

Around the
STATE

Citrus County
Blood sought on
New Year's Eve

LifeSouth will host its annual New Year's Resolution Blood Drive from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 31, at the Walmart Supercenter, 2461 E. Gulf-to-Lake Highway, Inverness.

To encourage participation there will be a drawing for a 42-inch LCD TV courtesy of Walmart, and all donors will be entered into a drawing for a PlayStation 4. There will be a drawing for a Mossy Oak three-piece seat cover kit and a 2.5-gallon ArmorAll Shop Vac, courtesy of Auto Zone in Inverness. All donors will also receive a thank-you gift from LifeSouth.

Donors must be 17 or older, or 16 with parental permission, weigh a minimum of 110 pounds and be in good health. A photo ID is also required. To learn more about donating blood, visit www.lifesouth.org.

Landfill holiday
hours announced

The Citrus County Central Landfill will close at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 24, and will be closed all day on Wednesday, Dec. 25, in observance of Christmas Day.

The administration office will be closed both days, and will reopen Thursday, Dec. 26, for regular business.

The landfill will also be closed on Wednesday, Jan. 1, New Year's Day, and will reopen Wednesday, Jan. 2.

For more information on landfill hours, call 352-527-7670 during office hours or go to the county's website at www.bocc.citrus.fl.us. Click on departments, then Public Works, then Solid Waste Management.

Tampa

Small plane crash at
airport injures pilot

Police say a small plane crashed at the Tampa airport, seriously injuring the pilot.

Tampa police Lt. Richard O'Connor said the single-engine plane was coming in for a landing when it crashed just inside the airport's fence around 11:48 p.m. Thursday.

O'Connor said police officers in a helicopter were on routine aerial patrol nearby when they heard the pilot's distress call and saw the plane stall and crash. O'Connor said the officers landed, extinguished a fire at the crash site and pulled the unconscious pilot from the cockpit.

O'Connor said the pilot was brought to a hospital with serious injuries, including facial fractures. But he said the injuries aren't believed to be life threatening.

Orlando

Man accused of
abuse after son, 5,
found dead

An Orlando man is accused of child abuse and could face additional charges after his 5-year-old son was found dead in his apartment.

Authorities said Darell Avant Jr. had multiple bruises and contusions on his body when he was found unresponsive on Wednesday evening. His 26-year-old father, Darell Avant, remained in the Orange County Jail Friday.

According to deputies, Avant picked up the boy early from school on Wednesday because he was acting up. When they got home, Avant said he hit the child on the buttocks before making him to pushups and squats for 20 minutes.

An arrest report said the boy collapsed after taking a shower. The father called 911 and the boy was pronounced dead a short time later.

—From staff and wire reports

Couple charged in car burglary

SEAN ARNOLD
Correspondent

A Homosassa couple faces multiple felony charges stemming from a car burglary.

Jeanette Villagran, 30, and Rufus Hoyt, 32, were arrested Dec. 19 and charged with felony grand theft, burglary to an unoccupied vehicle and possession of a controlled substance, along with misdemeanor charges



Jeanette Villagran

of drug paraphernalia.

According to their arrest affidavits, the victim was a hospice worker who parked her vehicle in the backyard of a patient she was seeing for approximately one hour on Dec. 17. While she was in the home, her car was burglarized. Items stolen from the white Hyundai included a laptop computer, cellular telephone and jewelry, along with some paperwork. The items were valued



Rufus Hoyt

at \$3,224.

When deputies arrived at the scene, they discovered remnants of a meth lab in a nearby woods, along with some stolen property. The homeowner gave permission for the house to be searched and, according to the report, items from this and other reported burglaries were uncovered. When searching the couple's bedroom, numerous items including credit cards and driver licenses in the names of recent burglary victims, seven cellular phones, five wallets, and a Dell computer were discovered. Methamphetamine, needles, and a glass pipe were also found in the bedroom.

Jewelry reportedly belonging to the victim was recovered in Hoyt's vehicle during his arrest on Dec. 18, and items belonging to the victims of an auto theft in a Walmart parking lot that Hoyt had been charged with on that date were found in his home during the search. Bonds of \$10,500 were set for Hoyt and Villagran.

Hoyt had previously been arrested, on Dec. 18, on felony charges of grand theft, burglary to a conveyance and possession of a controlled substance, along with a misdemeanor charge of petit theft, in connection to a vehicle that had been burglarized in the Lecanto Walmart parking lot.

Rescue mission



Wildlife officials and volunteers rescue an emaciated manatee Thursday. It has been transported to Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa for diagnosis and rehabilitation.

Special to the Chronicle

Emaciated manatee rescued at King Spring

Special to the Chronicle

The first King's Bay manatee rescue of the season was performed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC) staff and volunteers on Thursday morning at the King Spring sanctuary, located in front of the Crystal River Ale House.

The emaciated manatee was first spotted at Three Sisters Springs by volunteer Stacy Dunn during the Refuge Day festival last Saturday. U.S. Geological Survey manatee biologists Dr. Robert Bonde was present at the event and was able to tag the manatee that afternoon. The next day, the manatee moved to the King Spring manatee sanctuary where he was rescued Thursday.

The rescue was a success despite the challenges presented by the presence of a few hundred resting manatees in the sanctuary. FWC marine biologist Brandon Bassett along with Amber Howell came from St. Petersburg to assist the local manatee rescue squad.

Bassett set the stage by appointing a swimmer, three hoop net handlers and several people to the manatee rescue boat. The swimmers encour-

COUNTING MANATEES

- Staff from the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge conducted an aerial survey of manatees on Wednesday. A total of 596 manatees were counted along the survey route, stretching from the Cross Florida Barge Canal, near Inglis, south to the Chassahowitzka River. Included along this route are the Crystal River, King's Bay, the discharge canal of the Crystal River Power Plant, Salt River, and the Homosassa River, which includes the Blue Waters.
- King's Bay — 354 adults and 43 calves (397 total).
- Crystal River — 2 adults.
- Salt River — None.
- Discharge canal — 11 adults.
- Cross Florida Barge Canal — None.
- Homosassa River (Blue Waters) — 167 adults and 16 calves (183 total).
- Lower Homosassa River — 2 adults and 1 calf (3 total)
- In total: 536 adults and 60 calves.

aged the manatee to move to an isolated shallow area while the hoop net team waited to catch the manatee.

"As soon as the manatee was driven to shallow water, the team successfully hoop-netted the manatee head first," Bassett said. "Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the two agencies and the volunteers, we were able to rescue the manatee with minimal disturbance inside the sanctuary."

The rescue boat transported the manatee to the Port Hotel

and Marina boat ramp where the FWC rescue truck awaited. Then, the manatee was taken to Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa where it is undergoing further evaluation by zoo veterinarian Dr. Ray Ball, who will determine what is causing the emaciation.

Lowry Park Zoo health evaluation results should be released next week. Upon full recovery, the manatee will be released back into the wild at Three Sisters Springs, where it was originally found.

Energy
assistance
outreach
event

Special to the Chronicle

Citrus County Housing Services will accept energy assistance applications on a walk-in basis for one day only at The Catholic Charities Community Outreach Center in Homosassa. Because of the demand for assistance, applications usually are accepted only by appointment.

Low-income county residents may visit from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday, Jan. 13, at 9020 W. Atlas Drive, Homosassa, FL 34448, to apply. All applicants must be checked in by 1 p.m. to be considered.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low-income families with home heating and cooling costs. LIHEAP is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and has been established to help qualifying low-income homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating/cooling costs. LIHEAP is not designed to pay a household's total energy costs, but to provide supplemental assistance.

LIHEAP provides two types of assistance, crisis and regular. Households may apply for Crisis Assistance once a year and can receive up to \$600 for a crisis. Households must be delinquent in paying their utility bill, received a shut-off notice, be without power or require a deposit in order to qualify for crisis. If the household has received this assistance in the past year, the applicant is not eligible for crisis.

Households may also apply for Regular Assistance once a year for a current bill. The benefit range is \$150 to \$300 per household depending on family size and income. If the household has received this assistance in the past year, its occupants are not eligible for regular assistance.

Eligibility for participation in LIHEAP is established according to the federal income guidelines and must be at or below 150 percent of poverty level. Maximum annual income for a household of one is \$17,235, two persons is \$23,635, three persons is \$29,295 and four persons is \$35,325. (Add \$6,030 for each additional person in the household.)

Applicants must bring the following items that apply to the household to be served: photo identification, their most recent power bill (current, past due or shut-off notice), EBT/SNAP card for applicant and proof of all household members' gross income for at least the past month. Income documentation may include paystubs, 2013 Social Security benefits letter, child support award letter, unemployment award letter, TANF award letter or other income sources. Bank statements are not acceptable as proof of income.

Applicants also will have to provide Social Security number card or official documentation for EVERY member of the household.

Because of grant mandates, those who do not have the required documents will not be assisted.

For more information, email heidi.blanchette@bocc.citrus.fl.us or call 352-527-7520.