

The Bay Beacon

14 Pages, 2 Sections, 5 Inserts

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

50¢

UP
COMING

Wednesday, 9 a.m.

The **Valparaiso Garden Club** will hold its monthly meeting at the Mitchell Building, room 3, Valparaiso. There will

be a social with refreshments. Join the club and bid on several **pass-along plants**, grown by the members. Info: 678-1461.

Friday, 1 p.m.

The Valparaiso Community Library will hold a **"Hunger Games" pre-movie party**.

Celebrate the upcoming film by competing in **games for prizes**, including two movie tickets to the opening night. To sign up, call 729-5406, or email eruff@valp.org, and leave your name, age and District choice.



Saturday, 7 a.m.-noon

The **Niceville-Valparaiso Kiwanis Club** will hold a **pancake breakfast** and silent auction in the Niceville High School cafeteria.

Cost is \$4 for the breakfast. There is no admission charge for the auction.

Sunday, 6 p.m.

Bluewater Community Church will hold a **barbecue dinner**. Please make reservations by March 16. **Cost: \$10.** Info: 897-2332.



Calendar, B-2

Court nixes 2 area senate districts

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

The Florida Legislature today is scheduled to begin work to redraw two area legislative districts whose proposed boundaries were struck down Friday by the state Supreme Court.

The court rejected as unconstitutional parts of the Legislature's Senate reapportionment plan, including the proposed districts of two senators who represent the Niceville-Valparaiso area.



Sen. Don Gaetz

Among the eight new districts the court ordered redrawn are one containing the residence of Sen. Don Gaetz, Niceville, who heads the Senate panel that drafted the plan last year.

The legislature will convene in special session today to take another crack on the reapportionment plan in light of the court's 5-2 ruling.

"The Senate's plan plainly favors

Please see AREA, page A-2



The Florida Supreme Court ordered redrawn eight of 40 proposed State Senate districts, including two for Northwest Florida, districts 1 and 3.

Hello in there



A Niceville Little League catcher seems nearly lost in his gear during an opening-day game Saturday at Twin Oaks, Niceville. Earlier last week, the Valparaiso-Niceville Girls Softball Association began its season. Story, B-6.

Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

NHS seeks private funds for iPads

By Tess Hollis
Beacon Staff Writer

Niceville High School announced a campaign to raise at least \$200,000 to buy iPads and other computer gear for classroom use.

Principal Marcus Chambers said Monday that the money would fund purchase of the popular Apple mobile computing devices, as well as laptop computers, educational software and other materials.

The school hopes to raise the money by the end of May in order to start implementing the new technology in the fall.

"When students enter college, they are using lap



iPads may soon come to Niceville High School.

Please see IPADS, page A-4

Niceville service for slain soldier set tomorrow

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

A memorial service will be held tomorrow at the Niceville Church of Christ for Army Sgt. Joshua Born.

Sgt. Born, 25, was killed in Afghanistan Feb. 23 when a man dressed as an Afghan soldier turned his gun on him and another soldier, fatally wounding both.

Born was assigned to the 385th Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade (Airborne), XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort



Joshua Born

Please see SOLDIER, page A-4

Valp., Gulf Power settle 10-year fee dispute

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

The Valparaiso City Commission and Gulf Power Co. have settled their 10-year dispute over how much the company may charge for allowing them to attach its communications cables on the power company's utility poles.

The five-year agreement

appears to end a nine-year legal battle over how much Gulf Power could charge the city for attaching its communications cables to the poles.

In 2002, Gulf Power raised the annual rate it charged the city for each pole attachment from \$6.60 per pole to more than \$40. The power company said it was entitled to charge

the city a higher fee than normally allowed by the Federal Communications Commission.

As of January 2012, Gulf Power was billing Valparaiso \$46,568 a year for 1,147 pole attachments, while the city was paying at an annual rate of \$7,570, with the difference going into escrow, according to the city clerk.

Gulf Power lost in a case before the FCC that was initiated in a 2000 dispute between several cable companies and another utility owned by Southern Co., parent company of Gulf Power. The FCC decision was unsuccessfully appealed to an administrative law judge, and, just this year the power company lost its

appeal before the U.S. Appeals Court in Washington, D.C., according to Doug Wyckoff, Valparaiso's city attorney.

The new agreement between the company and Valparaiso includes an annual 2 percent escalator and calls for pole attachment fees of \$7.13 for 2011, \$7.27 for 2012, \$7.42 in 2013, \$7.57 in 2014 and \$7.72

in 2015. The new rates were accepted by several other cable operators in Florida, according to attorneys.

The new agreement eliminates the need for the city to maintain an escrow account—now more than \$416,000—for the benefit of Gulf Power at the

Please see DISPUTE, page A-8

\$6M upgrade OK'd for sewage plant

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

The Niceville, Valparaiso, Okaloosa County (NVO) Regional Sewer Board has approved award of a \$6 million construction contract to upgrade its effluent-treatment and disposal systems.

NVO board members also discussed a \$2.4 million offer from Okaloosa County to sell its share of the regional sewer utility to Niceville, in effect eliminating the county's participation in the regional utility.

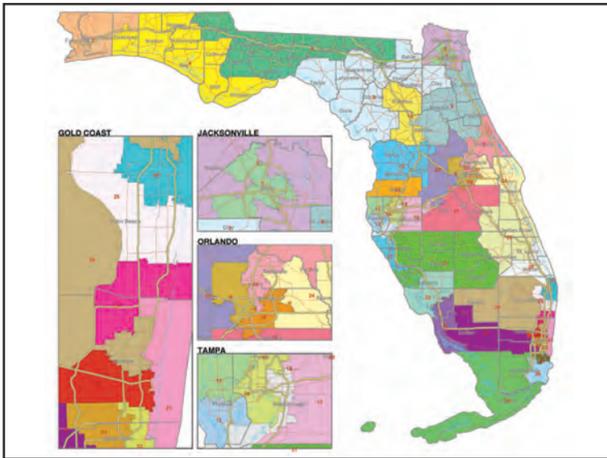
The sewer board unanimously approved award of a \$6,055,000 construction bid to the lowest of seven bidders at their March 7 meeting. Each of the contractors submitted separate bids on upgrading the wastewater treatment facility using the IFAS technology from two different manufacturers, on the conversion of the existing sprayfields to Rapid Infiltration Basin System (RIBS), and cleanup of existing tanks in the treatment plant.

Please see \$6M, page A-4



The Niceville, Valparaiso, Okaloosa County Regional Sewer Board plans costly improvements to its wastewater treatment plant, on Highway 85 North, Niceville, as well as its effluent-disposal system on leased Eglin land. The county has offered to sell its share of the regional utility to Niceville for \$2.4 million.

A redistricting plan proposed by the League of Women Voters was said to be more in line with what the Florida Supreme Court may consider to be constitutional, in "compactness" and in following boundaries of counties and cities.



AREA

From page A-1

certain incumbents by renumbering districts to allow them to serve longer than they would otherwise be eligible to serve," the court said in Friday's ruling.

The court ruled that eight of the 40 state Senate districts must be redrawn, including those of Gaetz and Evers, both Okaloosa County Republicans who represent parts of the Twin Cities.

Under the plan struck down by the court, the Niceville-Valparaiso area would no longer be split between two senate districts, but rather included in a district now home to Gaetz.

The terms of all Florida legislators expire late this year, so any who wish to continue in office must run for re-election in November in a reapportioned district.

Gaetz, who represents Valparaiso and most of Niceville

in the current Senate District 4, is chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee, and is slated to become the president of the Florida Senate in 2013 and 2014.

"We're very pleased," said Gaetz, that only eight of the Senate's 40 districts must be redrawn again.

"We're charting new ground," he said, referring to new reapportionment rules that voters imposed when in 2010 they approved Amendments 5 and 6 to the state constitution requiring legislative districts to be "fair" and compact, and to follow city and county boundaries as much as possible.

Gaetz described the high court's ruling as "an expected and

normal process" of the redistricting done every 10 years by the Florida Legislature to account for population changes. The aim is to ensure that all districts have an equal number of inhabitants, as measured by the U.S. Census.

The process is often fraught with political considerations, with critics contending that boundaries tend to be redrawn to favor incumbents.

The courts, Gaetz said, found fault with Florida reapportionment plans in 1982, 1992 and 2002.

The state Supreme Court approved the Florida House reapportionment plan, also passed by the Legislature during the just-completed regular session. It continues the Twin Cities area in a single House district.

The Senate's redistricting plan would have split Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton and Bay counties horizontally, east to west,



Sen. Greg Evers

Please see DISTRICTS, page A-6

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Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

The Northwest Florida State College Foundation governing board met in a new building at the college in Niceville last week.

College fund directors discuss financial position, donations

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

During their regular meeting in Niceville March 6, the board of directors of the Northwest Florida State College Foundation discussed the state of the foundation's finances, and how they are likely to be affected by trends in the national economy.

The board also reviewed an agreement to name a conference room in honor of a donor (the Carr, Riggs & Ingram accounting firm), and heard NWFSC President Ty Handy's concerns about giving free dual-enrollment college courses to top-performing high school students.

The NWFSC Foundation is the fundraising arm of the state college, soliciting and collecting money from private donors and other sources.

According to the foundation's "statement of financial position," the foundation's revenue was \$2,804,204 during the period from Oct. 1, 2011, to Jan. 31, 2012, up 6.9 percent from the \$2,624,166 in revenue

between Oct. 1, 2010, and Jan. 31, 2011. The total liabilities and fund balance of the foundation as of Jan. 31, 2012, was \$37,908,395, up 0.3 percent from a balance of \$37,780,255 on the same date in 2011.

Board member Wayne Campbell briefly discussed the foundation's IRS Form 990, the "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax."

Campbell explained that while it may seem absurd for a tax-exempt organization to be required to file a tax return, the federal government requires such documentation to confirm that the NWFSC Foundation is functioning as a non-profit organization, and is indeed exempt from income tax. He said that the tax return covering the year ended Sept. 2011, is ready for filing, as the foundation recently completed a survey of its members, assuring that board members have disclosed any personal business relationships that could potentially cause a conflict of interest for them when voting on foundation business.

Campbell said the foundation applied for, and was automatically granted, a three-month extension for filing the tax return, to allow time for completing the surveys.

Foundation board member Lamar Conerly said that the NWFSC board of trustees recently sought a legal opinion from the Florida state attorney's office as to whether a conflict of interest was created when the college hired Conerly's law firm as the college's new legal counsel. The state attorney referred the question to the state ethics committee, which stated that no such conflict exists.

Foundation financial advisor Ray McGovern, of the Merrill Lynch financial firm, said the national economic environment has been getting better. The value of the foundation's investment portfolio is up by 4.99 percent this year—better than the 0.12 percent growth of last year. McGovern said he expects the national economy will "continue to muddle along," as political leaders delay key decisions about economic policy until

after the general election in November. At least until then, he said, interest rates are expected to remain at their current levels, which are at a 30-year low.

Some issues that could affect the national economy in the near future, McGovern said, include the ongoing nuclear crisis with Iran, rising oil and gas prices, and the potential effect of European debt on the world economy. He said the second half of the year will be more challenging than the first for investors, but that high-quality, dividend-paying stocks are still a good investment. McGovern concluded that economic data is currently improving, and that the economy is off to a much better start this year than last.

Foundation directors also reviewed an agreement between the foundation and the Carr, Riggs, & Ingram accounting firm to establish the "Carr, Riggs & Ingram Leadership Institute Naming Endowment." The agreement calls for Carr, Riggs & Ingram to donate \$3,333 to the foundation by June 1, followed by a series of additional donations totaling no less than \$16,667 by June 1, 2016. The foundation will match every \$2 donated by Carr, Riggs & Ingram with \$1 of its own, up to \$8,333. The college will also name a 514-square-foot conference room at its new leadership institute the "Carr, Riggs & Ingram Conference Room." Funds from the endowment may be used to support and maintain the leadership institute, or for other purposes of the college.

Handy told the foundation directors that the college's men's and women's basketball teams are each ranked near first place nationally, and as of the meeting date, were still in contention in national tournaments.

Handy said that he expects the upcoming state budget for community colleges to remain "flat," and that he expects a tuition hike of about 5 percent next year. Handy also expressed his "personal philosophical problem" with how the state funds dual-enrollment college courses for high school students. High school students who quali-

fy for dual-enrollment courses, he said, are allowed to earn college credit for completing such courses without paying any tuition, since they take them as part of their tax-funded public high school education. Meanwhile, however, less-advanced high school students who take only secondary-level courses while in high school, but who pursue higher education after graduating, must pay tuition to take the same courses at colleges. Thus, colleges lose potential revenue, he asserted.

In addition, said Handy, the dual-enrollment system may be unfair to taxpayers and to other students, because many of the high school students who are academically advanced enough to take dual-enrollment courses also come from well-to-do families. By giving such top students college courses at no direct cost to them, Handy said, the taxpayer is subsidizing many affluent families, while less-affluent students must complete college courses partially at their own expense or seek financial aid.

However, even in the case of a community-college student who pays full tuition and receives no financial aid, state taxpayers fund the lion's share of his or her education.

Corrections

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office said March 8 that it had recorded incorrect addresses in two recent arrest reports.

Two unrelated articles published in the Bay Beacon March 7, both relying on the arrest reports, used the incorrect addresses that had been recorded by the sheriff's office.

A story reporting the arrest of Ralph Banegas, under the headline "N. Bay Fire book-keeper arrested," reported an incorrect address for Banegas, according to the sheriff's office. The sheriff's office now says his correct address is 4493 Parkwood Square, Niceville.

—In an unrelated case, a story reporting the arrest of Deshaun Roosevelt Frazier, under the headline "Niceville man arrested as a cocaine dealer," gave an incorrect address for Frazier, the sheriff's office now says.

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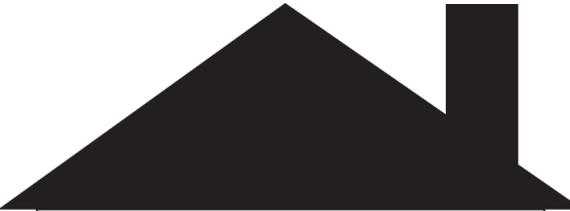
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SOLDIER

From page A-1
Stewart, Ga. He was one month into a year-long deployment to Afghanistan when he was killed. Joshua Born was the son of Craig Born of Niceville and Elizabeth Croft of Fort Walton Beach.

"He and I were a lot more like buddies," his father said. "We traveled a lot around the country."
Sgt. Born graduated from Niceville High School in 2005 and joined the Army six years ago. In addition to his parents he is survived by his wife, Megan, of Olive Branch, Ill. Funeral

services were held in Illinois last week, where he was laid to rest in the Mound City National Cemetery.
Niceville Church of Christ Pastor Joe Palmer said the memorial was requested by Sgt. Born's father, who was unable to attend his son's funeral in Illinois. Friends of Sgt. Born

have been asked to speak at the memorial, Palmer said.
The memorial service is set for Thursday, March 15, at 4:30 p.m., at the Niceville Church of Christ, 801 E. John Sims Parkway, across the street from Niceville High School. The service is open to the public, according to Palmer.

\$6M

From page A-1
Each company also provided bids on an alternative project to upgrade existing power generators at the plant.
The upgrade, cost of which will ultimately be borne by sewer customers, is required to meet state anti-pollution standards and to reduce the magnitude of a costly effluent-disposal sprayfield lease from Eglin Air Force Base.

Lake Monroe, \$6,267,000.
—P.F. Moon & Co. Inc., West Point, Ga., \$6,867,500.
—J&P Construction Co. Inc., Tuscaloosa, Ala., \$6,943,000.
—Cardinal Contractors Inc., Lakewood Ranch, \$7,348,898.
—RTD Construction Inc., Zephyrhills, \$7,452,581.
—Marshal Brothers Industrial Inc., Lynn Haven, \$7,548,800.

pump station to divert sewage from the unincorporated Bluewater Bay area (now being treated at the NVOC plant) to the county's new 10-million-gallon-per-day (mgd) Arbennie Pritchett treatment plant, located near Fort Walton Beach, Littrell said.
About a year ago Littrell had offered to divert all of the sewage flow now being treated at the NVOC regional plant to the Pritchett plant, with Niceville and Valparaiso paying the county for the service. The two cities rejected the plan, which would have resulted in closure of the regional plant in Niceville, as too costly.

Niceville expects development of nearly 1,100 acres of undeveloped land owned by Ruckel Properties, said Lannie Corbin, the city manager and also a sewer board member. There are also about 250 to 300 acres of undeveloped lots in other parts of the city, he said.
The city's current capital improvements plan calls for a \$4.25 million (present day cost) 1 mgd expansion of the wastewater treatment plant by 2018. The expansion would be funded by a future borrowing. Corbin and the city staff generally favor the proposed buyout of the county's share because it appears to be a less costly way to buy increased sewage treatment capacity.

North Florida Construction, Clarksville, was the lowest and winning bidder with a total of \$6,083,750. The board approved the bid, including the alternative bid of upgrading the generators. The North Florida Construction bid was \$28,750 less than its price quote on the generator upgrade, according to board's engineer, Glenn Stephens, of Polyengineering.

The sewer plant upgrade is designed around a new technology known as Integrated Fixed-film Activated Sludge (IFAS), a technology that removes more nitrogen-based nutrients from the wastewater. Bidders were asked to offer separate bids on IFAS technology provided by two companies, Kruger and Siemens, and Siemens was selected based on the lower bid prices.

Niceville now owns 43.6 percent of the permitted 3.35 mgd regional wastewater treatment plant, the equivalent of 1,462,605 gallons day, Littrell said. During three of the past 12 months the sewage flow from Niceville has exceeded its own treatment capacity, he said, and the city has had to "borrow" unused capacity from its two partners.

The city is considering using money from its Sewer Extension Fund to fund the purchase. That money is currently earmarked to extend sewer service to unincorporated areas of the Niceville area, such as parts of the Rocky Bayou community.
As Niceville continues to build, "tap fees," charges of about \$6,000 per house to connect to the sewer system, will refund the sewer extension fund.

Other bidders and their bids were:
—Wharton-Smith Inc.,

The county, which borrowed \$3 million in anticipation of the NVOC plant upgrade, would prefer to use the borrowed money to help build a 10-mile pipeline and

Niceville City Council and the Okaloosa County Commission have both been given an overview of the proposed deal, and both bodies asked their staffs to draft a proposed agreement.
The county, which borrowed \$3 million in anticipation of the NVOC plant upgrade, would prefer to use the borrowed money to help build a 10-mile pipeline and

Littrell told the Beacon that if Niceville doesn't agree to the buyout that the county would be obligated to continue as a partner of the NVOC regional treatment facility.
Over the next few years

IPADS

From page A-1
tops, iPads and other technology," Chambers said. "We have one of the strongest high schools in Florida, and we want to make sure our students are on the cutting edge of technology and learning with other students in the state."
According to Donnie Pridgen, Niceville High School Advanced Placement coordinator, all money raised from businesses, individuals, government and other sources in what the school dubbed the Eagles Technology Campaign would be earmarked for the tech program.

interactive textbooks, and can be accessed for in-class research. Pridgen said there are also many educational apps, or software applications, that teachers can use to help engage students.
The clickers will allow instructors to ask questions through a PowerPoint presentation, and gather responses by having the students click a remote-type device. The gear aids teachers in gauging how well the class understands the material.

or wireless Internet access, is provided by L3 Titan Communications, which monitors its use. Pridgen said the same company will monitor the new technological devices to ensure students are using them strictly for school purposes and not, say, to tend their Facebook pages or watch YouTube videos.
Pridgen added that school filters block students from going to undesirable web pages, and those filters will be used for the iPads, as well.

ing money from the school, and they have been supportive of this, as they are with many of our projects," Chambers said. The school has embarked on the campaign because of budget cuts at the state and district levels, Chambers added.
On top of receiving donations, the school is coordinating fundraisers with area fast food restaurants, as well as writing grants to receive funding. Individuals or businesses can also adopt a classroom and fund the devices needed for that particular class.



Marcus Chambers

"Initially, the goal is to get teachers the tools they need to help students become even more successful," Pridgen said. "For example, we would like to provide a 'clicker system' to teachers who still do not have one, but have asked for one. Perhaps one teacher may greatly benefit by having a document camera and another teacher may be comfortable with a classroom set of iPads."
Pridgen added that class sets of iPad computer tablets and laptops will be a goal, but the amount of money raised in the campaign will dictate what can be purchased, and how many. iPads retail for \$500 apiece.
The iPads will be used as

"Some technology campaign funds may provide training for teachers," he said. "It will be important that the technology and teacher are paired up appropriately. Our goal is to ensure that any technology put into a classroom becomes a part of that classroom's instructional framework."
Once the new technology is purchased, the devices will be housed at the school, however, depending on the nature of the lesson or project, some of the technology equipment could be signed out for use elsewhere.
Currently, the school's WiFi,

"We want to strengthen an already powerful educational environment," Pridgen said. "We have good technology now, but we want to move beyond that, and go above and beyond."
According to Chambers, the campaign resulted from various Niceville citizens and businesses wanting to help the school. Currently several businesses have already pledged to donate funds.
"When it comes to giving, this community has always helped," Chambers said. "We have a very generous community, and they are often asked to help, and if they can't, we understand. ...Even if it's just a few dollars, every bit counts for this campaign."
The school was required to submit a fundraiser request to the Okaloosa County School District, which was approved.
"The district is not withhold-

ing money from the school, and they have been supportive of this, as they are with many of our projects," Chambers said. The school has embarked on the campaign because of budget cuts at the state and district levels, Chambers added.
On top of receiving donations, the school is coordinating fundraisers with area fast food restaurants, as well as writing grants to receive funding. Individuals or businesses can also adopt a classroom and fund the devices needed for that particular class.
According to Chambers, those who donate will be recognized in various ways.
To oversee and manage the funds received, a capital campaign committee is being formed of business leaders, parents and teachers.
"I believe it is imperative that we have a committee in place comprised of various stakeholders whose role is to provide insight, direction and accountability," Chambers said. "An important role of the committee will be to ensure that sound decisions are made in regards to how many funds are expended."
Anyone interested in supporting the Eagles Technology Campaign should contact the school at 833-4114, or, chambersm@mail.okaloosa.k12.fl.us.

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Police Blotter

The following accounts of the activities of police are according to records of the Niceville and Valparaiso police departments, the Okaloosa County and Walton County sheriff's offices, other law-enforcement agencies, and the Okaloosa County and Walton County jails.

Arrests

Renee Colette Spara, unemployed, 31, of 300 21st St., Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police March 2 on a charge of dealing in stolen property. On Oct. 3, 2011, and Jan. 23, 2012, Spara is alleged to have pawned jewelry she knew to be stolen from a Niceville resident.

Two Niceville boys, ages 12 and 13, were arrested by Niceville police Feb. 28 and charged with felony criminal mischief. Another Niceville boy, 12, was arrested on March 2 on the same charge. The three boys, all students, allegedly caused an estimated \$10,000 in damages to a vacant mobile home Jan. 21. The defendants spray-painted graffiti on the walls, broke two windows, and knocked holes in the walls with a baseball bat and a hammer. The three boys were released, and each is scheduled for a court hearing in Fort Walton Beach April 11.

Harold James Thomas, 55, of 304 Reeves St., Lot F-13, Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police March 1 on a charge of affray. The charge stems from a physical altercation with another individual Aug. 14.

Tyler Mason Bass, 18, of 230 NE Marshall Drive, Fort Walton Beach, was arrested by Niceville police March 1 on a charge of leaving the scene of an accident. Subsequent to a verbal argument with the victim Oct. 23, Bass allegedly drove away from the 600 block of Highway 85 North, Niceville, after his vehicle struck the victim as he was walking to his vehicle. The victim suffered minor injuries.

James Michael Hamill, unemployed, 28, of 616 Crestview Ave., Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police March 1 on charges of disorderly conduct, battery and resisting an officer without violence.

Neal Edward Goodrich, a military member, 24, of 362-B Lincoln Ave., Valparaiso, was arrested by Valparaiso police Feb. 28 on charges of battery and criminal mischief.

Gary Wayne Grammer, 62, of 205-A Chicago Ave., Valparaiso, was arrested by Valparaiso police March 4 on a charge of discharging a firearm in public. Grammer allegedly discharged a black-powder .44-caliber ball 1860 replica pistol into a log in his front yard, from his front porch.

A 13-year-old Valparaiso girl was arrested by Valparaiso police March 4 on a charge of battery, domestic violence. Subsequent to an argument about text messages on the girl's phone, the 13-year-old girl allegedly bit her mother's right wrist and scratched the upper part of her arm when the victim tried to grab the girl's cell phone.

John Paul Barnett, 30, of 1405 Cape Lane, Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police Feb. 27 on a charge of theft. On Sept. 26, Barnett allegedly was caught on surveillance cameras entering the office of a store, 701 W. John Sims Parkway, and stealing a wallet and checkbook from an employee's purse.

Barnett was also arrested by Niceville police March 1 on a charge of attempting to cash a check with intent to defraud. On Oct. 17 Barnett allegedly tried to cash a \$500 payroll check at the Niceville Walmart drawn on an account he knew to be closed. After being refused, Barnett allegedly selected some merchandise to purchase and attempted to write another check on the closed account and presented someone else's Florida ID as his own.

Jan Christopher Montgomery, 27, of 934 Rue de Palms, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 29 for failure to appear on charges of driving while license suspended or revoked with prior conviction, possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia.

A 16-year-old Niceville boy, a student, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 26 on a charge of car burglary. On Jan. 6 the boy allegedly stole a piece of luggage sitting in the front passenger seat of an unlocked vehicle while it was parked at Niceville High School. The suitcase contained a video game system, a game controller and several games.

Charlton Barnhurst Buford, 21, of 2 Bayshore Drive, Freeport, was arrested by sheriff's deputies Feb. 27 on a charge of petit theft. On Jan. 17 Buford allegedly ordered food and beverages at a Niceville restaurant, 4400 E. Highway 20, then walked out without paying the \$24.65 bill. A witness picked Buford out of a photographic lineup.

Nicholas Kip Gaines, 31, of 704 29th St., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies on a charge of DUI on Highway 98, Feb. 25 at 3:34 a.m.

Cris Alan Lyttle, 27, of 107 Bermuda Way, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies, subsequent to a traffic crash with \$500 damage and no injury to others, on a charge of DUI at State Road 293 and U.S. Highway 98, Destin, Feb. 26 at 3:50 a.m.

A Valparaiso business owner reported Feb. 29 that unknown person(s) had accessed the business' email system and "taken" information, including insurance files and client's Social Security numbers.

An employee at a Valparaiso business, 143 John Sims Parkway, reported that unknown person(s) stole an iPod and a GPS unit from his unlocked vehicle, and damaged the center console of the car, while it was parked on the north side of the building March 1.

A Valparaiso business owner reported that sometime March 4-5 unknown person(s) entered a storage building on his property, 315 Kelly Road, and stole a \$371 roll of copper, a \$700 transit and tripod and a \$600 saw. An employee stated that he followed a pair of dolly tracks from the storage facility to the city water tower at the corner of Marquette Street and Wolverine Avenue. The dolly

Fire Department Reports

Niceville

The Niceville Fire Department responded to the following calls from March 5, 2012 through March 11, 2012.

0 Structure Fire	18 Emergency Medical Calls
0 Vehicle Fire	3 Vehicle Crash
0 Other Fire/ Vehicle Crash with Extrication	
0 Illegal Burn	3 Other Emergency Calls
0 False Alarms	1 Hazardous Conditions

Street	Situation	Date	Time
Nathey Avenue	Medical	03/05/12	13:55
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Vehicle Crash	03/05/12	18:24
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Medical	03/05/12	21:23
Union Avenue	Cancelled	03/06/12	13:50
Redwood Avenue	Medical	03/06/12	16:30
Tala Way	Medical	03/07/12	01:31
Kildare Circle	Medical	03/07/12	07:29
N. Partin Drive	Medical	03/07/12	10:25
Bahia Vista Drive	Gas Leak	03/07/12	15:39
Regatta Drive	Medical	03/07/12	18:39
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Service Call	03/07/12	19:07
E. College Blvd.	Medical	03/08/12	13:54
Weeden Island Drive	Medical	03/08/12	14:40
37th Street	Medical	03/08/12	17:36
Rocky Bayou Drive	Medical	03/08/12	18:11
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Vehicle Crash	03/08/12	18:35
SR85N/SR123	False Call	03/08/12	22:22
Magnolia Shores	Medical	03/09/12	07:20
W. John Sims Pkwy.	Medical	03/10/12	00:14
SR85N	Medical	03/10/12	14:36
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Vehicle Crash	03/10/12	19:32
College Cove	Medical	03/11/12	11:36
Kelly Road	Medical	03/11/12	11:47
Nathey Avenue	Medical	03/11/12	12:04
Reeves Street	Medical	03/11/12	17:01

Weekly Safety Tip: Weekly Safety According to the U.S. Fire Administration - every year, approximately 2,600 Americans die in home fires. Over half of these deaths (52 percent) occur between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., when residents are typically sleeping. Smoke and toxic gases from a home fire are as deadly as heat and flames. Just two or three breaths of toxic smoke can render you unconscious. Smoke detectors save lives. Test smoke detectors every month and replace batteries twice a year. Please look at the Niceville Fire Department web page on Facebook.

North Bay

The North Bay Fire Department responded to the following calls from March 5, 2012 through March 11, 2012.

Street	Situation	Date	Time
Cat Mar Road	EMS excluding vehicle	03/05/12	01:29
Olde Post Road	EMS excluding vehicle	03/05/12	02:27
Wright Circle	Alarm system activation	03/05/12	09:53
Parkwood Circle	Overheated motor	03/05/12	11:30
Pearl S. Buck Court	EMS excluding vehicle	03/05/12	12:48
Saint Andrews Cove	Assist invalid	03/05/12	13:38
N. White Point Road	Medical assist EMS	03/06/12	08:17
Union Avenue	Dispatched canceled	03/06/12	13:52
N. White Point Road	Medical assist EMS	03/07/12	04:00
Blue Pine Lane	Natural vegetation fire	03/07/12	20:32
N. White Point Road	EMS excluding vehicle	03/07/12	22:00
East Highway 20	EMS excluding vehicle	03/08/12	09:36
N. White Point Road	Dispatched canceled	03/09/12	00:49
Oakwood Circle	EMS excluding vehicle	03/09/12	12:14
Sonoma Circle	EMS excluding vehicle	03/09/12	12:47
White Point Road	EMS excluding vehicle	03/10/12	09:22
Merchants Way	EMS excluding vehicle	03/10/12	16:19
Pinehurst Cove	EMS excluding vehicle	03/10/12	17:50
Blue Pine Lane	EMS excluding vehicle	03/11/12	04:04
Pinehurst Cove	EMS excluding vehicle	03/11/12	13:08
Mossy Cove Court	EMS excluding vehicle	03/11/12	13:31

Visit northbayfd.org for more information.

was found on the victim's property.

A 46-year-old man from Holt reported March 6 that two men stole the pickup truck he had been test driving after he pulled into a gas station, 100 Redwood Ave., Niceville, and started to get out of the vehicle. The man claimed he was forced to the ground by a man in a gray hoodie with an 8-inch hunting knife on his belt, while the other man entered the truck through the passenger side.

The victim said the man who forced him to the ground took his keys. The alleged attacker and his companion then drove eastbound on State Road 20, according to the man from Holt. The victim said he had come to a used car lot, 1010 E. John Sims Parkway, Niceville, to buy a vehicle and had taken the 2004 GMC four-door pickup to Freeport for various reasons before returning to Niceville about two-and-a-half hours later, and stopping to put gas in the truck.

A Niceville man from the 200 block of Niceville Avenue reported March 6 that unknown person(s) stole his \$428 backpack blower. The victim said he had used the blower and left it outside the front yard fence near the street, and went back into his residence. When he remembered he had left the blower outside he returned to find it missing.

It was reported March 2 that unknown person(s) stole copper wire from a home construction site in the 6000 block of Sterling River Way, Niceville.

A Niceville resident from the 200 block of Fir Avenue reported March 4 that someone had stolen prescription medications from her bedroom.

Breona Monet Hicks, 18, of 708 E. Scott St., Pensacola, and Kenisha Danielle Ezell, 19, no address given, were issued criminal summonses by Niceville police Feb. 27, each charged with retail theft.



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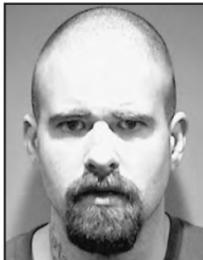
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 Niceville's Newspaper

Okaloosa seeks fugitives

This information is from reports by the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office.

Name: Jessie Lee Davis
 Wanted for: robbery by sudden snatching and several misdemeanor charges.
 Height: 6-feet, 5-inches
 Weight: 220 pounds
 Age: 26
 Date of birth: 09-06-1985
 Hair: brown
 Eyes: blue



Name: Samantha Ann Armstrong
 Wanted for: violation of probation on the original charges of burglary, grand theft and dealing in stolen property. Armstrong's last known address was in Milton.
 Height: 5-feet, 3-inches
 Weight: 106 pounds
 Age: 28
 Date of birth: 01-18-1984
 Hair: blond
 Eyes: brown



This information is from reports by the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. A reward is offered by Emerald Coast Crime Stoppers, 863-8477, or 1-888-654-8477. Information can also be provided anonymously by texting "TIP214 plus the message" to CRIMES (274637)

THE INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER —Mike Griffith



How well do you think the presidential candidates of either party are addressing issues of particular interest to women?

Location:
Niceville
soccer and
little league
complex



"I think they're focusing on the economy and national security, and staying away from social issues."

Monica Atkinson, 35,
Niceville,
stay-home mom



"There really hasn't been a whole lot of focus on women's issues that I've noticed."

Doreen Hart, 42,
Niceville,
mom



"The issue that most interests me is how to lower gas prices."

Amy Oliver,
Niceville,
Hurlburt Field public affairs



"They're not deliberately avoiding women's issues, but they're focusing on the 'hot topics,' like the economy and foreign policy."

Travis Hill, 44,
Bluewater Bay,
military



"I think Rick Santorum best addresses family values and speaks to what I'm looking for."

Dana Topel, 41,
Niceville,
Realtor



"The only women's issue I've heard discussed so far is birth control."

Cory Borcharding, 40,
Milton,
social worker

What should we ask next week? Email your suggested question to: info@baybeacon.com Include "Suggested IP question" in the "subject" field.

DISTRICTS

From page A-2

into Senate districts 1 and 3. The proposed new districts were similar to the current Senate districts 4 (Gaetz) and 2 (Evers), created in 2002. Both the old and proposed districts are notably long, and narrow in spots, extending from the Alabama line west of Panama City (proposed District 1), or even

to the Apalachicola River, edge of the Eastern time zone (proposed District 3).

Advocates of maintaining the extended north-south division said it would prevent the interests of the largely rural northern parts of those counties—now represented by Evers—from being overshadowed by those of the more heavily populated coastal communities to the south, currently represented by Gaetz.

But the high court ruled that

the redistricting map for Senate districts 1 and 3 "sacrificed compactness—a constitutional imperative—in order to keep coastal communities together." The court also said the north-south split "followed numerous different boundaries when drawing Districts 1 and 3, often switching between different types of boundaries within the space of a few miles, it sacrificed compactness, not in a reasoned balancing effort to comply with the requirements

of equal population or to utilize political or geographical boundaries such as municipal or county boundaries, but rather to create a coastal district and an inland rural district."

"We also consider it significant that in doing so, a high percentage of population from predecessor districts was retained to the benefit of the incumbents," the court justices ruled.

The court mentioned favorably a competing plan submitted by

the Florida League of Women Voters, which sued to block the Senate's proposed plan. The league plan, which the court stopped short of endorsing, would include Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, and the north half of Okaloosa County, in District 1, rather than extending it along the coastline across five counties.

Gaetz said he expected districts 1 and 3 to be redrawn following county and city political boundaries. The court favors political boundaries such as county lines, he said, a position that was also taken by the coalition (the Democratic Party, The League of Women Voters and Common Cause) that challenged the Republican-dominated Legislature's 2012 redistricting plan.

The House and Senate, which ended its 60-day annual regular session Friday, will reconvene in Tallahassee at 1 p.m. today, March 14, in a special session called by Gov. Rick Scott, Gaetz said. The Senate Reapportionment Committee Gaetz chairs will meet for about 10 minutes on the Senate floor, he said, then with lawyers and to instruct staff to draft options that would meet the court's criteria. Most of the rest of the Legislature will go home after today's meeting, Gaetz said, while the Senate

Reapportionment Committee will meet next week, probably Tuesday, March 20, to consider the options and recommend a new plan.

The Legislature has 15 days to pass a new plan, Gaetz said.

Gaetz and Evers said they would seek reelection regardless of how the map is finalized.

"In deference to the court, we've got to redraw the maps," said Evers, who also serves on the Senate Reapportionment Committee. Evers' current Senate district, concentrated in northern, rural parts of the Panhandle, includes the Rocky Bayou area of Niceville. The proposed district in which he lives, continuing to be largely rural, would not have included any part of the Twin Cities.

A redrawn map could place both Evers and Gaetz, both Okaloosa County residents, in the same district.

Gaetz said he too intends to run for reelection no matter how the districts are redrawn or who any opponent might be. "I love the campaign," he said.

Gaetz said as the president-designate of the Senate, his Senate presidency would be beneficial to residents of Northwest Florida. The last Senate president from Okaloosa County was Newnan Brackin in 1949, he said.

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DISPUTE

From page A-1

higher rate. The escrow requirement was established in 2003 in case Gulf Power won its case.

The new agreement also allows Valparaiso and Gulf Power to complete a franchise agreement that expired last year. A franchise agreement continu-

ing Gulf Power's exclusive right to provide electric service inside the city was being held up by the lack of agreement on the pole attachment fee issue.

At one point city officials said they might establish a municipal utility to replace Gulf Power's distribution network in Valparaiso. City Administrator Carl Scott said Tuesday that the

idea is now dead.

The agreement on the pole attachment issue Monday came on a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Diane Kelley asking for the vote to be tabled until April.

Joe Morgan, who will take office as a city commissioner next week, also asked the commission to postpone a vote to

give more time to review the 36-page document.

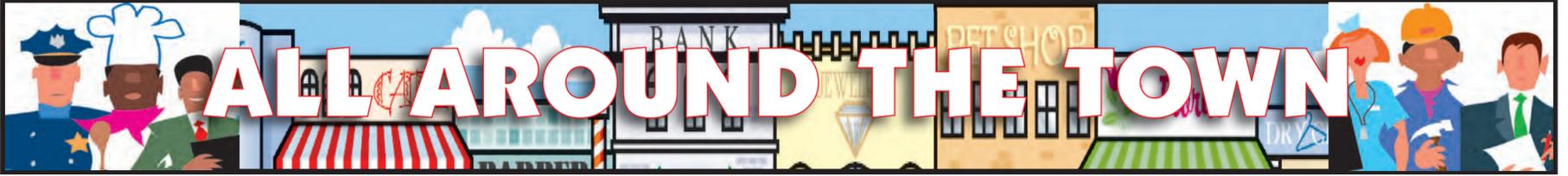
Commissioner Tom Miller, who has been closely involved in the issue, said he wanted to vote on the agreement before he left office. Monday was his last meeting as commissioner after serving since first being elected in 1996. He lost a bid for reelection earlier this year.

In other business, Mayor Bruce Arnold lauded the accomplishments of Miller over his 16-year career on the city commission, and those of Commissioner Neal Shermer over the two years as an appointed member. The mayor presented plaques to both men, with four dollar coins on Miller's plaque for his service during his

last four year-term and two dollars on Shermer's. Commissioners serve for a dollar a year.

A reception honoring Miller will be held March 19, from 2 to 4 p.m., at city hall.

Two new commissioners, Morgan and Kay Hamilton, will be sworn in to office at noon, March 20.



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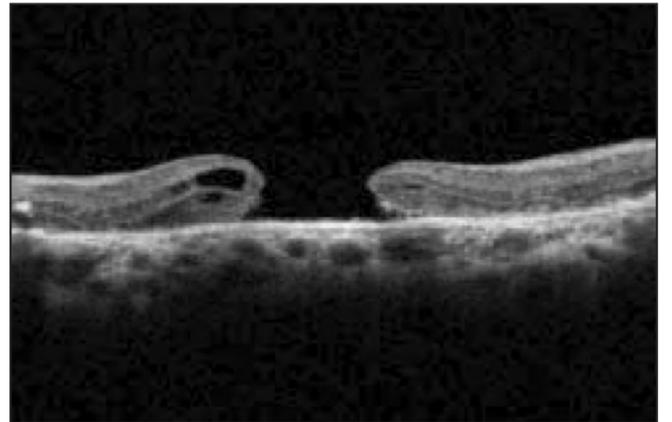
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Courtesy photo

Members of First Baptist Church of Niceville's Faithful Fingers show off some of the quilts they recently made that will be sent to children in Guatemala.

Faithful Fingers to send quilts to Guatemala

The volunteers of First Baptist Church of Niceville's fledgling ministry, Faithful Fingers, are making quilts, lots of them. Forty children's quilts will be going with the church's mission team to a malnutrition center in Guatemala in March. The quilts, were displayed in the church and blessed on March 11, then turned over to the mission team leader, Nancy Grigsby.

The malnutrition center, sponsored by the Florida Baptist Children's Home, takes in starving children and nurses and nourishes them back to health.

"It's really very neat," Grigsby said. "We send the children back home with clothing and food. Now they will be taking the quilts home with them, as well. They enjoy sitting on these brightly colored quilts and sleeping under them."

The church's ministry and its volunteers have been working

on the quilts for five months.

"I like to see the children smile," said ministry director Yoshi Neal. "The quilts make them happy."

Faithful Fingers has other ongoing projects including, trademark caring angel lap quilts made for members of the congregation who are suffering from long-term illnesses; patriotic "Prayer Squares" made and sent to troops; colorful draw-string bags (600 of them) to be sent in Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes in December; and children's quilts for Children in Crisis. Twelve children's quilts will be given to the Niceville Police Department in the spring.

Faithful Fingers meets the first and third Friday of each month from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., in the church's gymnasium/fellowship hall, where tables are set up to accommodate the sewing machines and cutting areas needed by the group.

Students go head-to-head in annual Math Bowl

By Tess Hollis
Staff Writer

Rocky Bayou Christian School, Collegiate High School and Rickards High School each took home first place in their divisions at Friday's 25th annual Math Bowl, held on the Northwest Florida State College Niceville campus.

Students from 22 Northwest Florida high schools convened at the college to show their smarts and compete in the event.

The competition, sponsored by area groups that support STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), started at 9:30 a.m. with a written exam, and concluded with a ciphering contest.

During the ciphering contest, two students from each school worked together to solve math equations within a two-minute time-frame. The ciphering contest consisted of various algebra, trigonometry, analytic geometry, plane geometry and calculus problems.

Malcolm Foley, a junior at Choctawhatchee High School, said he was not nervous about any of the events at the Math Bowl.

"I have a good memory, and it just comes naturally to me," he said. "It's just fun and very interesting to see people like myself who are good at math altogether. It's a rarity in most high schools."

Angela Fortune, an AP calculus teacher and sponsor of the Crestview High School math team, brought 10 of her students to compete in the tournament.

"Science and engineering are going to be the future for



Beacon photo by Tess Hollis

Ronette Kortbein and Sabrina Valenti, both juniors at Niceville High School, concentrate during the ciphering contest of the Math Bowl that was held on Friday, at Northwest Florida State College.

America," Fortune said. "Events like this build up interest in science and math, and it's a good way to get students interested in what's going to be the wave of the future."

See results, page B-5

Each school was divided into a class, X, Y, or Z, depending on the school's size. If a school scored high during the written exams, they could work their way up into a higher class for

the ciphering portion of the tournament.

"It's fun to see the talent of other schools here," said Rocky Bayou Christian School senior Graham Pierce. This was Graham's first time at the Math Bowl.

Wesley Olson, a senior at Northwest Florida State Collegiate High School, said events such as the Math Bowl are his "niche."

"You see a lot tougher problems here, which makes it fun," Wesley said. "In class

you see the same problems you have been practicing over and over, but the Math Bowl takes everything you've learned and brings it all together."

Alexander Russ, also a student at Collegiate High School, agreed with Wesley.

"It's fun to see other people in the hallways or at the tables all focusing on working out math problems," Alexander said. "You don't see that normally."

In the Service

Todd A. Hohn, son of Roger and Linda Hohn of Niceville, has been selected for promotion to the rank of colonel in the U.S. Air Force.

Hohn is the commander of 16th Airlift Squadron at Joint Base Charleston, S.C. He has

served in the military for 17 years.

His wife, Kathy Byrd-Hohn, is the daughter of Robert and Anne Byrd of Merritt Island.

Hohn graduated in 1989 from Niceville High School, and received a bachelor of arts in 1994 from Florida State University, Tallahassee. He also earned a master's degree in 2002 from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach.

Twin Cities Hospital ranks in top 10 percent for patient experience



Twin Cities Hospital, Niceville, was a recipient of the 2011 Outstanding Patient Experience Award. The local hospital rank among the top 10 percent of hospitals in the U.S.

Courtesy photo

HealthGrades, a source for researching and selecting doctors and hospitals, recently named Twin Cities Hospital, Niceville, a recipient of the 2011 Outstanding Patient Experience Award.

This distinction ranks Twin Cities Hospital among the top 10 percent of hospitals nationwide, based on an analysis of patient satisfaction data for 3,797 U.S. hospitals.

According to HealthGrades, 80 percent of patients treated at the nation's best-performing hospitals would definitely recommend the hospital, compared to only 55 percent of patients who received care from the poorest-performing hospitals.

HealthGrades analyzed Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) hospital survey data obtained from the

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), from April 2009 to March 2010.

HealthGrades identified those hospitals performing in the top 10 percent in the nation for patient satisfaction, based on survey responses from patients treated at those facilities. These

339 hospitals were designated as 2011 Outstanding Patient Experience Award recipients. Hospitals had to meet bed size, survey response size, and clinical-quality thresholds in order to be eligible for the award.

The hospital treated 40,188 patients in 2011.

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Shop and sing yard sale
Rosemont Baptist Church, Niceville, is accepting reservations for free tables and spaces at its annual Shop and Sing community yard sale. The sale will be March 24, 7 a.m.-til, at the corner of 27th and Pine Streets, across from Plew Elementary School. Contact the church at 678-1611, or RBCNiceville.org, to reserve a space. Food, beverages and music will be provided for free.

Book sale bonanza
The American Association of University Women, Niceville/Valparaiso Chapter, is requesting used book donations for their annual Book Sale at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, March 31, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Proceeds will be used to provide scholarships to deserving women in the community. Donations will be accepted at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, 115 Westview Ave., Valparaiso, Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Info: Freida Spence, 678-2900.

Valparaiso Garden Club
The Valparaiso Garden Club will hold its monthly meeting March 14, at the Mitchell Building, room 3, Valparaiso. Social with refreshments will begin at 9 a.m. Join the club and bid on several pass-along plants, grown by the members. Info: Kay Parsons, 678-1461.

NWFSC presents musical
Northwest Florida State College will present the musical, "Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?," March 14-17, 7:30 p.m., Sprint Theater of the Mattie Kelly Fine and Performing Arts Center, Niceville. The show captures the comedy, music and tenderness of growing up in Catholic school in the 1950s and 60s. Tickets are on sale: \$20 for adults and \$15 for youth ages 18 and younger. Purchase tickets at mattiekellyartscenter.org, or 729-6000.

Horticulture study group
The Tri-County Horticulture study group will be March 15, 10 a.m., at the Destin Library, 150 Sibert Ave. The program will begin with a lecture from botanist Andrea Olivara and research scientist, Eric J. Rentz. Following the lecture, the group will visit Indian Pointe on Indian Trail to identify native plants. After the meeting, the group will meet at Dewey Destin's for lunch. Call 269-2170, or 217-4888, or email joycew@cox.net, to join the group for lunch.

Hospice seeks volunteers
Covenant Hospice will hold a training workshop March 15, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., at Niceville Assembly of God, 108 Highway 85 North. The workshop is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be provided. Info: Kappy Smith, 729-4271.

Tootsie Roll drive
The Knights of Columbus, Christ Our Redeemer Council #13527, will hold its annual People with Intellectual Disabilities Drive (Tootsie Roll Drive), March 15-18. Knights will collect donations at Walmart, Destin, Thursday-Saturday; Winn-Dixie, Bluewater Bay, Thursday-Saturday; and Ace Hardware, Bluewater Bay, Saturday. Donations will also be collected at Bluewater Bay Golf



Climate scientist to present lecture Friday

Dr. William Schlesinger, a climate scientist, will present a lecture, "The Causes, Impacts and Potential Responses to Global Climate Change," on March 16, at Northwest Florida State College. The lecture is part of the Science Friday series, and will be from 11 a.m.-noon in the Robert E. Greene Jr. Science Building, room 110. The lecture is free and open to the public. Info: 729-5276.

Club, Niceville. The funds collected from this event will help the following agencies: Horizons, Inc., Special Olympics of Okaloosa County and Resources for Human Development, Inc.

Guardian ad Litem
The Realtor Outreach Committee Association of the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors will have a Guardian ad Litem orientation on March 16, at 3:30 p.m., at the ECAR office, 10 Hollywood Blvd., SE, Fort Walton Beach. Members of the public, business owners and Realtors are invited to learn more about volunteering as a Guardian ad Litem or a Friend of the Guardian ad Litem program.

'Hunger Games' party
The Valparaiso Library would like to invite teens to a "Hunger Games" pre-movie party. Celebrate the upcoming film by competing in games for prizes, including two movie tickets to the opening night. The party will be March 16, at 1 p.m. To sign up, call 729-5406 or email eruff@valp.org, and leave your name, age and District choice.

Track meet
The City of Fort Walton Beach's Recreation Department annual Fast Lane Track Meet will be March 16, at Etheredge Stadium (next to Choctawhatchee High School). All elementary students in grades 3-5 are welcome to participate. Info: 833-9580.

Friday night live service
Members of All God's Children and Living Word Worship Center, 40 John Sims Parkway, will hold a Friday night live service, March 16, at 7 p.m. The guest will be Pastor Michelle Bradley, of New Beginnings Worship Center, Mobile, Ala. Info: 678-7732.

Spring Praise 2012
The Emerald Coast Convention Center will present Spring Praise 2012, March 16, 6:30 p.m. Sponsorships for the concert will benefit the Special Olympics of Okaloosa County. Tickets are on sale at EmeraldCoastConventionCenter.com. General admission is \$15, with a \$3 processing fee applied to all tickets. Info: 609-3800, or boxoffice@co.okaloosa.fl.us.

Bird walk
An Audubon Society bird walk around the Bluewater Bay and Lake Pippin areas will be March 17, 7:30 a.m. Meet at the Bluewater Bay Winn-Dixie, State Road 20. Birds of interest include migrating warblers, vireos, owls and ospreys. Beginners are welcome. Info: 582-7064.

Freedom rally
The U.S. Constitution and Freedom rally will be held March 17, noon-5:45 p.m., at the Emerald Coast Conference Center. The rally will feature guest speakers: Lt. Mike Thornton, Navy SEAL and Medal of Honor recipient; Lt. Jason Redman, Navy SEAL, retired; Gov. Rick Scott, and more. Admission is \$35 each, \$50 for VIP reception tickets, and \$100 to rent a vendor table. Tickets can be purchased at Passionate Patriot, 335 Racetrack Road, NW, Fort Walton Beach.

Pancake breakfast
The Niceville-Valparaiso Kiwanis Club pancake breakfast and silent auction will be March 17, 7 a.m.-noon, in the Niceville High School cafeteria. Cost is \$4 for the auction, and there is no admission charge.

Items for auction will include: resort weekends, golf packages, household items, dinners, tools, appliances, computers and sporting goods. Proceeds will benefit local youth and children's programs, Sharing and Caring, aid to the elderly and other community projects.

Astronomy meeting
The Northwest Florida Astronomy Association will meet March 17, 7 p.m., at the observatory on the Niceville campus of Northwest Florida State College. Weather permitting, telescopes will be set up for viewing by sunset. Info: Tom Haugh, 678-6483, or nwfastro.org.

Lifeguard class
A Red Cross lifeguard class will be held at the Destin Family YMCA, March 17 and 18, and March 24 and 25, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. The 30-hour course includes certification in life-guard, first aid, CPR/AED. Cost: \$80 and includes manual, pocket mask, certification

cards, Red Cross provider fee and all needed supplies. Bring a swim suit for pool training, a towel and goggles. Sign up at Destin YMCA, 4645 Commons Drive, West. Info: 837-8440.

Worship anniversary
Members of All God's Children and the Living Word Worship Center, 40 John Sims Parkway, Valparaiso, will honor Pastors Walter and Barbara Williams in a third anniversary celebration, March 18, at 3 p.m. The guest will be Pastor Benjamin T. Randolph and the Evelaner Baptist Church of Crestview. Dinner will be served prior to the service, and all are invited. Info: Deacon Triplett, 897-4767.

Bluewater barbecue
Bluewater Community Church will present a barbecue dinner, March 18, at 6 p.m. Please make reservations by March 16, by calling Bobbie Logan, 897-2332. Tickets are \$10 each.

YMCA Sports Camps
The Fort Walton Beach YMCA will host a daily sports camp during the March 19-23 Okaloosa County Schools spring break. Boys and girls, ages 8-12, can sign up for one day or all five days. Cost is \$20/day, or \$80/week. Camp hours are 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Info: 863-9622.

Better Listening series
Jeffrey Rink, conductor and director of the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, will present a program on March 20, "Haydn and his famous pupils," with commentaries and related CD selections. The program, part of the Better Listening series, will be from 7-9 p.m., at the Valparaiso Unitarian Church, 1295 Bayside Drive. Info: uufec.com, or Lou Johnson, musicstudy.uufec.com.

Stage Crafters auditions
Auditions for Stage Crafters Community Theatre's second production of its 40th season, "The Dixie Swim Club," will be held on March 19 and March 20, at Stage Crafters in Fort Walton Beach, 40 Robinwood Drive. Scripts will be available for perusal at 6:30 p.m., both evenings, with auditions starting at 7 p.m. Five roles for adult women are available.

Cobia seminar
The Saltwater Seminar Series will provide tips and tricks to target and land a cobia, as they migrate along the Emerald Coast. The series will be held on March 21, 6 p.m., at Northlight Marina. There will be a free buffet at 5:30 p.m. There is no charge to attend and reservations are not needed. Info: saltwaterevents.com, or Joe Z., 516-0709, or joez@saltwater-events.com.

Technology program
The Valparaiso Community library will have a technology program, March 22, at 4 p.m., for students of all ages interested in attending college in the near future. Ron Walls, instructional technology specialist at NWFSC, will present the program discussing how to access college course/content using mobile devices. The program is open to the general public at no cost. Info: 729-5406.

Wine to Water
The second annual Wine to Water fundraiser, to provide water filtration systems for Haiti, will be March 22, 5-7 p.m., Aunt Martha's Bed and Breakfast, Fort Walton Beach. The water purifiers are manufactured in Haiti and provide employment for many people. Each water purifier can provide pure water for a family of ten, for five years. There will be wine tasting, live music, heavy hors d'oeuvres, social time and a selection of wines for sale. Cost: \$10. For tickets and more information, call 243-6702. Tickets can be picked up at 315 Shell Ave. behind the Chamber of Commerce.

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Courtesy photo

McKenna Reed, a student at Niceville High School, was a recipient of the 2012 National Center for Women and Information Technology Award for Aspirations in Computing, North Central Florida Affiliate.

NHS student receives award from National Center for Women and Information Technology

McKenna Reed, a student at Niceville High School, has been selected as a recipient for the 2012 National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT) Award for Aspirations in Computing, North Central Florida Affiliate. NCWIT is a coalition that works to increase diversity in information technology and computing.

McKenna will be recognized on April 9, at the University of South Florida Polytechnic. Eighty girls applied for the North Central Florida Affiliate and McKenna was one of the few selected. All of her teachers at Niceville High School, as well as her friends and family, are proud of this accomplishment. McKenna was selected for this prestigious award thanks to her diligence and passion in the field of information technology.

Her interests and work range from networking and PC support, to web design and e-commerce. McKenna puts great focus on her academics,

studying, networking and PC support to prepare her for her continuing education in computer science. She hopes to attend the University of Florida to obtain a bachelor of science, majoring in computer science and minoring in physics. Her dream in life is to become a quantum physicist and one day have the honor of becoming a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

McKenna is on the Advanced Placement track at Niceville High School, currently maintaining a 4.3 grade point average. In addition to her school work, McKenna also runs an e-commerce store, studies continuously to obtain more information technology certifications, works on improving and expanding her portfolio, and is involved in extracurricular activities. She is the president and founder of a new club at Niceville High School, and is currently a ranking officer in two other clubs. She also volunteers and tutors fellow classmates in her spare time.

Bluewater students meet NASA astronaut

Students at Bluewater Elementary School recently had the opportunity to meet a real astronaut.

Col. James Dutton spoke to students about his STS 131 Space Flight, that took place April 5 through 20, 2010. The flight was a resupply mission to the International Space Station, and was launched from the Kennedy Space Center.

Dutton, a 1991 Air Force Academy graduate, has more than 3,300 flight hours in more than 30 different aircraft.

The astronaut's visit was organized by Bluewater teacher Alison Dunne, the Young Astronaut sponsor for Bluewater Elementary.

"It was such an amazing opportunity for our third through fifth grade students, and an honor to have him present about his STS 131 Space Flight," she said.

The Young Astronaut Program has been a part of Bluewater Elementary for more than 10 years, and there are Young Astronaut Clubs in sever-



Courtesy photo

Students and teachers at Bluewater Elementary School recently met NASA astronaut Col. James Dutton. From left: Young Astronaut sponsor Alison Dunne, Col. James Dutton and Young Astronaut sponsor Katherine Stephens.

al Okaloosa County elementary schools.

"Young Astronauts Club is an extracurricular activity that engages fifth grade students in

the areas of engineering, aerodynamics and space exploration," Dunne said.

Each year, students are involved in multiple hands-on

activities, and each year students who participate in the Young Astronauts club have the option of attending Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala.



Rocky Bayou senior receives Youth of the Month award

Wayne Hopper, Niceville Exchange Club president, presented Grace Stoner with the Youth of the Month certificate. Grace is a senior at Rocky Bayou Christian School. Students are scored based on his or her grades, school and volunteer activities, and awards.

Courtesy photo

MARCH MADNESS MEMBERSHIP SPECIAL



Recreation Services Inc., located in Bluewater Bay, is offering a great membership special. Join either the Swim or Hard Court Tennis Membership from now until March 31, and receive a 50% discount on the enrollment fee! Membership includes 4 pools (1 heated) and 3 Tennis Courts. We also offer Water Aerobics, Facility rentals, RV/Boat Storage, swimming and tennis lessons.



Recreation Services, Inc. office is located at 1050 Bay Drive (Bay Drive Pool). For more information call 897-3664.

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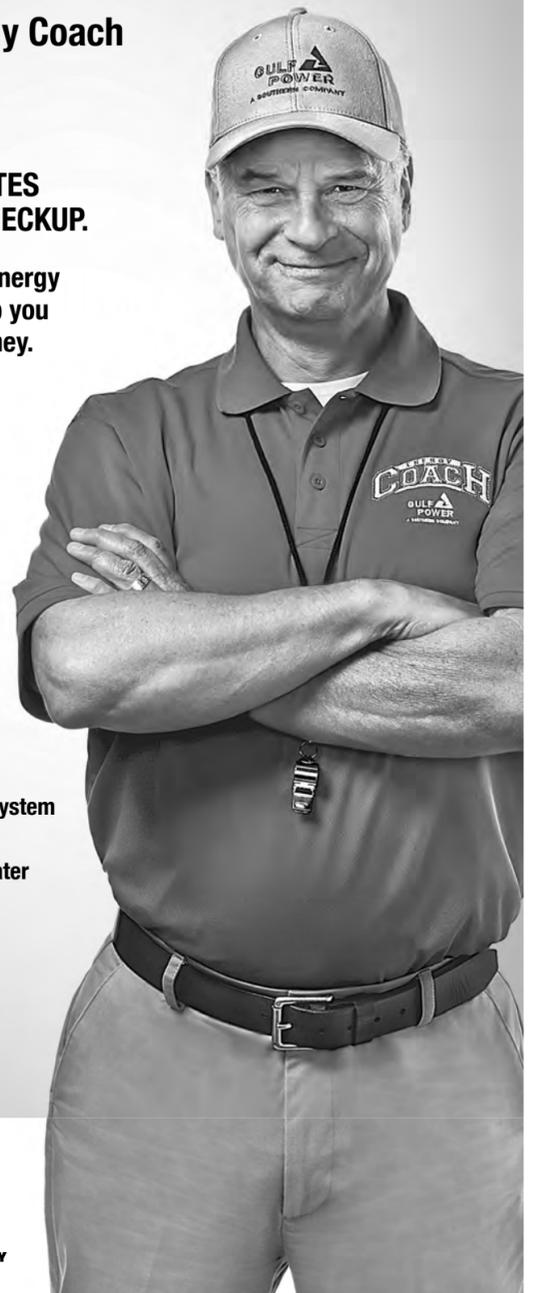
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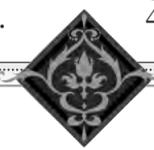
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The City of Valparaiso cordially invites you to attend a reception to celebrate **Commissioner Tom Miller's 16 years of dedicated service to the City of Valparaiso**

Monday, March 19, 2012
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Valparaiso Community Room
459 Valparaiso Parkway



Ruckel announces 2012 science fair winners

Ruckel Middle School has announced its winners of the 35th Annual Robert Sheffield East Panhandle Regional Science and Engineering Fair that was held on Feb. 9.

First place:

—Claire Ponder, seventh grade, "EMF? OMG! Using common household objects to reduce the electromagnetic fields from your notebook computer power supply."

Second Place:

—Brynn Burdge and Lauren Matthews, seventh grade, "Which worm?"

—Tyler Russell, eighth grade, "Auditory vs. visual responses."

—PJ Shaw, eighth grade, "Water breakdown with cobalt catalyst."

—Nick Pizzolato, eighth grade, "Particle size analysis."

—Daniel Bobbitt, sixth grade, "Tsunami stoppers."

—Stephen Herrera, eighth grade, "How surface area affects solar water heater effi-

ciency."
—William West, eighth grade, "Which exercise increases 'my' vertical leap the most?"

Third Place:

—John Wargo, eighth grade, "The race to 50,000: which computer programming language is the fastest?"

—Makayla Denney, sixth grade, "Which insulation works better to keep water hot?"

—Alex Tolbert, seventh grade, "Corn is for cows...not cars!"

—Sarah Erikson, eighth grade, "Insulation sensation."

—Carl Smeltz, eighth grade, "Want whiter teeth?"

—Connor Auclair, seventh grade, "Hydroponics: The future of farming."

Honorable Mention:

—Taylor Toth, eighth grade, "Do you need to change your dish soap?"

—Christian Brobeck, sixth grade, "Grass and salt."



Courtesy photo

Niceville Key Club hosts Spring Zone rally

The Kiwanis-sponsored Niceville High School Key Club held their Spring Zone Rally at Northwest Florida State College in March. There were 130 attendees, including the State Key Club Governor and nine Lieutenant Governors. The clubs boasted 12,000 service hours during this past year. From left: Key Club Lt. Gov. Thuyvi Luong, Key Club Gov. Doug Ream, Niceville Key Club Pres. Jennifer Williams, and Niceville Kiwanis member Judy Boudreaux. Hosts were the Niceville-Valparaiso Kiwanis Club, and the Niceville High School Key Club.



Courtesy photo

Bank gives to Children in Crisis

The employees of Beach Community Bank, Niceville, presented Ken Hair, Children in Crisis president and CEO, Niceville, with a check for \$343 to help provide a home and care to abused, neglected and abandoned children in the local community. The donation funds were collected by the Beach Community Bank team during their "Jeans Friday" fundraiser.



Courtesy photo

The K-5 Gifted students at Lewis School recently created robots using parts of cell phone motors.

Lewis students create robots

The K-5 Gifted students at Lewis School recently created tiny directional robots using an eccentric weighted pager motor from a cell phone to move the robot. The students used common objects like the head of a toothbrush, a reclaimed pager motor and a watch battery to create the tiny directional robots. As a result of the overwhelming student interest in robotics, Lewis School will include the Lego Robotics program in its Gifted K-5 program, which will extend and enhance student's opportunities. Bobbi Luna teaches the gifted students at Lewis School.



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Sunday Morning Worship - 11:15 a.m.
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Sunday Bible School 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.

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2012 Math Bowl results

The 25th Annual Math Bowl was held Friday at the Niceville campus of Northwest Florida State College. Twenty-two high schools from Northwest Florida competed. The following is a list of the winners.

School winners

Class X

1. Rocky Bayou Christian School
2. South Walton High School
3. Maclay High School
4. Altha High School

Class Y

1. Collegiate High School

2. Gulf Breeze High School
3. Pensacola Catholic High School

Class Z

1. Rickards High School
2. Chiles High School
3. Lincoln High School
4. Choctaw High School
5. Niceville High School

Individual winners

Class X

1. Sun Young Moon, Rocky Bayou
2. Byn Baek, Maclay
3. Geonhoyoo, Rocky Bayou

4. Reed Cocker, South Walton
5. Courtney Harris, Altha
6. Davetan, Rocky Bayou
7. Ju Young Moon, Rocky Bayou
8. Jacob Leuze, South Walton
9. Wely Chevillot, Altha
10. Haia Kim, Maclay

Class Y

1. PJ Dunne, Gulf Breeze
2. Wesley Olson, Collegiate
3. Jordin Findling, College Catholic
4. Duc Tran, Pensacola Catholic
5. Justin Shoemaker, Gulf Breeze
6. Alexander Russ, Collegiate
7. Katee Driscoll, Pensacola Catholic

8. Warner Olson, College (Tie)
9. Kristia Folds, Marianna (Tie)
10. Jeffery Grosso, West Florida

Class Z

1. Keven Huang, Chiles (First place winner overall)
2. Alexander Yu, Rickards
3. Payal Patel, Rickards
4. Thomas Luo, Rickards
5. Matthew Kang, Rickards
6. Ginger Yu, Chiles
7. Brian Ahn, Chiles
8. Jeewoo Kang, Rickards
9. Jessie Chi, Chiles
10. Jimmy Zhang, Chiles

Engagements

Harris-Walters

The parents of Melanie Amber Harris, Donald R. and Alice Harris of Niceville, together with the parents of Brian James Walters, Ralph L. and Melissa King of Niceville, and William W. Walters of Panama City, are proud to announce the engagement of their children, which took place on May 21, 2011.

Melanie and Brian attended Niceville High School together and they attended Northwest



Melanie Amber Harris and Brian James Walters

Florida State College. Melanie is currently employed at AEI, Destin, and Brian is the owner of Walters' Tile & Stone Installation.

A March 31, 2012 wedding is planned.

Beacon CLASSIFIEDS

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Yard Sales

Garage Sale, Sat. March 17, 9:00 am. 605 St. Anne Cove. Beads: Pandora type, glass, clay, focal, different sizes and shapes. Jewelry findings, fabric, silk flowers and more jewelry.

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Earn extra cash of \$45 to \$140 or more each week in your spare time! The Bay Beacon seeks a reliable independent contractor to insert, bag, and deliver newspapers Tuesday night. You must be over 21 and have a reliable vehicle, a good driving record, a Florida driver's license, and proof of current liability insurance. No collecting duties. Earnings vary according to route and work load. Stop by the Bay Beacon for an information sheet and to fill out an application. The Beacon 1181 E. John Sims Parkway, Niceville • 678-1080 (Parkway East Shopping Center across from PoFolks)

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Little League, softball seasons begin play

730 players in 2012 Little League



Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

A player takes a lead after the ball is hit as she waits to see if it's a single or an out.

Softball league starts 2012 play

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

Opening games of the Valparaiso/Niceville Girls Softball Association (VNGSA) and the Niceville Little League have been played.

Although thunderstorms forced the cancellation of an opening ceremony scheduled for March 3, the VNGSA began its season on Tuesday evening, March 6, at the Niceville softball complex. Parents, coaches, and girls gathered to begin the season, first with some warm-ups and practice sessions, then with games

between various teams.

Jennifer Galloway was among the parents who watched proudly as her daughter, Zoe Rominger, 5, began her first softball season. Softball, said Galloway, is a tradition in her family.

"I grew up playing," she said, "and Zoe has two brothers, ages 6 and 9, who have also played. I enjoy watching them play, especially at this age, when winning matters less than rolling on the ground and goofing around."

Zoe said she likes batting the best. "I also like the name of my team—Purplicious," she said.

Travis Cook, assistant coach of Zoe's team, said he began coaching VNGSA softball as a way to have fun with his own 6-year-old daughter, Nicole, who plays on this team. Cook, a youth pastor at Rocky Bayou Baptist church in Niceville, also plays for his church's men's softball team.

Nicole said, "Softball is fun, because you get to bat and go around the bases." She said an important lesson she has learned from playing is that, "Even if you get tagged, you still have to be happy. You get to go every single time."

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

Clear blue sky and a mild temperature welcomed Little League players, coaches, and family members to the opening of the 2012 Little League season at the Niceville soccer and little league complex Saturday morning. The opening ceremony included speeches by league officials, check presentations by donors and awards to some of last year's teams, as players, coaches, parents and family members watched and waited for the chance to play ball.

League president Stephen Cunningham told the Beacon that more than 730 boys and girls have joined his league's 64 teams so far. Players range from 4 to 12 years of age, with skills ranging from beginners to proficient middle school athletes.

Cunningham said he got into Little League about two and a half years ago, for the sake of his 8-year-old son, Stephen Cunningham II. Stephen coaches his son's "Mudcats" team, in addition to managing the league as a whole.

"I love it," Cunningham said of his involvement in the sport. "The best part," he said, "is the kids. When they start, they don't know what to do with the ball, but by the end of a season they have learned how to play the game, and as a coach, you don't have to tell them anything."

Valparaiso resident Steve Hays donated \$1,000 to the Little League from his business



Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

A Redwings pitcher winds up, ready to deliver the ball against the River Bandits during Saturday's Niceville-Valparaiso Little League opening day.

at Preston Hood Chevrolet. He said he is involved in Little League because his son played in the league, as his grandson, Wyatt Markle, does now. "I think Little League is fantas-

tic," Hays said. "My youngest son played, and now my grandson plays."

Wyatt, 4, described what he likes best about Little League in only one word: "Running!"

Niceville third-grader wins gymnastics title

By Susan Rasins
Special to the Beacon

Niceville native Major Bain recently won the All-Around Gold Medal in men's gymnastics during the prestigious 2012 Champion's Cup hosted by the Gymnastics Training Center in Atlanta.

The Champion's Cup was a U.S.A. Gymnastics-sanctioned meet that featured more than 150 competitive gymnasts from Florida, Georgia and Tennessee during the two-day competition that was held March 3 and 4.

Bain, a home-schooled third grader, and longtime participant in the Eglin Air Force Base Youth Sports Program, was

awarded first place on the vault and rings; second place on the pommel horse and parallel bars; third place on the high bar; and

fourth place on the floor event. His total score of 88.600 earned him the All-Around Gold Medal in the level five men's competition and the highest overall score in the meet.

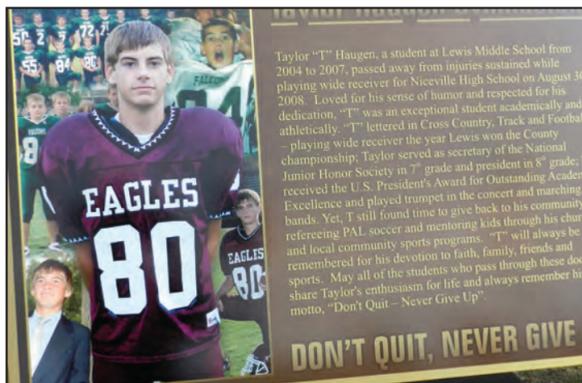
Major is a member of the Gymnastics Plus Competitive Team in Panama City. The Gymnastics Plus level five men's team earned second place honors by defeating more than a dozen teams competing at this year's event.

Major resides with his parents, Casey and Misti Bain, in Bluewater Bay.



Photo by Susan Rasins

Major Bain displays the 2012 Champion's Cup trophy after earning the All-Around Gold Medal in men's gymnastics in Atlanta.



Above, the plaque describing why the Lewis School gym was named for Taylor Haugen. Below, Kathy and Brian Haugen, Taylor's parents, listen to the tributes to their son.



Beacon photos by Mike Griffith

Taylor Nixon spoke of the humor and friendship of his classmate and lifelong friend, Taylor Haugen.

Lewis names gym for Taylor Haugen

By Mike Griffith
Beacon correspondent

During a brief but emotional ceremony Saturday afternoon, the gymnasium at Lewis School in Valparaiso was dedicated to the memory of Taylor Haugen, a Lewis graduate who excelled as an athlete, scholar and student leader at the school from 2004 to 2007, before attending Niceville High School, where he died from injuries suffered during a football game.

At Lewis, Haugen stood out academically and as an athlete and all-around student. He was secretary of the National Junior Honor Society and lettered in cross country, track and football. As a wide receiver, he

helped his team win the county football championship. He also played trumpet in the school band, and won a President's Award for Outstanding Academic Excellence.

Lewis athletic director Jimmy Harrison said that when the time came to name the school gym after someone, there was no doubt that Haugen was the right choice. There was no need for discussion, he said, "because of who Taylor Haugen is." He said Taylor was a natural leader among his peers, and a very friendly, outgoing student who never seemed to meet anyone he didn't want to be friends with.

Billy Russell, Niceville United Methodist Church min-

ister of youth, talked about Taylor's Christian faith, which Russell said was the center of Taylor's life.

"Everything else flowed from that relationship with Jesus Christ," Russell said. Haugen's life, said Russell, exemplified a passage in the book of Philippians; "Christ is exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."

Taylor Nixon, a classmate and lifelong friend of Haugen's, said Haugen was someone who liked to make people laugh, and was always there for anyone who needed him. His friendship with Haugen, Nixon said, has helped him focus his own life on the things that matter most, and he challenged others

to do likewise. "It is our relationship with Christ that defines who we are," he said, "not material things."

Lewis principal Mike Fantaski said Haugen's life set an example for other students to follow, while he was at Lewis and for future students as well.

"If we can instill Taylor's qualities in future students at Lewis," he said, "we will have done a good job."

Taylor's parents, Brian and Kathy Haugen, attended the ceremony but did not formally address the crowd of people who were there with them. Following the ceremony, Brian Haugen said the event was "a bit overwhelming, but we feel honored."

Sports Briefs

Rocky falls despite comeback

The Rocky Bayou Lady Knights hosted undefeated district opponent North Florida Christian on Saturday. The Knights took the loss but the team nearly came away with the victory in a very exciting comeback.

Rocky Bayou trailing 4-0 in the bottom of the sixth when Maria Denbow and Rachel Mosley singled. Brittany Tiller followed with an RBI single. With the score 4-1 and two outs in the inning, freshman Morgan Milam hit a towering three-run homer over the centerfield fence to tie the game.

The knights had a chance to win it in the bottom of the seventh but were unable to score.

The NFC Eagles put four on the board in the eighth as the Knights committed two errors and gave up a bases-loaded double, making the final score 8-4.

Sam Holcomb had 10 strikeouts for the Knights in a tough performance in the circle. The Knights are now 4-3 on the season and 1-2 in the district.

Golf tourney for Eagles

The Niceville Amateur Youth Baseball Traveling Eagles will hold their 11th annual golf tournament at Bluewater Bay Golf Course Friday, April 6.

Registration begins at noon, with a shotgun start at 1 p.m.

The entry fee is \$350 per team or \$90 for individuals without a team. The fee includes cart, greens fees, food and prizes.