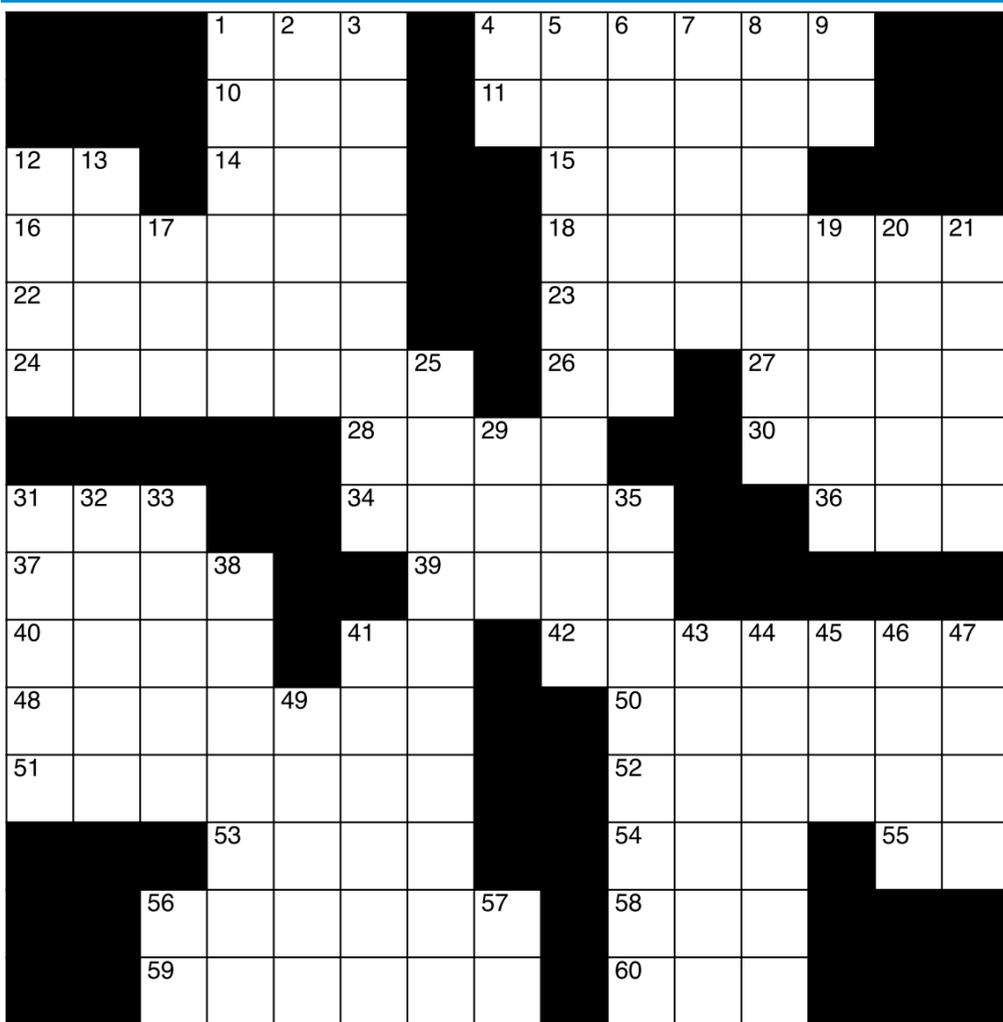


COURTESY OF PATRICIA SERIO

## Volunteer of the Year honored

The GFWC Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club has selected longtime member Faith Sincich, of Lutz, as its Club Volunteer of the Year. Sincich was recognized for her years of dedication and service to the woman's organization, and for giving unselfishly of her time and energy to better the community through her volunteer work.

## The LAKER / Lutz NEWS CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### ACROSS

- Plural of be
- Dress
- Nothing
- Relating to apes
- They protect and serve
- Swindle
- Show's partner
- Lift
- Raise up
- Do something to an excessive degree
- Occupies
- Power-driven aircraft
- Indicates position
- Matchstick games
- This and \_\_\_
- No longer here
- Health insurance
- Spore-producing receptacle on fern frond
- Monetary unit
- Sweet potatoes
- Tropical Asian plant
- Guilty or not guilty
- Carbon dioxide
- Able to arouse intense feeling
- Earl's jurisdiction
- Omitted
- Heartbeat
- Albania capital
- Fashion accessory
- Interaction value analysis
- Symbol of exclusive ownership
- More promising
- \_\_\_ student, learns healing

59. Nonresident doctor

60. Midway between east and southeast

### DOWN

- Enrages
- Capital of Saudi Arabia
- Uses in an unfair way
- Cesium
- Written works
- Breakfast item
- Found in showers
- A way of fractioning
- Unit of measurement
- Sailboat
- Indian goddess
- For each
- Farewell
- Ethnic group of Sierra Leone
- German industrial city
- Measures intensity of light
- Small, faint constellation
- Promotes enthusiastically
- Malaysian inhabitant
- Ancient units of measurement
- An unspecified period
- Frame house with up to three stories
- Lassie is one
- Martinis have them
- Rant
- Famed journalist Tarbell
- Opening
- Round Dutch cheese
- Archaic form of do
- Once more
- Registered nurse

SEE SOLUTIONS, PAGE 6B

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Wednesday, February 14, 2018 / 10:00am – 12:00pm  
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Thursday, February 15, 2018 / 5:00pm – 7:00pm  
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Tuesday, February 20, 2018 / 10:00am-12:00pm  
Premier Community Healthcare  
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Wednesday, February 28, 2018 / 10:00am – 12:00pm  
Zephyrhills Public Library  
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Wednesday, March 7, 2018 / 10:00am-12:00pm  
Morton Plant, North Bay Hospital  
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