

NEWS-SUN

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Making a splash
Cobb, Hutchins qualify for state diving championships
SPORTS, 1B

Team effort
VA, hospice agencies join forces for veterans
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Latte love affair
Indulge in your love of lattes with these four ideas
LIVING, 12B



Wednesday-Thursday, November 7-8, 2012

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Forecast



Sunny, pleasant and cool

High **73** Low **48**

Complete Forecast **PAGE 12A**

Online



Question: Who will win the presidential election?



Romney 63.5%



Obama 36.5%

Total votes: **222**

Next question: Are you glad the election is over?

Make your voice heard at www.newssun.com

Obituaries

Ellen Bellerose
Age 75, of Sebring

Carl Hancock
Age 77, of Sebring

Roland Hodge
Age 67, of Avon Park

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Tim Spain

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ELECTION DAY 2012



News-Sun photo by KATARA SIMMONS
Rick Babb (from left) and Michael Stone wave signs Tuesday morning along the Sebring Parkway near Precinct 25 in Sebring. Stone said he received one middle finger and one thumbs down from people passing by, but mostly he was greeted with smiles and waves. Stone was running for Highlands County Commission District 3.

Voters turn out early

By **BARRY FOSTER**
News-Sun correspondent

SEBRING — Election Day started early at the Highlands County Supervisor of Elections office with equipment and poll workers fanning out to 25 different locations around the county.

Workers at the office said there was an initial rush at many of the locations as residents wanted to cast their votes on their way to work.

By mid-morning, however, the polls had settled down significantly, with many reports of no lines and residents able to fill out their lengthy ballots with relative ease. Some of the slowdown



News-Sun photo by KATARA SIMMONS
Campaign signs lead the way to voting Precinct 5 at the Sebring Hills Clubhouse in Sebring Tuesday morning.

See **ELECTION**, page 6A

Leapin' lizards! Little Theatre opens new season with 'Annie'

By **CHRISTOPHER TUFFLEY**
christopher.tuffley@newssun.com

SEBRING —Highlands Little Theatre's 30th season opens tonight with a new production of the popular musical "Annie," based on the Little Orphan Annie comic strip by Harold Gray.

Mike McMillian directed the cast of 39 human actors and one dog.

The story takes place in 1933 and is about the 11-year-old orphan Annie, who is trapped in a miserable orphanage run by the horrible Miss Hannigan.

Annie's life changes when she is invited to a billionaire's home for a visit. Everything, of course, ends up happily-ever-after, but before it does Annie has to escape kidnapers and accept that she will never see her long-missing parents again.

As Annie, Larissa Meagher, a junior Heartland Idol winner, shows tremendous promise in her first starring role. She is as endearing as her character, and just as feisty. When a



News-Sun photo by CHRISTOPEHR TUFFLEY
Larissa Meagher is Annie in HLT's first show of the 2012-2013 season. Bucky (in real life a Goldendoodle) plays Sandy.

See **HLT**, page 5A



Operation Christmas Child collection sites set

By **SAMANTHA GHOLAR**
sgholar@newssun.com

SEBRING — A local group of volunteers will be busy making the world, and this community, a better place in the upcoming week.

Operation Christmas Child, an internationally known project, is targeting children and their needs as we enter the end of the year and the holiday season. Operation Christmas Child is a part of the Samaritan's Purse organization. The project has been around for four decades and continues to bring together volunteers and those in need all over the world.

Locally, OCC has been contributing to the hurting world for 10 years. The basic idea behind OCC is fill a shoe box with items for hurting people throughout the world.

Area coordinator Margaret Sager and her many volunteers continue their service this year and are gearing up for their big collection week, which runs concurrently with the national collection week Nov. 12-19. The shoe boxes will all go to needy children around the world.

See **SITES**, page 3A

LPPD Bike Rodeo sees 143 riders

By **SAMANTHA GHOLAR**
sgholar@newssun.com

LAKE PLACID — The Lake Placid Police Department spent the weekend giving back to the community in a big way.

For the fifth year, the LPPD held its Bike Rodeo and invited children and youth throughout the community to come be a part of the informative and fun event.

"It's our biggest event of the year," said event coordinator and LPPD Officer Heather Mulligan.

Chief Phil Williams expressed his satisfaction with his staff's efforts to have the event each year.

"The officers and volun-

See **BIKE**, page 7A

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Sportsmen seek aid for trip to Classic

By SAMANTHA GHOLAR
sgholar@newssun.com

SEBRING – The Florida Sportsman Association is once again working to create a unique and memorable experience for local, underprivileged youth.

Each November, the FSA pools its resources to take young students to the Florida Classic football game. Two of Florida’s historically black universities, Florida A & M and Bethune Cookman, battle each year for the title and bragging rights.

Association members use the Florida Classic as a means to reach kids who are labeled “at risk” and to show them the importance of a good education.

“In order to continue to make a difference we must continue to provide the opportunity for growth and change,” FSA president Robert Saffold said.

“The support has made a great difference in their decision to make changes in their future. Many have entered universities and colleges across the nation because of the experience and support given at this annual event,” Saffold said.

The Florida Classic is more than a football game to the FSA and to the youth; it’s a window into the future. The experience is one that stays with them throughout the years, that allows them to see a world beyond their current views.

“This is our biggest event of the year,” Saffold said. “We work all year long for this, to take the kids to this.”

Funds for the Florida Classic trip have been cut way down this year due to the FSA’s cancellation of its biggest annual fundraiser, the golf tournament.

“Most of the money we use for the Classic we get from the golf tournament, but we didn’t have it this year. There was so many things going on around the time we usually have it in October. There were at least three other tournaments the same weekend we normally have ours so we were unable to have it,” Saffold said.

FSA hopes to acquire enough sponsorships and donations over the next couple of weeks to be able to still take the annual trip to the Florida Classic on Saturday, Nov. 17.

The price per student for the trip is \$48, which includes a seat on the charter bus, game ticket and a meal. The FSA has reserved six Annett buses and hopes to fill each seat this year. The total overall cost of the event is \$4,710. Any interested sponsors, businesses or individuals may contribute to the fund by paying for one child’s ticket, a family’s cost, sponsoring one bus or just giving to the overall cost.

Anyone wishing to provide financial support for the Florida Sportsman Association annual Florida Classic Youth Bus Tour may make checks payable to: Florida Sportsman’s Association, Inc. Attn: Robert Saffold, 608 Bowman Ave., Sebring, FL 33870.

Contributions are tax deductible and will help in the future development of local underprivileged youth. Contact Saffold at 381-5166 or Barbara Walker at 385-6662.



News-Sun photo by LARRY LEVEY
Honoring veterans is a major part of the programs for both Highlands County hospices: Good Shepherd and Cornerstone. Here, Good Shepherd chaplain and Spiritual Care Consultant Jim Langham shows off a tribute to the military hanging on one of the walls in the Bud and Donna Somers Hospice House.

VA and hospice join forces



Commentary
Larry Levey

Veterans Day ceremonies planned

SEBRING – I walked into the Good Shepherd Bud and Donna Somers Hospice House, fully expecting to learn about their Hospice-Veteran program by interviewing Chaplain Jim Langham, who heads up that program. But the good chaplain turned the tables on me by asking, “Are you a veteran?”

When I said, “Yes,” his immediate response was, “I want to thank you for your service to our country.” And he firmly shook my hand.

Thanking me, shaking my hand: two simple acts. No one had ever done that for me before. And I got all misty-eyed over this brief but touching recognition of my former military service. Somehow, I just wasn’t expecting it.

Eventually, the chaplain and I began to chat about this Hospice-Veteran Program. Some years ago, the government realized the need to strengthen the bond between community hospices and VA facilities, so that VA patients have easier access to community programs – and hospice personnel may learn more about the special needs of veterans and their families, especially combat veterans.

Thus, in 2001, the National Hospice-Veteran Program was born. Special needs of veterans? Here’s a sampling: Like the 86-year-old vet with end-stage heart failure and moderate dementia. He had survived some of the toughest battles in World War II; Much later, he earned a law degree and created a successful practice. But he never talked about the war with his family and they never thought to mention it to his nursing home staff.

But he still carried the memories of that war. He cried frequently and had periods of profound depression. The family and nursing home staff knew something was wrong, but what? No one knew how to comfort him.

Or like the vet whose religious and moral training are at odds with his military training. Or the vet who leaps under a bed at the sound of a

door being slammed shut. Or the vet who was spat upon after returning from Viet Nam. Or those vets suffering from Agent Orange – or from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

As a press release states, “Hospice staff may provide the last opportunity for veterans to feel their service was not in vain. Simple acts of gratitude at the end of life can make up for a lack of appreciation or recognition during the veteran’s lifetime, especially for those vets who were never thanked for their service.”

Training sessions for staff and volunteers participating in this National Hospice-Veteran Program stress the importance of thanking veterans for their service to this county, of giving them an opportunity to tell their stories, and of being sincere, caring, compassionate and willing to listen.

Having received a “thank-you” and handshake, I got a taste of the impact these tools can make.

Not all hospices are alike. Some offer a “Veteran’s History Project,” where trained volunteers record the veteran’s story, which is then submitted to the Library of Congress.

But common to most, if not all, Hospice-Veteran Programs is the Veteran Pinning Ceremony. This tailor-made ceremony involves the family, hospice staff and volunteers, other veterans and the veteran, who is encouraged to share some of his or her stories. The veteran receives a Certificate of Appreciation and an “Honored Veteran” pin.

Some ceremonies might include such words to the vet-

eran as, “... thank you for your service to our nation. Thank you for the sacrifices you made and your willingness to serve our country. You endured hardships and you were willing to risk your life to maintain our freedom ... When you see this pin, know that your service to the nation is deeply appreciated.”

Larry Levey is a News-Sun correspondent.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Air Force Association meeting Thursday

SEBRING — Retired Air Force Major James K. Galloway announced that an Avon Park High School teacher Alex Daly will be the guest speaker Thursday afternoon at the meeting of the local Air Force Association. The meeting will start promptly at 4:30 p.m., in the Governor’s Room at the Kenilworth Lodge.

“We are indeed pleased to have First Class Petty Officer Daly, U.S. Navy (Reserve) to tell of his experiences during his 20 years of service including his reserve tours as a meteorologist,” commented chapter president Galloway.

Daly, a science teacher at Avon Park High School, served three years of active duty in the U.S. Navy and 17 years in the Navy Reserve. He also holds a degree in metrology, in addition to high school science.

All AFA members are encouraged to attend, as well as other interested local area residents.

Country Swingers offer dance lessons

SEBRING — Country Swingers Line Dance Club is offering eight beginner lessons for only \$45. Fee includes annual membership at the Sebring Recreation Club, 333 Pomegranate Ave.

The first lesson is today and will continue every Wednesday from 5:15-6:15 p.m. Any questions, call 655-2398.

Scribblers and Scribes meet today

SEBRING — The Florida Writer’s Association group, Sebring Scribblers and Scribes, will hold its monthly meeting at 7 p.m. today at Beef O’ Brady’s in Sebring. Come earlier for dinner.

Barbara Beswick, the group’s leader and a published author, has again been published with her first children’s book.

Mirror Publishing Company has released “A Christmas Moon,” which is a personalized gift book for young children and reasonably priced for holiday gift-giving. She will be signing copies of her book at the meeting to which the public is invited.

Membership in FWA or Scribblers is not required and FWA applications are available. For more information, call Beswick at 402-9181.

Rotary Club has annual apple sale

SEBRING — In addition to the Sebring Noon Rotary Club having its annual apple sale Thursday at Lakeshore Mall, there will also be a barbecue with pulled pork sandwiches/babyback ribs meals available for sale. Call 381-5127 or 385-8538 to pre-order babyback ribs, whole Boston butt or a tub of pork. Proceeds will go to the New Testament Mission in Sebring.

Highlands P.E.O. to meet Thursday

LAKE PLACID — The Highlands P.E.O. will meet at 12:30 p.m. Thursday at the home of Janet Mitchell. Any woman who is a member of P.E.O. and is now residing or visiting in Florida is welcome to attend. For more information, including directions, call 273-9935.

‘Lunch ‘n Learn Health Lecture Series’ offered

SEBRING – Cornerstone Hospice and Palliative Care announces the presentation during November and December of four of “Lunch ‘n Learn Health” lectures of interest to all Baby Boomers and anyone caring for a loved one facing a life-limiting or life-threatening illness in Highlands or Hardee counties.

All lectures are free of charge and will be presented at the Sebring Chamber of Commerce Visitors

Continued on page 7A

	Lottery Center		Nov. 2 10 16 21 23 41 44 x:2 Next jackpot \$19 million
	Nov. 5 5 16 19 21 28 Nov. 4 11 12 13 19 31 Nov. 3 1 7 25 30 33 Nov. 2 23 24 30 33 34		Oct. 31 2 17 34 36 43 52 x:2 Oct. 27 1 2 29 30 31 35 x:5
	Nov. 5 3 4 11 37 8 Oct. 30 9 31 39 41 8 Oct. 26 27 30 37 40 15 Oct. 23 3 17 27 40 7		Nov. 5 (n) 1 3 1 Nov. 5 (d) 0 5 8 Nov. 4 (n) 9 1 6 Nov. 4 (d) 9 8 3
	Nov. 3 4 7 9 30 54 Next jackpot \$143 million		PB: 25
	Oct. 31 1 27 31 45 48 Oct. 27 22 32 34 36 56		PB: 5 PB: 33

Note: Cash 3 and Play 4 drawings are twice per day: (d) is the daytime drawing, (n) is the nighttime drawing.
PB: Power Ball

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Touch a Truck, Touch a Plane event planned

Special to the News-Sun

SEBRING – The Rotary Club of Sebring and Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 1240 will again conduct Touch a Truck - Touch a Plane on Saturday, Nov. 17 at Sebring Regional Airport. This family-friendly event gives kids of all ages the opportunity to climb on, get in, blow horns and generally get familiar with a multitude of trucks representing a broad spectrum of agriculture, commercial, industrial and First Responder vehicles from around Highlands County.

Additionally, a group of privately owned airplanes from members of EA Chapter 1240 will be on display, giving those attending the

opportunity to climb in and become familiar with this segment of aviation, which varies from small home-built planes to twin-engine aircraft designed for long range family travel.

The event will include a bounce house, clowns and face painting, a police dog demonstration and other activities. Participating organizations in addition to Rotary and EAA Chapter 1240 include the Sebring High School InterAct Club and South Florida State College. Car parking is free. Just follow the signs on the airport to the lot.

Event hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 17. Admission is \$5 per person, with \$20 for a family up to



Courtesy photo

Although the Touch a Truck - Touch a Plane event is geared toward children, kids of all ages are urged to come out Nov. 17 and see up close airplanes, trucks and emergency response vehicles.

six. Admission includes a hot dog and drink for each child. Food will be available for others for a donation of \$5 for breakfast and \$5 for lunch. Breakfast will be available from the time the gates open until 11 a.m. and lunch will be available from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Food is being provided by

EAA Chapter 1240. Drinks will also be available from the Sebring High School InterAct.

All profits from the event, both sponsorships and ticket sales are designated for Champion for Children and EAA youth education activities. Both organizations are not-for-profit.

Sites set for Christmas Child drop-offs

Continued from page 1A

needy children around the world. The millions of recipients of OCC boxes are spread throughout the world in a total of 100 countries.

Each of the boxes provide hope and a sense of prosperity to those in need.

Last year the Florida region, along with Puerto Rico, collected a total of 348,352 OCC boxes. The 2011 collection was an 11 percent increase over the previous year.

Closer to home, the local collection sites contributed 3,791 boxes to the regional and national total.

"We are accepting the boxes at our collection sites. We cover three counties right now, Highlands, Hardee and Glades," Sager explained.

The two collection sites in Highlands County will be ready and waiting on the first day of collection week on Monday, Nov. 12. The Sebring collection site is at Bible Fellowship Church, 3750 Hammock Road. Collection times are as follows:

Monday – 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Tuesday – 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 14 – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 15 – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 16 – 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 17 – 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 18 – 1-5 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 19 – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Lake Placid collection site is at First Baptist Church of Lake Placid, 119

E. Royal Palm Ave. Collection times are as follows:

Monday and Tuesday – 3-4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 14 – 9-10:30 a.m. and 3-4:30 p.m.

Thursday and Friday, Nov. 15 and 16 – 3-4:30 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 17 – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 18 – 9-10:30 a.m.

Operation Christmas Child is closely approaching a milestone of providing boxes to its 100 millionth person since its inception in 1993. Sager is confident in the local communities effort to continue come together to make this an even bigger collection year and touch the lives of the many people across the world.

"Last year a lot of our boxes went to Haiti. We had many that went to Africa as well. They seem to always go to the Caribbean area and warmer climate countries but they always go to children in countries that are in need," Sager said.

"The countries are on a seven-year rotation cycle that way the boxes aren't going to the same kids every year and we can touch more people."

These "life-changing" gifts can bring joy, happiness and, in many cases, basic necessities to someone in need.

The boxes can even be tracked around the world so that the donator can discover where their donation ended up and who it touched.

"For a \$7 contribution for shipping costs, the box is fitted with a tracking shipping label. When it gets to its drop-off location it is

scanned and the sender can log on to see the exact location," Sager explained.

Local organizations are gearing up for "packing parties" to get a jump start on the collection week chaos and to contribute to the cause. Highlands County 4H clubs will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Bert J. Harris Jr. Agri-Civic Center to pack boxes. The 4H-ers hope to pack 100 boxes. Bible Fellowship Church will hold its packing party Wednesday evening.

Boxes may be dropped off at the collection sites beginning Monday. Any standard shoe box is acceptable. (Small plastic tubeware boxes are also accepted.) Items such as small toys, soap, crayons, notepads,

combs, toothbrush, candy or any item that may bring a child joy will be accepted. Military or "war items" – such as toy guns, military figurines, knives – liquids, medications and food can not be accepted. Boxes may be designated for a boy or a girl. The truck will load up every donated box and head to mail the items on Nov. 20; all boxes must be turned in by Nov. 19.

For more information on local efforts or to pick up boxes for donation contact Sager at occ@bfcsebring.com or call 386-0414.

For more information about packing instructions, labels or to make a donation to OCC visit www.samaritanspurse.org/occ/.

America Votes: A century of wisdom at the polls

Associated Press

BOCA RATON — After 102 years on this earth, after a life as an art teacher and a store owner, after seeing war and a Depression and presidents good and bad, Selma Friedman sees no reason to muffle her opinion. What does this election mean? She'll give you an earful.

She wants to see war ended and schools renewed, for manufacturing to return and women's rights to improve.

She worries about health care and climate change and energy and fairness, and stops for only a moment before continuing her litany.

Friedman's first presidential vote was for Franklin Roosevelt in 1932. When she voted Tuesday at St. Andrews South, her retirement community in Boca Raton, she went with a Democrat again, marking Obama on her ballot with no hesitation.

"He couldn't do it all in four years," she said.

Around the breakfast table at St. Andrews, Romney supporters shook their heads when they considered the past four years. Doris Jacobsen, 76, a retired secretary, couldn't imagine why someone would give Obama their vote again.

"What has he done?" she asked with refrained outrage, a piece of bacon pinched between her fingers.

Friedman has heard those arguments, along with her neighbors' thoughts on tax rates and foreign policy and abortion.

She cannot convince them. She is a couple decades older than most here.

Maybe, she thinks, it's just youthful ignorance.

Voting in the shadow of Sandy

LITTLE FERRY, N.J. — The Big Dipper hangs over Liberty Street as poll worker Frank Puzzo arrives to begin his Election Day duties.

Just a week ago, rescuers were piloting boats through three feet of water that coursed past Memorial School and throughout this storm-scarred town.

Now, it's 28 degrees; the first voters won't arrive for nearly an hour.

But Puzzo — whose apartment still has no heat or hot water, whose car was claimed by storm surge — is the first to arrive to prepare and open the polls.

"This is super important for the future of the country," says Puzzo, an accountant who has been out of work since July.

The people of Little Ferry could be pardoned if they focused purely on their beleaguered present.

Some arrived shivering and clearly exhausted, their long-held certainties about shelter and safety deeply shaken.

But the future matters to the people lined up at the voting machines in the hallway outside Ms. Kukula's third-grade class.

Agim Coma, a 25-year-old construction worker, is the first voter to arrive, 13 minutes before polls open.

The storm claimed his apartment and car, but he's still eager to vote.

"It's important because it's our day," he said, as Election Day in America got under way here and everywhere.

"No matter what happens — hurricanes, tornados — it's our day to vote."

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Woodlawn Veteran's Day program to celebrate heroes

By SAMANTHA GHOLAR
sgholar@newssun.com

SEBRING – Veteran's Day is fast approaching and local schools are gearing up to pay tribute to the many United States military personnel in our community.

Woodlawn Elementary School has set its Veteran's Day program for Thursday and has an exciting event planned for students, teachers, veterans and visitors.

Local veterans, active duty and retired, are invited to be a part of the annual program.

"All veterans who have served our country are invited to attend this program so that we can show our gratitude for their service and sacrifice," said Ginger

McIntyre, WES secretary.

Each year the school puts on a thankful tribute to the veterans of the community. This year students will perform songs and guests will be honored through a presentation by WES faculty and staff.

Any interested veterans may contact Woodlawn office for information on how to participate in the event at 471-5444.

Veterans will be in the spotlight as WES third graders perform their annual song, dance and skits.

Family and friends of veterans are also invited to enjoy the program and take part in the celebration of our nations deserving heroes.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

Continued from page 4A

What has Obama done?

Editor:

What has Obama done for the people of the United States?

The Veteran – Gave them the most funding ever.

The Student – Cut out the middle man (banks) in student loans; doubled Pell Grants.

Foreign Policy – Gave orders that had Bin Laden killed; the Iraq War ended and troops came home; is pulling troops out of Afghanistan in 2014; helped the international community topple Khaddafi.

Women – Signed the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act that says women who do the same job as men should be paid the same; more women are gaining jobs; put payroll tax cuts in the pocket of 75 million families; appointed a woman to the Supreme Court; believes a woman should have control of her reproductive rights.

Tax Cuts – Passed 25 separate tax cuts that gave the average American \$3,600 more in their pocket.

Healthcare – Signed the Affordable Care Act that closed the Doughnut Hole, said insurance companies can't discriminate against women, and said that that pre-existing conditions are not a reason to deny health coverage.

Signed financial reform regulation – Averted a Depression; signed a credit card reform bill.

Spending – Slowest increase in spending since Eisenhower; shrank the size of government.

Economy – Dow Jones is at 13,000 up from 7,000 since he took office; extended unemployment benefits; have had 32 straight months of private sector growth; when he came to office the economy was contracting at 8 percent a year. It is now growing at 2 percent a month; the auto bailout was successful; has added 18 different tax breaks for small businesses; has pushed banks to give more loans to small businesses.

Energy – Approved 250 permanent off shore drilling permits.

It took Republicans eight years to destroy the economy and the confidence of the United States. President Obama needs eight years to bring it back to life.

Millie Grime
Sebring

Amendments can raise taxes

Editor:

This election allows the citizens to vote to raise their property taxes. There are a number of amendments on the ballot giving numerous property exemptions to various groups.

However, if these exemptions are granted, the government has not agreed to lower their expenditures, which results in higher tax rates to the rest of the population. If you rent, expect your rent to go up to cover the additional cost.

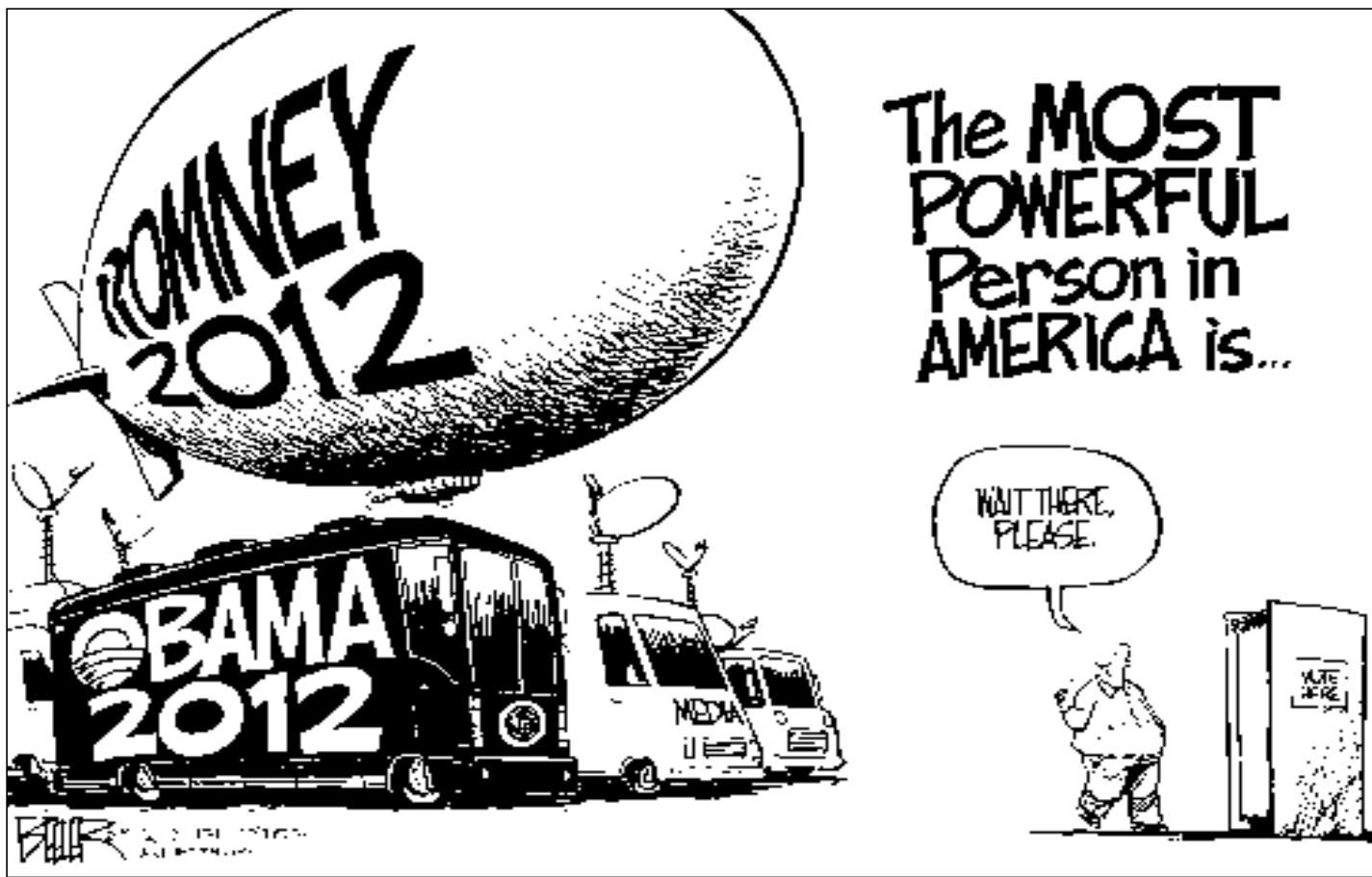
It appears that many groups want the government to be a charity with the power of taxing to fund their agenda. It seems deserving groups should be going to the existing charities to meet their needs, and not using the public treasury.

Vote your choice and be willing to live with the consequences.

Roy Loweke
Sebring

Take spiritual values to the voting booth

Editor:



America's spiritual foundation is being destroyed. Liberal politicians who seemingly have no moral or spiritual compass are destroying our country.

There is no evidence they have God in their lives and they do not want God or His Word in our nation's public arena. Our founding fathers would turn over in their graves if they could see how liberal politicians are re-defining separation of church and state. America's founding fathers were not anti-Christian nor anti-God. They were concerned that government might try to influence religion, not that Christianity would influence government. If God's people do not start voting for candidates who embrace, believe and live their lives by Judeo-Christian principles, we will soon be a country led by atheists and agnostics. You do not have to look any further than Europe to see what our country will look like if we continue to elect secular socialist-minded political leaders.

American Christians are not helpless to solve this problem. Christians must stop leaving their spiritual values outside the voting booth and elect candidates who have a spiritual compass to guide their decisions. There has never been a time in America's history when we needed Christians to trust God more and exercise righteous judgment in the voting booth. If we do, there still may be time to repair America's foundations. Let your voices and your vote be heard for righteousness on Nov. 6!

Ben Yantis
Sebring

Vote Wally Cox for who he is

Editor:

I write this letter in support of Wally Cox for who he is when the door is shut and no one else is watching. Is that not a litmus test in judging the character of a person? Look at how he conducts his personal life.

I have known Mr. Cox for the last 13 years, and in that time I have recognized him to be a faithful husband, a superior example for his two children, an active listener and a man of honesty and humility. Wally works with a servant's heart, giving of both his time and treasure to many things that I personally know he requested anonymously from recognition or reward.

I look at his children who are people of character showing his ability to parent by example. I look at his peers throughout the state who bestowed the great honor of "Superintendent of the Year" to an unassuming man in rural Highlands County which had no politi-



cal gain to give such recognition. I know a man whose family has been here for generations and has nothing to gain by having any hidden agenda other than leaving our children with the best education our current economic times allow. I know a man of experience and integrity.

Even if you disagree with a decision, which is inevitable with any candidate you choose, Wally is a man of honor. Working under five superintendents is also supported by having a spouse who was a lifelong educator and making good choices in people he has placed in key positions. Having a teacher for a spouse myself, I can only assume Trish (spouse) did her duty in sharing with him a "ground level" perspective.

My own two elementary school-age children are happy, well adjusted and challenged daily to work to their maximum potential.

On a more sensitive point, our school system has the greatest level of cooperation in coordinating services for children who have been abused than at any time in our county's history. As the director of the Champion for Children Advocacy Center I can testify that we have the full cooperation from our school district in healing and educating our child victims of abuse.

I respectfully recommend you vote in support of Mr. Cox as Superintendent of Schools for the person he is, win or lose. I am a better person having known Wally Cox.

Jeffrey L. Roth
Avon Park

Cox deserves re-election

Editor:

I have the pleasure of working with present Superintendent of Schools Wally Cox for more than 30 years and have always found him to place the welfare of students and teachers in our school system as his highest priority.

A school district with in

excess of 1,500 employees and a multi-million dollar budget needs a person skilled in management at the helm. Wally has chosen to surround himself with talented educational administrators to run the various departments of the district.

Wally's wise management of our small educational share of the pie has prevented mass layoffs of teachers and limited the effect these cuts have upon our classrooms.

Mr. Cox comes from an educator family with Wally Sr., a long-time principal in the district; wife Tricia, a 30-plus media specialist, and daughter Katie, a teacher in the Orlando area. Wally makes it a special mission to seek advice for improvements in the district. Having served with him for the past ten years on the Highlands County Education Foundation board, I have found his eager desire to improve classroom performance commendable.

As a 35-year veteran of our school system, I can honestly say that Wally Cox is my choice and hopefully yours for Superintendent of Schools. He is the right person for the job.

Chet Brojek
Sebring

Consider the Amendments

Editor:

For the undecided and those who will vote soon, please do read the 11 constitutional amendments before you go to the polls.

This year's election is about change. The candidates running for office, president, Congress and especially the Florida Senate and House, do require consideration of change. Those undecided voters and especially those voting the first time need to study the issues, especially those 11 amendments.

Suggestion: Vote No on all 11 amendments. When you analyze them, you will discover that they give you something with one hand and take more from you with

the other.

Those voting for the first time were born before 2010. They will need to go back to 2001 to discover that a \$500 billion surplus was changed to an \$8 trillion national fiscal debt in 2008. Those toxic mortgages engineered by Wall Street, et al, caused the economy to collapse, so that when President Obama came to office, he was confronted with the Great Recession.

It took eight years for this crisis to fester, the Republicans faulted President Obama for only "stopping the bleeding." In fact, they blame him for this disaster.

Those 11 amendments are a symptom, especially in Florida, of what is troubling this nation.

Gabriel Read
Avon Park

Liberal politicians are biggest threat

Editor:

In Psalm 11:3, King David asks, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Every Christian in America needs to ask and biblically answer that question.

America is being shaken to her very foundation and the future of our country and posterity is at stake. It is not a hostile foreign enemy who is threatening to destroy our nation, but liberal politicians who have been entrusted to protect our country. What Christian people do or fail to do at this defining moment in history will forever impact our nation and family.

America's financial foundation is being destroyed by liberal politicians who are spending our country into a bottomless pit of debt. Our nation is more than \$16 trillion dollars in debt. It is almost impossible to comprehend how massive America's debt problem is. For example, if a person spent a million dollars every day, it would take 3,000 years to spend \$1 trillion dollars. Christians simply need to refuse to cast our vote for any candidate that is

not fiscally conservative.

America's moral foundation is being shaken. Liberal politicians are spitting in the face of God and biblical moral values by redefining marriage to include homosexual couples. Every Christian should refuse to cast their vote for any political candidate who supports gay marriage. Christian people must stop compromising their biblical Judeo-Christian values at the voting booth by casting their vote for those who unashamedly endorse gay marriage.

America's moral foundation also continues to be destroyed by immoral and unethical politicians who proudly stand for the systematic murder of millions of innocent unborn children. Our political leaders are elected to serve, defend and protect and yet many continue to sponsor and vote for legislation that supports and federally funds the murder of our nation's unborn children. It is unthinkable that any Christian would knowingly cast their vote for a candidate who is pro-abortion.

Vote responsibly!

Ben Yantis
Sebring

Those who outsourced jobs are problem

Editor:

Who were the senators and congressmen who betrayed America and the American people, by outsourcing millions of American jobs?

No matter whether they were Republican or Democrats, they betrayed America and the American people. They all should be arrested and tried for treason against America and the American people.

Think of that when you go and vote.

Don H. Streeter
Sebring

Who would God vote for President?

Editor:

If you don't believe in the Christian God of our founding fathers, don't waste your time reading this because you won't get it. Same sex marriage and killing the innocent up to the point of birth goes against all of our nation's Christian teachings. This election is all about the moral direction of this country. This is the first time in American history that our moral and religious values are on the election ballot.

We should be pleased that the President made his beliefs known to us. It tells us he believes the majority of Americans have the same moral beliefs and the ones who don't, will still vote for him because he offers more "stuff." It makes the decision of whom not to vote for very easy for devoted Christians.

I am disappointed that these moral and religious issues were not front and center in this election. I have heard very little outrage from our Christian clergy. I did read in the Tampa Tribune and give credit to, the black pastor of a church who told his congregation not to vote at all due to the moral shortcomings of the President. The separation of church and state applies if the state stays out of God's business. Birth and marriage are all about God's business. Please search your soul before you vote. I pray that the majority of American hearts are still righteous and moral. What good is it to be "promised" all the things of the world, only to lose your soul?

Bob Kurabieski
Lake Placid



News-Sun photo by CHRISTOPHER TUFFLEY

While Daddy Warbuck's assistant Grace Ferrell (Laura Wade) looks on, the orphans can't help but be jealous when Annie's invited to the mansion for a visit.

HLT's 'Annie' on stage tonight

Continued from page 1A

butler asks to take her new coat she throws up her fists and answers, "Are you going to give it back?"

Bill Davis is a perfect Daddy Warbucks — big, imposing and a marshmallow in Annie's hands. Laura Wade as his personal secretary Grace Ferrell is motherly, beautiful and kind.

The villains, as often happens, steal the show, however.

Ellen Lemos is the dastardly Hannigan, evil right down to the tip of her, er, pint bottle of vodka, but hilarious at the same time. For example, she makes the audience laugh while twisting the head off a doll as she sings an ode to little girls.

Not a master of empathy, in other words, Hannigan says, "why any kid would want to be an orphan I'll never know."

Playing her brother Rooster, Todd Coleman oozes and slinks across the stage, the quintessential snake-in-the-grass.

And as his girlfriend Lily (Johanna Johnston) nails the "Joisey Gurl" with a heart of gold — although her heart is not exactly worth 24 carats.

The three do a wonderful job with the number "Easy Street."

The orphans are all terrific. Energetic, in step and in harmony, they create excitement and command attention.

Besides the acting and the singing, the set design and choreography stand out.

The audience follows the characters from an orphanage bedroom, to a homeless gathering under a bridge, to a stunning uptown mansion to night time Times Square. All scene changes are done in smooth motions without lowering the curtain. Every inch of the stage is put to good use.

Most of the songs have become classics, such as "It's a Hard Knock Life," and "Tomorrow."

There are other numbers too, like the powerful "We'd Like to Thank You Herbert Hoover; You made us what we are today" an angry song, sung to stomping feet.

Special mention goes to Bucky, the 5-year-old Goldendoodle playing the part of Sandy the mutt.

Despite an audience in

front of him, speakers on either side of him and cans tied to his tail, Bucky hit every mark (and left no mark) in a subtle, finely-tuned performance.

This ambitious production, showcasing a wide range of talent. It is the perfect kickoff to the 2012-2013 season.

The orphans: Jacqueline Fernandez, Carly Juve, Madelyne Weaver, Nala Price, Julia Laframboise, Moriah Finney, Sylvia Weaver, Katie Shoemaker, and Katlyn Sassatelli.

The multi-cast chorus: Elise ChaeSean, Harley Aade, Amber Gerberich, Ashlee Carnahan, Payton Wright, Gennell Ward, Hannah Cribbs, Patrick Hely, Gary

Johnson III, Mark reyes, Javon Dennis, Kendall Haithcock, Jackson Davis, Brenda Hippchen, Gloria Coffey, Goldie Garnich, RoseMarie Tippins-Berenger, Larry Greer, Andy Basso, Glenn Fowler, Ryan Chandler, and Ron Thomas.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt is played by Art Harriman and Bert Healy by Pete Pollard.

"Annie" runs through Nov. 18, with evening shows Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; and matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call the box office at 382-2525 or visit the web site at www.highland-slittletheatre.org.

Election Day begins with early push of voters

Continued from page 1A

may have been attributable to a weather system that moved through the county during the morning, causing cooler temperatures and a few rain showers.

By 1 p.m. Wednesday afternoon, the supervisor's office had issued statistics showing that 29,224 ballots had been cast. The running total was 47 percent of the 62,076 registered voters in Highlands County.

That number belied the actual vote totals, inasmuch as it represented only the county's three largest precincts, which are connected to the supervisors office electronically. Also factored into that number were all the early voters, absentee and over-the-counter votes at the



Highlands County Government Center offices.

By the close Saturday, 16,989 residents had cast their ballots at locations in Avon Park, Sebring and Lake Placid.

Elections workers said that as of noon there had been no incidents at the polls. They also noted a brisk business of what were termed "over-the-counter absentees," with residents showing up at the supervisor's office to cast their bal-

lots at machines that were set up there for public convenience.

Members of the canvassing board spent most of the day Tuesday getting ready for the evening's count of ballots.

They reportedly wrapped up processing absentee and early voting ballots on Monday to be ready for counting after the polls closed.

More than 700 absentee ballots had to be duplicated for counting due to over-votes in some of the races.

This was the last official election for Highlands County Supervisor of Elections Joe Campbell, who announced he would not seek re-election after four terms as the elections chief here.

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