

The Bay Beacon

12 Pages, 2 Sections, 6 Inserts

Wednesday, April 18, 2012

50¢

**UP
COMING**

Saturday, 9 a.m.



Parkway Veterinary Hospital will hold a **nail trim clinic**, 1101 E. John Sims Parkway. The cost is \$8 per pet, \$6 for additional pets. All proceeds will benefit the American Cancer Society's **Relay for Life**. Rabies certification required, tags will not suffice.

Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida will hold its 36th **Saturday in the Park Festival**. The festival will feature live entertainment, food, re-enactments, arts and crafts, and more. The event is **free** and open to the public. Info: 678-2615.



Saturday, 9 a.m.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer will hold a **High Heel Dash** at Bluewater Fitness. The race will be a 150-yard dash, with all proceeds going to the **American Cancer Society**. Cost: \$20, and includes a T-shirt,



food and drink, a chance to win door prizes and a free

Zumba class. Participants must be 18 and older. Registration forms are available at Bluewater Fitness and at active.com.

Calendar, B-2

Sen. Gaetz blasts 'turkey' label

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

Sen. Don Gaetz, R., Niceville, has lambasted a tax watchdog group for labeling as a "budget turkey" a Gaetz-backed \$389,825 legislative appropriation for the planned Valparaiso STEM Middle School.

Florida TaxWatch, a Tallahassee-based government watchdog, identified 159 projects totaling \$171 million

in the legislature's recently completed 2012-13 appropriations bill as "turkeys." The group urged Gov. Rick Scott to use his line-item veto to kill them, among them the funding for the planned science and math school in Valparaiso.

The bill specifies that Valparaiso STEM Middle School appropriation is "for the establishment of a magnet middle school for grades 5-8 focused



Don Gaetz

on intensive and gifted studies in science, technology, engineering and math courses and skills." The measure also specifies students from Walton and Santa Rosa counties also be able to enroll in the school, to be operated by the Okaloosa County School District later this year.

Okaloosa County Schools Superintendent Alexis Tibbetts said the magnet school would enroll 66

sixth-grade students at the former Valparaiso Elementary School in August. She said the legislative appropriation of \$389,825, which she said the district had not sought, would be used for startup costs such as wireless computer networks and lab gear.

Recurring state funding, about

Please see GAETZ, page A-5

Tea Party rallies in Niceville



Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

The Niceville-Valparaiso Tea Party held its fourth annual Tax Day Rally on April 15, in front of Niceville City Hall. The event, which drew a small crowd of families, political candidates and at least one dog, featured speeches by conservative activists. Among them was Karen Schoen (pictured), a director of Panhandle Patriots who talked about how governments allegedly collude with big banks and other politically connected businesses to manipulate the financial system. Providing entertainment was a singer who borrowed from the repertoire of country music star Willie Nelson, hence the sign on the lectern.

Niceville is lauded for its management of finances

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

The Niceville City Council heard a favorable audit report on the city's finances last week.

During a meeting April 10, the council also learned that several bids had been made by contractors to replace or renovate 13 substandard Niceville homes, and that the city will buy a floating dock to replace rented barges used to launch fireworks during the annual Fourth of July celebration.

Tammy McGaughy, of the Warren Averett O'Sullivan Creel Division accounting firm, presented the annual audit report. She said the audit report gave the city an "unqualified," or highest possible, rating for its financial management, meaning that auditors found no violations of laws or regulations, or other serious problems with how the city government manages its finances. In fact, said McGaughy, the city is in excellent financial shape.

"The city has done very well this year," she said, largely thanks to a stable city staff of experienced people, who "take a lot of pride in what you do here."

The audit team was so favorably impressed by their audit of Niceville's city government, she said, that one audit team member from another location expressed interest in moving to Niceville because of the city's well-managed government and its overall quality of life. McGaughy's one recommendation for improvement, she said, would be for the city to expand training opportunities for new city employees, in order to maintain continuity of expertise in the future, as veteran city employees retire and are succeeded by new staff members.

In other business during the April 10 meeting, the city council heard from Dennis

Please see LAUDED, page A-6

Fire district faulted on bookkeeping controls

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

The North Bay Fire Commission was taken to task last week by its outside auditor for having allowed a former employee too much control over district funds.

The ex-employee, Ralph Banegas, was arrested earlier this year on charges that he stole

\$81,000 from the district in his capacity as bookkeeper.

During a commission meeting April 10, Bruce Nunnally, of the accounting firm of Carr, Riggs & Ingram, presented copies of the annual audit the firm performed for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2011.

The audit report stated that the district's former administrative

assistant (Banegas), who had operated the district's payroll, had paid himself about \$81,000 more than authorized in a five-year period that began in 2006.

Banegas was fired Jan. 30, 19 days after Nunnally brought the alleged misappropriation to light in the course of the annual audit. On Feb. 28, Okaloosa County sheriff's deputies arrested

Banegas on grand theft charges stemming from the allegations.

Banegas' alleged thefts from payroll were possible, the audit report stated, because he was able to use a fire district signature stamp "under his control" to create, sign and cash fraudulent handwritten checks he made out to himself.

Auditors pointed to shortcomings

in the fire district's cash controls, stating that segregation of duties should be an essential element of the district's internal control over cash.

"No one person should have access to the physical check stock, have the ability to authorize the transaction, (i.e., sign the check), and have the ability to record the transaction in the dis-

trict's accounting system," the report stated.

Banegas had all three, although district officials have said he was not authorized to sign checks in recent years.

The district responded to the auditor's comment by stating that the fire chief has taken control of

Please see DISTRICT, page A-3

Students vie to design facelift for city Web site

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

When Valparaiso officials decided they needed to freshen up the city's Web site and make it more appealing and user-friendly, they knew where to look to find the expertise they needed—students in Niceville High School's Information Technology Choice Institute.

The city is scheduled to select one of several competing student redesign plans next month.

Go to the Valparaiso's official city Web site today and you'll find clip art of a beach that isn't even in Valparaiso, and the first words you'll see are directions for making complaints about jet noise from Eglin Air Force Base. Not the kind of image of the "Vale of Paradise" that city officials want Web visitors to come

away with, said Valparaiso City Commissioner Diane Kelley.

Kelley, who is principal of Destin Middle School, knew that for the past five years talented NHS students taking Web design courses at the school's Choice Institute of Information Technology have been creating Web sites for outside agencies and businesses. After talking with the city's mayor and city administrator about what kind of changes they'd like to see at the city's online presence, Kelley met with students in April Branscome's Web design class to explain the city's goals and answer questions.

Of course these tech-savvy teenagers had plenty of questions for Kelley: Was advertising on the side of the page allowed? How many "hits" did the city's

Please see WEB, page A-3



Niceville High School freshmen Ashali Chimata, 15, foreground, and Bailey Fontaine, 14, are project managers of "The Valparaiso Dreamers", one of 37 teams of Niceville students vying to redesign Valparaiso's city Web site.

Beacon photo by Del Lessard

Work to start on bank branch

By Del Lessard
Beacon Staff Writer

The first tenant of the "Home Depot" shopping center along Niceville's main thoroughfare will break ground tomorrow.

CCB Community Bank plans to begin construction of a 4,320-square-foot, single-story building starting with a ceremonial ground

breaking April 19, according to Don Collins, Niceville City President of the bank.

The facility will be on the north side of John Sims Parkway, just east of the Swift Creek bridge, or about halfway between the traffic signals at Rocky Bayou Drive and Redwood Avenue.

Construction, valued at \$1,182,000, includes a four-lane drive-thru, according to plans filed with the Niceville building inspector's office. Access to the new bank will be provided directly off John Sims Parkway.

The bank is expected to open in the last quarter of the year, with six employees.

CCB Community Bank is a privately owned, state-chartered bank based in Andalusia, Ala., with \$393 million in assets. Established in 1947 in Andalusia, the bank added a branch in Opp, Ala. in 2002, and another in Crestview in 2007. It has about 100 employees.

The new bank represents the

first commercial tenant of the yet-unnamed shopping center being developed by Valparaiso Realty on the northwest corner of Highway 20 and Rocky Bayou Drive. A Home Depot store was expected to anchor the commercial development, but plans were put on hold after the 2008 nationwide housing-market crash.



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DISTRICT

From page A-1

the signature stamp, which is of his signature, and now keeps it in a locked safe.

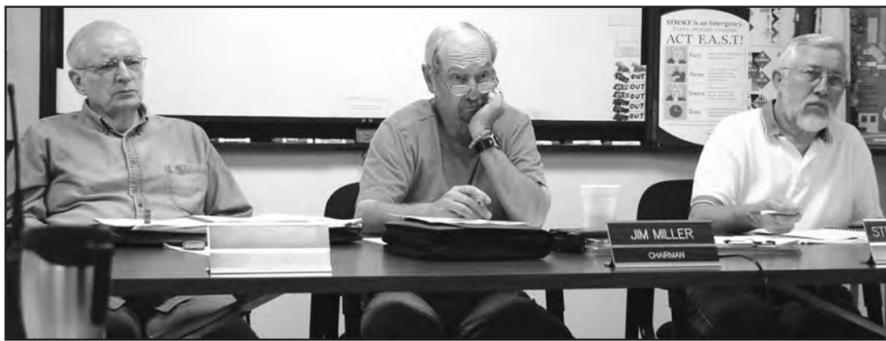
Fire Chief Joe Miller said Monday that the auditor's statement that his signature stamp was under Banegas' control was not accurate. Miller said he kept the stamp in his own desk.

In a statement to the sheriff's office recorded in Banegas' arrest report Feb. 26, Miller told investigators that Banegas would write checks to himself, go into Miller's office, and sign the checks with the stamp when the chief left the office.

After firing Banegas, the district hired a company to handle the district's payroll. Miller said he verifies the hours and amounts before the company forwards the funds to employees' banks for direct deposit.

The fire district had total revenue of \$1,901,760, including property tax revenue of \$1,883,528 in 2011, the audit stated. Of that, \$74,985 was due to an increase in the millage rate.

In other business before the fire commission April 10, Travis Zaal, local president of the North Bay Professional Firefighters Association, proposed pay elements of a contract between the district and its nine firefighters. The previous con-



North Bay fire commissioners listen as auditors reported on the fire district's 2011 annual audit April 10. From left, Jim Boswell, Jim Miller and Steven Strait. Commissioner Lee Wetzell was also present.

Beacon photo by Del Lessard

tract expired Sept. 30.

Zaal compared local salaries with those of the Destin and Okaloosa Island fire districts, which offer Advanced Life Support, as does North Bay. He stated that North Bay pay fell short by between \$10,000 and \$20,000 a year.

Salaries at North Bay have been frozen since 2009, he said, as firefighters agreed not to press for raises while the fire district was suffering from the weak economy and subsequent drop in taxable property values.

Zaal asked commissioners to boost firefighter pay by \$1,000 a year, plus an additional \$300 for each year of seniority.

Zaal said recent cuts to the number of firefighters on duty from five to four, was causing remaining firefighters to do

more work. The proposed pay raises would bring North Bay firefighters up to "the rear of the pack," he said.

Chairman Jim Miller said commissioners would need some time to review the request and look at the overall impact of the requested raises in future years. Commissioners were scheduled to meet behind closed doors Monday, April 16, to discuss the proposals.

The North Bay Fire District made the final payment of \$44,507 on the district's Tower 8, an aerial ladder truck the district purchased in 2007 under a five-year, \$225,000 lease-purchase agreement.

In other business, commissioners were told that North Bay firefighters responded to 113 calls during the month of

March, including:

—Five fire calls, including one structure fire, two wildfires and two others.

—78 rescue calls, including seven vehicle accidents and 71 medical calls.

—30 other emergency responses, including 6 false alarms, four good intent, 14 canceled calls, five service calls and one for hazardous materials—unexploded ordnance found at the Naval EOD complex.

—North Bay firefighters received mutual aid nine times, including five times from East Niceville, twice from Walton County and one each from Eglin and Niceville.

—North Bay firefighters also gave mutual aid four times, three times to Niceville and once to Eglin.

WEB

From page A-1

Web site enjoy now? Did Valparaiso want a presence on Twitter or Facebook? What kind of photos of Valparaiso would the city like and, by the way how about video messages?

Branscome's students have in recent years created Web sites for the NHS Booster Club, Lewis School, the Choice Institute and a private environmental business in Freeport. Students in her Web-5 class are also working this semester on a state-sponsored Web site that will serve as a place for middle school students and educators to get career information, she said.

The design project for Valparaiso business is very competitive. "Everybody's really engaged," she said.

Branscome had each of her second semester Web Design II students—149 students—create a resume, asked interested students to apply for the job of project manager, held three-minute rounds of "speed interviews" and posted a gallery of each student's first semester Web site projects. Student project managers ranked each of the students in their class, then chose design team members by lottery, not unlike the annual NFL draft of college talents. Each design team has three or four students and each team is competing against 36 other teams.

Most of the students in Branscome's fifth period class are 14- and 15-year-old freshmen who took Web Design I at the middle school level, like Jake Hughes, a 14-year-old project manager on the "Aristos" (Greek for "the best") the team informed a reporter). During a visit by a Beacon reporter Friday, Hughes said one of the flaws in Valparaiso's current Web site is that it is difficult to navigate the site, with lots of the links difficult to find. His team was busy Friday trying to avoid pages without content.

Several of the design teams have photos of Valparaiso on JSliders software, so that the photos can be scrolled through by visitors. Ashali Chimata, 15, Bailey Fontaine, 14, and Wesley Mosier, 17—three of the four members of "The Valparaiso Dreamers" team (named for the Dreamweaver software they use)—have also Photoshopped photos into a mosaic of Toms Bayou on their site.

Allen Bradley, 16, project manager of "The Blue Crew" (the name just sounded good) said the worst thing about the city's current site is that when you open it you see the jet noise report.

"It's not something that would attract someone to Valparaiso," he said.

Since students already have learned tools of Web design in earlier classes, Branscome sees

her role as a facilitator more than teacher. Some students have already taken their own digital photos around Valparaiso, and at least one design team member visited Valparaiso's city commission meeting April 9 to better assess what her client's needs might be.

As far as motivation, students on the winning design team will each receive a laptop computer, a prize that students themselves said they wanted, Branscome said. Second place teams win a \$100 gift card to Best Buy, while the third-place team gets \$50 Visa gift cards, she said. Donations from Valparaiso, the Booster Club, and others will pay for the prizes, she said.

On May 4, a panel of outside judges will whittle the student competition down to a top five, Branscome said, with the winners

going on to be judged by Valparaiso officials. "I haven't seen one bad site," she said, but "some are more professional."

On May 10 at 9 a.m., the top five teams will make their presentations to Valparaiso city representatives in the NHS auditorium.

Kelley said a city staff member from the library will be responsible for maintaining the Web site once a winner is chosen.

Choice Institutes at Okaloosa County high schools allows students to earn industry certificates in fields such as IT, aviation, healthcare, early child development, construction, automotive and culinary fields. To date, 8,000 students have earned industry certification that allows them to graduate and be ready to go to work in their chosen field, although many also go on to higher education.

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Correction

An article April 11 concerning a teacher-pay dispute between the Okaloosa County School District and the Okaloosa County Education Association (OCEA) misstated three facts:

- According to the school district, the OCEA had 15 days to appeal after learning that there would be no "step" raises paid teachers this year. The article misstated the triggering event.
- An impasse was declared Sept. 14 in labor negotiations between the district and the OCEA. The article gave the wrong date.
- Following a Jan. 4 public hearing by the school board resulting in final rejection of the step pay raise, the OCEA filed a complaint with the state Public Employees Relations Commission alleging an unfair labor practice. The article incorrectly described the complaint.

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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

John Lee Elliott, 60, of 821 Bayshore Drive, #38, Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police April 5 on a misdemeanor charge of possession of a new legend drug without a prescription.

Job Jerusalem Gammons, a project manager, 45, of 417 Bobby Drive, Crestview, was arrested by Niceville police April 4 on charges of burglary with battery, two counts.

Gammons allegedly approached vehicles driven by females in a parking lot at Northwest Florida State College, knocked on the driver's door, and stated he was doing a study of clutches, then he reached inside and touched the legs of the driver.

After the activity was reported, a Niceville police undercover officer stationed in a parking lot saw Gammons commit the alleged offense.

Freddie Lee Chancey Jr., 47, of 3017 Sowell Drive, Crestview, was arrested by Niceville police April 8 on a charge of giving worthless checks. Chancey is alleged to have written two checks on a closed account, then given them to the victim. The checks were written for \$3,500.

Vance Gordon Mitchell, 42, of 1713 Maple Ave., Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police March 23 on a charge of driving while license suspended or revoked, habitual offender.

Aaron Deering Odle, unemployed, 25, of 282 Washington Ave., Valparaiso, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 30 on charges of dealing in stolen property and giving false ownership statement of regulated metals, \$300 or more. In September, Odle allegedly stole an estimated 300 vehicle batteries from a Fort Walton Beach business, 320 Racetrack Road, and sold them to a metals recycling business as his own, receiving \$1,441.

Terry Lavon Cobb, 40, of 720 Powell Drive, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies April 1 on a violation of probation charge on the original charge of driving while license suspended or revoked.

Troy Evan Hockaday, 25, of 106 Beverly Drive, Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies March 30 on a charge of failure to appear on the original charge of no valid driver's license.

Christian Michael Briscoe, 29, of 1126 47th St., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies April 3 on a charge of petit theft. Briscoe allegedly walked into a Mary Esther grocery store, 251 Mary Esther Blvd., filled a plastic bag with \$96 worth of meat, and tried to leave without paying.

Briscoe was arrested again by sheriff's deputies April 7 on another charge of petit theft. Briscoe allegedly concealed two men's shirts in a plastic bag at the Dillard's store, 300 Mary Esther Blvd., and attempted to leave without paying the \$89.50 cost of each shirt, April 7.

Brittany Nicole Evanoff, a cashier, 20, of 1133 47th St., Niceville, was arrested by sheriff's deputies April 5 on a charge of aggravated assault, domestic violence related. Evanoff was also charged with petit theft involving a \$35 lottery ticket that precipitated the incident.

DUI arrests

Sunny Jones Westfal, 36, of 322 23rd St., Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police for DUI, subsequent to a crash with \$500 damage, at 322 23rd St., April 6 at 10:22 p.m. Westfal was also cited for failure to use due care.

Tucker Raymond Robinson, a restaurant employee, 21, of 1115 Rita Lane, Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police for DUI on 27th Street at Redwood Avenue, April 10 at 1:19 a.m. Robinson was also cited for having an open container of alcoholic beverage in the vehicle, and for failure to maintain a single lane.

Thefts

A Niceville resident from the 2400 block of Rocky Shores Drive reported April 6 that unknown person(s) stole her wallet and two iPods from her vehicle. The victim was unaware of the theft until an officer returned the stolen wallet, which had been discarded on the street.

A Niceville resident reported that on April 5 unknown person(s) stole a half carton of cigarettes and three hydrocodone pills from his unlocked pickup truck while it was parked in the 400 block of Bayshore Drive, Niceville.

A Niceville couple reported that unknown person(s) burglarized their minivan while it was parked in a church parking lot in the 200 block of South Partin Drive April 8. Stolen was \$400 cash, some prescription medications and a cell phone.

A Niceville resident reported April 7 that she was a victim of fraud. The victim said she received a letter in the mail stating she had opened a phone account with two phone lines valued at \$500 each.

A Niceville resident from the 400 block of Bally Way reported April 7 that unknown person(s) stole a phone out of her vehicle. The phone had no minutes on it.

A Mary Esther resident reported that unknown person(s) burglarized her unlocked vehicle while it was parked at 626 W. John Sims Parkway, Niceville April 6. Two book bags were stolen. The bags contained college textbooks valued at \$1,500.

Please see BLOTTER, page A-5

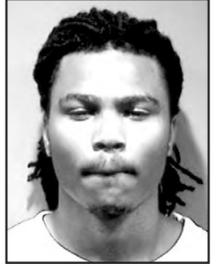
Okaloosa seeks fugitives

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

Name: Daniel Westly Arthur
Wanted for: fraud, neglect of an elderly or disabled person without great harm, possession of a controlled substance, forgery and theft. Arthur's last known address was on McFarlan Avenue in Fort Walton Beach.
Height: 5-feet, 8-inches
Weight: 155 pounds
Age: 29
Date of birth: 06-06-1982
Hair: brown, Eyes: green



Name: Aaron Quincy Ingram
Wanted for: robbery by sudden snatching and knowingly providing false information in a pawn transaction. Ingram's last known address was in Fort Walton Beach.
Height: 5-feet, 11-inches
Weight: 170 pounds
Age: 22
Date of birth: 02-08-1990
Hair: black, 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)

Fire Department Reports

Niceville

The Niceville Fire Department responded to the following calls from April 9, 2012 through April 15, 2012.

- 0 Structure Fire
- 0 Vehicle Fire
- 0 Other Fire
- 0 Illegal Burn
- 0 False Alarms
- 17 Emergency Medical Calls
- 4 Vehicle Crash
- 1 Vehicle Crash with Extrication
- 5 Other Emergency Calls
- 1 Hazardous Conditions

Street	Situation	Date	Time
Stoney Creek Cove	Medical	04/09/12	16:17
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Vehicle Crash	04/09/12	16:42
N. Partin Drive	Canceled	04/09/12	20:10
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Medical	04/09/12	21:47
22nd Street	Electrical Problem	04/09/12	22:05
23rd Street	Medical	04/10/12	09:45
Bayshore Drive	Medical	04/10/12	10:21
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Medical	04/10/12	14:43
N. Partin Drive	Medical	04/10/12	18:08
E. College Blvd.	Medical	04/11/12	10:11
East Park Avenue	Medical	04/11/12	17:01
Dana Point Drive	Medical	04/12/12	02:35
N. Partin Drive	Medical	04/12/12	06:56
SR85N	Canceled	04/12/12	10:52
SR85N/123	Vehicle Extrication	04/12/12	10:56
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Vehicle Crash	04/12/12	11:43
Royal Palm Drive	Medical	04/12/12	23:02
SR123	Vehicle Crash	04/12/12	10:07
Range Road/SR293	Service Call	04/13/12	20:04
Wild Boar Run	Canceled	04/14/12	00:30
Spencer Place	Good Intent Call	04/14/12	10:12
College Blvd.	Medical	04/14/12	12:15
Juniper Avenue	Medical	04/14/12	12:19
N. Partin Drive	Medical	04/14/12	19:00
Powell Drive	Medical	04/15/12	03:49
Green Palm Circle	Medical	04/15/12	18:12
Bailey Drive	Medical	04/15/12	19:14
Pine Avenue	Vehicle Crash	04/15/12	22:21

Weekly Safety Tip: Use or store flammable products (e.g. pesticides, fertilizers, paint, gasoline) away from any source of heat or flame. Never smoke near flammable liquids. Please look at the Niceville Fire Department web page on Facebook.

North Bay

The North Bay Fire Department responded to the following calls from April 9, 2012 through April 15, 2012.

Street	Situation	Date	Time
West Birkdale Circle	Medical assist	04/09/12	01:33
Bay Drive	EMS call	04/09/12	11:05
Hickory Street	Unintentional transmission	04/09/12	13:46
East Rosewood Way	EMS call	04/09/12	17:04
22nd Street	Dispatched and canceled	04/09/12	22:06
North White Point Road	EMS call	04/11/12	08:50
East Rosewood Way	EMS call	04/11/12	12:39
Range Road	Dispatched and canceled	04/11/12	14:00
North White Point Road	Medical assist	04/12/12	08:17
Windlake Drive	EMS call	04/12/12	14:11
Hagen Court	Rescue, EMS incident	04/12/12	17:47
Pine Street	Unauthorized burning	04/12/12	19:43
White Point Road	Medical assist	04/13/12	12:00
State Road 293	Rescue, EMS incident	04/13/12	20:06
Wild Boar Run	Cooking fire	04/14/12	00:32
Merchants Way	Dispatched and canceled	04/14/12	03:10
North White Point Road	EMS call	04/14/12	09:51
Spencer Place	Dispatched and canceled	04/14/12	10:16
Northbound acceleration	Motor vehicle accident	04/14/12	13:05
Chocatawatchee Drive	Outside rubbish	04/14/12	18:06
White Point Road	EMS call	04/14/12	18:26
West of White Point Road	Good intent call	04/15/12	14:51

Visit northbayfd.org for more information

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GAETZ

From page A-1

\$5,500 per student per year, or \$363,000, would be used to pay the three teachers and other recurring costs, she said. The school board has set aside \$164,000 for some capital items as well as pay for administrative personnel at the new magnet school.

TaxWatch identified 72 "turkeys," worth \$82.6 million, that were added to the \$70 billion state budget "during conference," that is, only after committee hearings and the first votes by the House and Senate.

Gaetz, who was in Gainesville Monday recovering from back surgery, said it was "poor form" and "disingenuous" for TaxWatch to criticize a project simply because it didn't jump all the usual legislative hurdles. Adding and subtracting items in conference committee, near the end of the legislative process, is how state budgets get balanced, he said.

No one from the Okaloosa County School District requested the STEM money, said Gaetz, who said he added the project during a public meeting of a House-Senate conference committee. He defended the funding as furthering the STEM initiative—promoting science, technology, engineering and math in K-12 schools—articulated by himself and the governor.

In its annual report on the Florida budget, released last week, Florida TaxWatch stated that an appropriation added during conference, such as the STEM funding, "is generally a clear-cut 'turkey' as defined under Florida TaxWatch criteria, especially if directed toward a specific organization or locale."

"A project added in conference means that it was usually not requested by an agency nor rec-

ommended by the governor, and was not included in either the House or Senate budget as passed by the respective chamber," the watchdog group stated.

A House-Senate conference committee meets after the two bodies approve their respective versions of the state-government budget. The committee, composed of key members of both houses, irons out differences between the two bodies, and sends the spending plan back for a final vote by the legislature.

TaxWatch recommended that rather than picking and choosing projects in a legislative session's 11th hour, the Legislature instead develop a grant program for funding projects like the Valparaiso STEM Middle School.

The TaxWatch report went on: "This lack of scrutiny was highlighted in a grand jury's indictment of a past Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives (who was cleared of charges) when it stated: The appropriation process that gives unbridled discretion to the President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Appropriations Chairs needs to be changed. The procedure currently in place requires that our elected Legislators vote on a final budget that they have no knowledge about because it is finalized in a meeting between only two legislators."

"This process allows taxpayer money to be budgeted for special purposes by those few legislators who happen to be in a position of power," TaxWatch stated. "While this is not to suggest that any of these appropriations rise to the level purported in that case, it does serve as an important reminder that there can be serious problems with adding appropriations, especially to private or local recipients, late in the process. And

perhaps more importantly, it is not fair to all legislators, and therefore unfair to all citizens of the state."

Gaetz bristled at the comparison to former Speaker of the House Ray Sansom, the Destin Republican who was indicted in 2009 by a state grand jury for his role in a secretive \$6 million appropriation to Northwest Florida State College. Charges were dropped during a trial in 2011, but not before Sansom resigned his posts as House Speaker, lawmaker, and college employee.

"I have nothing to gain or lose" if the STEM funding is approved or vetoed, said Gaetz, a former Okaloosa County Superintendent of Schools who is scheduled to take office as Senate President in 2013.

The STEM money was not added in a secret meeting of legislative leaders, but rather during a public, televised meeting, Gaetz said. About 20 members of the House and 10 from the Senate were present during the meeting, as well as the news media, he said.

TaxWatch stated its objection to the process this way: "Because the final conference report cannot be amended—it can only be voted up or down—this places the rest of the Legislature in the position of having to vote the entire budget down in order to object to specific items."

The conference committee completed its work March 5, sending a \$70 billion budget back to the full legislature, which approved it March 9 and adjourned the same day.

Scott's office said Tuesday that the governor was scheduled to sign the state's budget just after noon yesterday, April 17, in Jacksonville. Information on any line-item vetoes was not available before press time.

BLOTTER

From page A-4

A Bay County resident reported that unknown person(s) stole the vehicle registration sticker off her vehicle license plate sometime April 5-6 while she was visiting her daughter in the 100 block of Evans Court, Niceville.

A Niceville resident from the 400 block of Galway Drive reported finding his wife's purse and the contents on the ground in some bushes at the end of their yard. The purse was left in an unlocked vehicle overnight April 4-5 when unknown person(s) entered the vehicle and stole the purse. Nothing of value was reported missing.

A guest at a Niceville motel, 106 Bayshore Drive, reported that while packing her belongings from her room to her rental vehicle on the night of April 6, unknown person(s) entered the vehicle while she was in the room for about 10 minutes and stole a loaded .38-caliber Smith and Wesson revolver from the glove compartment. The victim reported the next day that her prescription medication and a pendant were also missing from the vehicle.

A guest at a Niceville motel, 106 Bayshore Drive, reported that unknown person(s) knocked out the passenger-side window of his truck sometime April 8 and stole his wife's purse, which contained an iPod and other belongings.

A man reported that March 31 he was at a Niceville grocery store, 4512 E. Highway 20, while it was raining and

had laid his wallet on some stacked merchandise while he folded his umbrella, got a shopping cart and went into the store. Within minutes the man realized he left his wallet on the boxes and returned, but it was missing. Six hours later the wallet had not been turned in and the man contacted the bank about two credit cards it contained.

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LAUDED

From page A-1
Dingman, who manages the city's housing rehabilitation program. Dingman said the city has received bids from contractors, to replace or renovate 13 Niceville homes identified as substandard, and whose residents are elderly, disabled, or otherwise unable to improve

their homes on their own. The rehabilitation program is funded with state and federal grants. Three companies were recommended to receive contracts for individual rehabilitation projects: Allen Milton Construction, Jason Buck Construction Services and James Taylor General Contractors. The city's Community Development Block

Grant (CDBG) budget for this year includes \$582,000 for rehabilitation, demolition and replacement of homes, as well as \$13,000 for temporary relocation of residents while their homes are being worked on. The city council unanimously approved the third and final reading of a city ordinance updating the city's rules for minimum housing standards, flood-

plain management and some provisions of the city building code. The council also approved the first reading of an ordinance authorizing the issuance of up to \$3.2 million in water and sewer revenue bonds to help pay for improvements to the city's water and sewer system. The council approved the second of three readings of an ordinance setting rules for

grease interceptors and separators for restaurants and other businesses that might discharge such materials into the city's sewer system. The council also approved a resolution supporting a proposal to declare John Sims Parkway between State Road 85 and the Walton County line as a "Purple Heart Memorial Highway" in honor of killed or wounded veterans. The

proposal would not change the name of the highway or require anyone to change their address. Niceville Library Director Sheila Bishop informed the council that renovations to the Niceville Children's Park have been completed in time for the summer season. City Manager Lannie Corbin told the council that the city is purchasing a large floating



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Advertising Feature by Gerri Norris

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The Summit II in Hair stylists want you to look and feel great this summer!

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Local students place at State Science Fair



Three Niceville High School students placed at the 57th annual State Science Fair in Lakeland. From left, NHS Principal Marcus Chambers; Michael Sementelli, fourth place, senior engineering; Brayton Miles, first place, senior engineering; Kyle Saleeby, fourth place, senior engineering; and science fair review committee and science instructor Gina Emery.



Rocky Bayou Christian School students Connor Lynch and his sister, Sarah Lynch, participated in the State Science and Engineering Fair in Lakeland. Connor won second place in senior engineering and will advance to the international competition.

By Tess Hollis
Beacon Staff Writer

Several students from Niceville High School, Rocky Bayou Christian School and Ruckel Middle School placed, or won awards at the 57th annual State Science Fair in Lakeland. One Niceville student took home first place in the senior engineering competition.

The fair is the largest such competition in the state, and 32 students from Okaloosa and Walton counties, and more than 820 students from around the state participated in the event. Each of the Okaloosa County students who participated placed at the 35th annual Robert Sheffield East Panhandle Regional Science and Engineering Fair that was held in February.

Three of the students from

Niceville will compete in the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) May 13-18 in Pittsburgh. The ISEF is the world's largest international pre-college science competition. The competition is for students in grades 9-12, and provides an annual forum for more than 1,500 high school students from 65 countries, regions and territories to display their research.

Three Niceville High School students placed in the state competition.

Brayton Miles, a freshman, won first place in senior engineering, and will represent Florida at the ISEF. Brayton's project was "Passive auto tracking solar panel." Brayton's design project involved creating solar cells that orient themselves to the sunlight, without the use of motors.

"Ever since middle school, science has been a passion of mine," he said.

Kyle Saleeby, a junior, placed fourth in senior engineering, and was also a speaker at the fair. Kyle's project was "On thin ice: controlling, slowing the motion of a car on a slippery surface." Kyle will also advance to the ISEF competition.

"I heard he did an excellent job as a speaker at the opening ceremony," said Niceville High science instructor Gina Emery. "He was the only speaker who was interrupted by applause."

Kyle said he is more excited than nervous about attending the ISEF competition. He added that his science teachers have led him to his love of science and engineering.

Please see STUDENTS, page B-4



Courtesy photo

Ruckel Middle School State Science and Engineering Fair participants, from left, Claire Ponder, Stephen Herrera and Patrick Shaw. Claire won the third place state award in the computer science category.

Courtesy photo

Saturday in the Park set for this weekend

Saturday in the Park, hosted by the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, will be April 21, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at Perrine Park, Valparaiso. Area residents enjoy the Heritage Museum during a past Saturday in the Park. See page B-4 for the story.

Courtesy photo



Who's News

Sabrina Valenti, of Niceville, a junior at Niceville High School, earned a top composite score of 36 on a recent ACT test. Nationally, while the actual number of students earning a composite score of 36 varies from year to year, roughly one-tenth of one percent receive a top score. The ACT consists of tests in English, mathematics, reading and science. Each test is scored on a scale of 1-36, and a student's composite score is the average of the four test scores. ACT test scores are accepted by all major U.S. colleges, and exceptional scores of 36 provide colleges



Sabrina Valenti

with evidence of student readiness for the academic rigors that lie ahead. Sabrina is currently enrolled in four Advanced Placement courses at NHS.

Grace Ann Stoner, a senior at Rocky Bayou Christian School and daughter of retired Lt. Col Charles and Lori Stoner, of Niceville, has been selected as a finalist for Florida's 32nd Annual Homecoming Queen Selection that will be held April 22, at the Sheraton Lake Buena Vista Resort in Orlando. Grace is RBCS' homecoming queen.



Grace Stoner

Florida's 2012 Homecoming Queen will receive a cash scholarship, plus an all-expense paid trip to the National Finals to compete with the queens from each state for America's Homecoming Queen.

Shannon Burton, a 2005 Niceville High School Summa Cum Laude graduate, has been selected as a member of the University of Florida Delta Epsilon Iota Academic Honor Society. Members must have completed a minimum of 30



Shannon Burton

Please see WHO'S, page B-3

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District 5 candidate forum

The Okaloosa Republican Club will host a candidate forum on April 26, for County Commission District 5. The Club meeting and forum will be at the American Legion on Hollywood Boulevard, Fort Walton Beach. There will be a social hour at 6:15 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:55 p.m. Reservations will be accepted through April 24 by calling Jane Dale, 651-5049. The price of the dinner is \$10.

Piggy bank contest

The Niceville Library will have a Piggy Bank Contest for school kids and teens, K-12. Rules and application forms are available in the Youth Services Department, or in the library lobby. The themes are: prettiest, most creative and celebrity look-alike. Prizes for first, second and third place will be awarded. Judging will be on April 26.

Church dinner

Rosemont Baptist Church is taking reservations for "Dinner with Nida," from Nida's Thai and More. Reservations need to be made by April 25. The dinner will be April 27, at 5 p.m. All proceeds will benefit Operation Child Shoeboxes. Info: RBCNiceville.org, or call the church office to make a reservation, 678-1611.

NHS zombie play

The Niceville High School first-year drama department members will present "I, Xombi" on April 27 and 28, at 7 p.m., in the Niceville High School auditorium. The play is about the perils of the walking dead. Tickets will be \$5 at the door.

NHS Band Poker Run

The Niceville High School Eagle Pride Band Boosters are looking for sponsors for its second annual Rockin' Southern Style Poker Run on April 28. The NHS Band and Auxiliary will use proceeds from the event for expenses to this year's Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City. Registration will be at Niceville High School from 9-11 a.m., with the last bike out at 11 a.m. Last bike will be in at the final stop of Heritage Harley-Davidson by 3 p.m., with prizes announced by 4 p.m. All individual motorcycle riders, trike riders, cage drivers and motorcycle groups are welcome. Music at the final stop that

day will be provided by Flock of Sea Monkeys. This is a family-friendly event. For more info, or to be a sponsor, contact Brian Hayes at hayesmichigan24@gmail.com, or visit the NHS Band 2nd Annual Poker Run web page on Facebook.

Day of Service food drive

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints would like to make Niceville residents aware of a food drive they will have on April 28. Members of the church will collect donations throughout the Niceville community from 9-11 a.m., and will donate the items to Sharing & Caring, Inc., Niceville. Leave food on your front porch, and the church will do the rest. Sharing & Caring is specifically in need of meal mixes such as Hamburger Helper or Rice-A-Roni,

pasta sauce, cold cereals, peanut butter, laundry detergent, dish soap, diapers, toilet paper, wipes and cleaning products. Info: Melynda, NicevilleDayofService@gmail.com, or 897-0064.

OAA poster contest

The Okaloosa Arts Alliance is accepting artwork for its fourth annual Okaloosa County School Poster Contest. This year's theme is "Summer Fun," and can be anything you can create on paper with markers, paint, pastels, charcoal or crayons. Digital artwork will be accepted. There will be a first, second and third place winner for three students in each category: elementary, middle and high school. All of the entries will be on display at the Family Fun Arts Fest on May 12, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., at Henderson Beach State Park, Destin. Entries can be mailed through an Okaloosa County school, or to Okaloosa Arts Alliance, Attention: School Poster Contest, P.O. Box 4426, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549. The deadline is April 30. Only one entry per student, and posters should be standard size (8-by-11) and include the name of the artist, grade and school name.

Scholarship applications

The Emerald Coast Chapter of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) will award \$9,000 in scholarships: one, \$2,000 scholarship; two, \$1,500 scholarships; and four, \$1,000 scholarships in May 2012. AFCEA is also accepting nominations for science teachers, with a chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship to use in support of the teacher's school's science program. The deadline for submissions is May 4. Info: emerald-coastafceachapter.org, or glenda.robinson2@eglin.af.mil.

ASMC scholarships

The American Society of Military Comptrollers (ASMC) Gulf Coast Chapter is offering scholarships for high school seniors and college students entering a field of study related to finance/resource management. Info: ASMC website, gulfcoastasmc.org/education.html. The deadline for applications is May 11. Info: Sandra Telemacque, or Sandra.Telemacque@eglin.af.mil, or Donna Schulist, 882-4538, or Donna.Schulist@eglin.af.mil.

Republican Women

The Walton Republican Women Federated will hold its monthly meeting on April 18, at 11 a.m., at Carrabba's Italian Grill in the parking lot of Silver Sands Mall, Sandestin. Lunch will be an Italian salad, Chicken Bryan, with a special ice cream dessert for \$18 for members, and \$20 for guests. For reservations, contact Margaret Crozier at 837-5321, or macrozier@cox.net.

Environmental Symposium

Registration is now being accepted for the Mattie M. Kelly Cultural and Environmental Institute at Northwest Florida State College's fifth annual Environmental Symposium on the Choctawhatchee Basin on April 27, from 8 a.m.-3 p.m., at the college's Niceville campus. This year's symposium theme is "Comparing Estuaries of Northwest Florida." The symposium is open to the public. The registration fee is \$25, and will include all symposium materials, a continental breakfast and lunch. Register by April 18, at mattiekellyinstitute.org, and pay the registration fee by mail or in-person the day of the event.

Saltwater Seminar

This month's Emerald Coast Saltwater Seminar Series will be April 18, at 7 p.m., at North Light Marina, Niceville. The seminar will focus on tips and techniques to help catch more king mackerel, as well as proven ways to target bigger fish. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m., and there will be free raffles. The seminar is open to everyone. Info: saltwater-events.com, or Joe Z., 516-0709.

Volunteer Day

Northwest Florida State College's PRIME Time program will host Volunteer Day on April 18, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., in the Student Services Center, rooms 132-133, on the college's Niceville campus. Local representatives from a large variety of agencies will be on hand to answer ques-

tions about volunteering for their program, or volunteering in the local area. Info: Laura Schultze, 729-6084.

Ministry banquet

The Good News Jail and Prison Ministry Annual Banquet will be April 19, at 6 p.m., at Niceville United Methodist Church Community Life Center. The banquet is a fundraiser that supports the ministry of the chaplain at the Okaloosa County Jail. There will be testimonies from former inmates, as well as an update from Chaplain John Lennon. Info: Chuck Turk at 678-5827.

Spring job fair

The 2012 Northwest Florida Panhandle spring job fair will be April 19, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., St. Mary's Parish Life Center, 165 Coral Drive, Fort Walton Beach. Job-seekers are not required to register, and attend for free. Employers must register at panhandlejobfair.com. Info: Ester Molder, Panhandle job fair chairman, University of West Florida, 863-6575, fpanhandlejobfair@cox.net.

Necklace exchange

Niceville UMC Women's Ministry will present "What's Around Your Neck?," April 19, from 6-8 p.m., in the Sanctuary, featuring Kim Orellana of Ecuador and worship with Andrew Griffin. There will be light refreshments. Participants are asked to bring a lightly-loved necklace for a necklace exchange.

Senior activities

The Walton/Okaloosa County Council on Aging Senior Program will offer the following events for people 60 and older at the Valparaiso Community Center, 268 Glenview Ave., 833-9291. April 18, monthly birthday party hosted by the women's group of the First Baptist Church of Niceville; April 19, Wii bowling, 9:30 a.m.; April 20, bingo, 9:30 a.m.; April 23, dominoes and socializing, 9:30 a.m.; April 24, bingo, 9:30 a.m.

Horse meet and greet

The Okaloosa County 4H Horse Advisory Committee is accepting registrations until April 20, for a "Horse Meet and Greet" at Camp Timpoochee. The clinic is designed for kids who want to learn more about horses, but don't have a horse. This is a hands-on introduction to horses, their care, grooming and what it takes to own or lease a horse. The clinic will be May 5, from 9 a.m.-noon. The event is open to children ages 8-12, for \$25 (\$15/subject child in same family). Participants will need a helmet and shoes/boots with a heel, no sneakers. Info: Susan Simmers, 4horseadvisory@gmail.com. Space is limited to the first 15 applicants.

'Difficult People' seminar

The Costa Leadership Institute at Northwest Florida State College will host a "Dealing with Difficult People" seminar on April 20, from 8 a.m.-noon, at the Niceville campus. Registration will be accepted until the session date, space permitting. Info: 729-6880, or nwpsc.edu/LI. Real world scenarios will be presented with strategies to use when confronting a difficult situation. Cost: \$70.

Entrepreneur Fair

Northwest Florida State College will hold its first Student Entrepreneur Fair on April 20, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. The event will give NWFSO students an opportunity to share their business ideas, and compete for a cash prize. For additional information, visit the Costa Leadership Institute website at nwpsc.edu/LI. The fair will be held in the Student Services Center, Room 132.

Seven-mile day hike

Join the Florida Trail Association on April 21, at 9 a.m., for a seven-mile day hike at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park at Santa Rosa Beach. Info: 723-5112, or choctaw.floridatrail.org.

Public star gaze

The Northwest Florida Astronomy Association will hold a public star gaze in support of Earth Day activities at Topsail Hill State Park. The Earth Day event will be April 21, starting at 8 a.m. The star gaze will start at dusk. Info: nwfaastro.org.

Audubon bird walk

The Choctawhatchee Audubon Society will hold a bird walk on April 21. Join master birder, Dave Gordon, for birding in the upland hardwoods of Northern Walton County. Wear long pants and sleeves, and bring insect repellent and water. Lunch will be at a nearby eatery. Meet at the Niceville Food World at 7 a.m., and at the Walton County Extension Office on Highway 83 at 7:45 a.m. Info: Dave, 651-3328.

Boy Scout parking lot sale

Niceville Boy Scout Troop 157 will have a parking lot sale on April 21 at the American Legion Post 221, 444 John Sims Parkway, Niceville. The sale will begin at 8 a.m. If you have donations, call 897-1789 to schedule a pickup.

Nail trim clinic

Parkway Veterinary Hospital will hold a nail trim clinic, April 21, from 9 a.m.-noon, 1101 E. John Sims Parkway. The cost is \$8 per pet, \$6 for



Courtesy photo

NWFSC to present 'Dance Facets 2012' on Friday and Saturday

The Northwest Florida State College's Division of Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts dance program will present "Dance Facets 2012" on the Mainstage of the Mattie Kelly Arts Center in Niceville. Thirty-four dancers will perform seven original dance presentations featuring: contemporary ballet, modern, jazz and tap. The evening will begin at 7:30 p.m. on both April 20 and 21. Tickets: \$15 adults, and \$10 youth ages 18 and younger. To purchase tickets, call the Mattie Kelly Arts Center box office at 729-6000.

additional pets, cash or check only. All of the proceeds will benefit the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. Rabies certification required, tags will not suffice. Cats should be in a carrier and dogs should be on a non-retractable leash.

36th Saturday Festival

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida will hold its 36th Saturday in the Park Festival on April 21, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The festival events include: A Heritage 5K run/walk, and kids fun run, register at active.com; People's Choice antique car show and parade; live entertainment, featuring Zack Williamson; a kid zone; free museum tours; re-enactments and traditional craft demonstrations; craft and wood vendors. The event will be held at the Museum, and is free and open to the public. Info: 678-2615.

Turtle Bob presentation

Turtle Bob will present snakes and turtles on April 21, at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center, 4956 State Highway 20 East, Freeport. Come and learn about the importance of Gopher Tortoises in the Long Leaf Pine Forest. Standard admission rates apply. Info: cowilson-center.org.

High Heel Dash

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer will hold a High Heel Dash on April 21, at 9 a.m., at Bluewater Fitness. The race will be a 150-yard dash, with all proceeds going to the American Cancer Society. Cost: \$20 and includes a T-shirt, food and drink, a chance at door prizes and a free Zumba class. Men are welcome, and costumes are encouraged. Participants must be 18 or older. Registration forms are available at Bluewater Fitness and at active.com. Info: Melissa Yandel, 974-4427.

Spring Fling flea market

The Flying Needles Quilt Guild, will host a Spring Fling flea market on April 21, in the parking lot at Niceville Church of Christ, across from Niceville High School. Everyone is welcome to set up and bring tables and chairs. Set up time is 6 a.m., and the flea market will open to the public at 8 a.m. The Guild is asking that 10 percent of all sales be given to the Flying Needles Quilt Guild. Antiques, household goods, jewelry, clothing, quilting supplies, old quilts and other treasures will be displayed. A booth of baked goods and drinks will be available. Info: Pat, 897-5070, or visit flyingneedlesquiltguild.org.

Titanic anniversary

The Friends of the Niceville Library will host the "100th Anniversary of the Titanic," with guest speaker Judy DeBolt. Come and hear the stories of the passengers and crew. The program is free, and will be held at the Niceville Community Center, 204 N. Partin Drive, on April 21 at 10:30 a.m. Info: 279-4863, ext. 1504.

Sheriff's forum

The Niceville Valparaiso Tea Party will host a Sheriff's Forum April 23, at 6 p.m., at Niceville City Hall, 208 N. Partin Drive, Niceville. All candidates have agreed to participate. David Scholl will be the moderator for the evening. Visitors are welcome. Info:

729-2874, or EmeraldCoastPatriots.org.

Driver safety course

The AARP Driver Safety Classroom Course for mature drivers will be offered April 23 and 24, from 8:30-11:30 a.m., at the Niceville Public Library. Cost: \$12 for AARP members, \$14 for others. Each student must attend both sessions, and should bring cash or check to the class along with their driver's license and valid AARP card. The class will be open to drivers 50 and older, and the classroom course is designed to help mature drivers adjust to the challenges of life changes. Info: 729-5406.

NARFE meeting

The National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, Chapter 1428, will meet on April 24, at Golden Corral, Fort Walton Beach. Lunch will be at 11 a.m., followed by the meeting at noon, which will consist of a workshop to identify the priorities and direction of the Chapter for the remainder of 2012. All current and retired federal employees are welcome. Info: 678-6045.

Embroiderer's Guild

The Sand Dunes Chapter of the Embroiderer's Guild of America will meet April 23, from 9:30 a.m.-noon, at Niceville United Methodist Church. The night group will meet on April 26, from 6-9 p.m., at Niceville United Methodist Church. Visitors are welcome.

Monthly trail meeting

There will be a monthly meeting of the Florida Trail Association on April 24, at 6 p.m., at Ed's Hometown Seafood and Steaks, Niceville. Visitors welcome. Info: 654-1172, or choctaw.floridatrail.org.

Niceville Garden Club

The Niceville Garden Club will hold a meeting on April 24, at 6 p.m., at the Niceville Library. This club has been organized with the help of the Valparaiso Garden Club. There are several members who are Master Gardeners.

Alzheimer's support group

Alzheimer's Family Services will hold a support group on April 25, at 10:30 a.m., at the First United Methodist Church, Chandler Center, 214 S. Partin Drive. The support group is free and respite care is available. To register or for additional information, call 478-7790, or AlzFamServ.org.

Magnolia Golf Classic

The Bluewater Bay Ladies Golf Association will present the Magnolia Classic on April 25 and 26. Info: 897-4808, or 897-8444.

'Change Management'

The Costa Leadership Institute at Northwest Florida State College will host a "Change Management" seminar on April 25, from 1-5 p.m., at the Niceville campus. Registration will be accepted until the session date, space permitting. Info: 729-6880, or nwpsc.edu/LI. The seminar will present a comprehensive model organizations can use to ensure that their personnel buy into changes, support them and cooperate with making them succeed. Cost: \$70.

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RBCS offers free math tutoring

Rocky Bayou Christian Academy's Mu Alpha Theta Club will offer free math tutoring from 8 a.m.-noon on Saturday, April 21, at Rocky Bayou Christian School, room 802 in the modular by the soccer fields. Tutoring in basic math through AP Calculus will be available. This free service will be open to students from any of the local area schools or colleges. Please call Carla Alldredge, at 729-7227, ext. 219 if you would like to reserve a tutor. Walk-ins are welcome. Bring your textbook, and any old tests and quizzes that you need help with.

Mu Alpha Theta is the national math honors society. Rocky Bayou's Mu Alpha Theta club focuses on preparations for math competitions, service to the community and training students to serve Christ with all of their talents. The Rocky Bayou chapter is offering this free service to the community as a club service project.



Courtesy photo

NHS students celebrate Youth Arts Month

Students at Niceville High School celebrated Youth Arts Month at the Sterling House in Bluewater Bay. The students were judged by the residents. Lauren Barsky received third place, and Liz Clements received Committee's Choice. Tori Ross also displayed her colorful artwork. From left, Liz Clements, Lauren Barsky and Tori Ross.

NHS student recreates book covers for OCPLC

Madison Blake, "Madi," a freshman at Niceville High School, had her large-scale book cover photo boards displayed at the Scout-O-Rama on Saturday at Uptown Station. Madi is a volunteer at Niceville Library, and created the book covers to use at promotional events for the Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative (OCPLC).

Vicky Stever, coordinator for the OCPLC, said Madi chose books that would appeal to Boy Scouts, and expertly recreated the cover art. Madi's family donated all the supplies for the project.

"The library cooperative will use the giant book jackets at future promotional events, and will also share them with our member libraries for programs and displays," Stever said.

Madi has a dream to attend art school, and the works will become part of her portfolio, Stever said, who described Madi as having "incredible artistic talent."

Madi also recently painted an eagle mural at Niceville High School, to display the school's spirit.



Courtesy photo

Madison Blake's recreated book covers that the Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative uses for promotional events. Madison is a freshman at Niceville High School.

WHO'S

From page B-7
semester hours at an accredited college or university, while maintaining a 3.3 cumulative grade point average, or a scholastic ranking within the top 15 percent of their class. Shannon is the daughter of Cynthia Burton, of Destin, and Gordon Lederman, of Niceville. Shannon will graduate this semester with a doctorate in physical therapy.

Chad Foy, of Niceville, was confirmed on April 9 by the Boy Scouts of America National as an Eagle Scout. Chad is a member of Troop 157, Niceville.



Chad Foy

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Niceville's Newspaper

PRIME TIME

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Local representatives from a large variety of agencies will be on hand to answer questions about volunteering for their programs, or just volunteering in the local area. Agencies will provide answers to all of your questions, supply brochures and information to help guide you through this process. If you have ever wanted to share part of your time with an organization, and didn't know how, be sure to attend this special volunteer information event.

Area organizations that will be represented are: NWFSC Programs, Children in Crisis, Covenant Hospice, NWF Area Agency on Aging, SOCKS, Twin Cities Hospital H2U, Trauma Intervention Program, Heritage Museum, Take Stock in Children, Horizons, Okaloosa Walton County Sheriff's Crime Prevention Programs, United Cerebral Palsy of NWFL, plus many more. If you have questions about this event, or would like to participate, please contact Laura Schultze at 729-6084.



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Museum to hold Saturday in the Park

By Tess Hollis
Beacon Staff Writer

This year's 36th annual Saturday in the Park festival, hosted by the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, will have activities for the entire family to enjoy, including a day full of live entertainment.

"This year is going to be the biggest and best ever," said Museum Director Gina Marini. "We are expecting about 4,000 people."

The festival, held in Perrine Park, Valparaiso, will be from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., and is free to the public. The Heritage 5K run/walk and kids fun run will begin at 8 a.m., with registration at 7 a.m. Participants can also register at active.com.

At 7:50 a.m., just before the race, Marini said there will be an opening ceremony where the Niceville High School ROTC will present the colors and raise the American flag. A woman will also sing the national anthem and there will be an invocation.

"By the time we do the opening ceremony, there will probably be at least 600 people in the park," Marini said.

Marini said parking for the festival is different this year, and there will be a golf-cart shuttle service.

"Right next to the park there will be parking for anyone who wants to make a \$5 donation to the museum," she said. "We are encouraging guests to park at Lincoln Park, because we will have a golf-cart shuttle service to pick up people from Lincoln Park and the surrounding streets."

This year, Okaloosa County Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux will be at the festival with a booth where residents can swipe a driver's license, and immediately register to vote or update their



Courtesy photo

The Valparaiso Garden Club's Standard Flower Show and native plant sale will be April 21, at Saturday in the Park in old Valparaiso. See floral designs by members, plants grown in area gardens, and purchase environmentally friendly native plants at the plant sale.

voter registration.

To beat the heat, Marini said the Niceville-Valparaiso Rotary Club will sell water and soda, with all proceeds benefiting the Museum.

Other events at the festival will include the People's Choice antique car show, where guests can buy a ticket and vote for their favorite car; free Heritage Museum tours; a kids' zone with a pony wheel, bounce house, petting zoo, old-fashioned games, toys and contests and face painting; re-enactments and traditional craft demonstrations by Walton Guard, Panhandle Pioneer Settlement, Shire Phoenix, spinners, tatters and basket weaving.

There will also be various craft and food vendors at the festival. Marini said the food will be "fair food" and will include barbecue, pretzels, funnel cakes, and more—No two food vendors will be the same, she noted.

While the festival is taking place, there will be a mainstage

in the park where guests can enjoy local entertainment throughout the day.

The following is the entertainment lineup:

—9-9:45 a.m., A Dance Studio.

—10-10:30 a.m., High Voltage electric violinists.

—10:30-11 a.m., Lewis Middle School Chorus.

—11-11:30, Zack Williamson, who will perform classic hits from yesterday and today.

—11:30 a.m.-noon, The High Steppers.

—Noon-12:30 p.m., Emerald Coast Barbershop Singers.

—1-1:30 p.m., Watermelon eating contest, \$5 registration fee.

—1:30-2 p.m., Lewis Jazz Band.

—2-2:30, Bubble gum blowing contest, \$1 entry fee.

—2:30-3 p.m., Rocky Bayou Christian School Jazz Band.

—3-3:30 p.m., Rocky Bayou Christian School Chamber Choir.

STUDENTS

From page B-1

"Asking why we like science is like asking 'why do you like the color blue?' We just do," he said.

Michael Sementelli, a freshman, placed fourth in senior engineering for his project, "Propeller energy." Michael was accepted to I-SWEEP 2012, the International Sustainable World Energy Engineering Environment Project Olympiad. The Olympiad allows top high schoolers from across the globe to display their ideas in Houston from May 3-6.

"I've always been interested in the physics of airplanes because I've always been around them," Michael said. "Mrs. Emery definitely kept me interested in science."

All three Niceville High

School students said they hope to pursue careers in science or engineering upon graduating from college.

Rocky Bayou Christian School also has a student advancing to the ISEF competition. Connor Lynch placed second in senior engineering, and also earned the United States Army Certificate of Achievement for an outstanding science project. His project was "A better way to fly: exploring the benefits of lifting fuselages and blended wing bodies."

Connor's sister, Sarah Lynch, was a finalist in senior engineering, and earned the United States Air Force Certificate of Achievement for an outstanding science or engineering project. Sarah's project was "Hydrogen generator—using hydrogen to

improve automobile fuel efficiency."

Ruckel Middle School was represented at the State Science and Engineering Fair by three students. Claire Ponder, seventh grade, won the third place state award in the computer science category, and Patrick (PJ) Shaw, eighth grade, was awarded a recognition ribbon for his chemistry project. Stephen Herrera, eighth grade, also participated at the state level.

Claire's project was "EMF? OMG! Using common household objects to reduce the electromagnetic fields from your notebook computer power supply;" PJ's project was "Water breakdown with cobalt catalyst;" and Stephen's project was "How surface area affects solar water heater efficiency."

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Dr. Seebaldt has relocated

Dr. Kelly Seebaldt, DMD, PA has moved from Shalimar to his new dental office in the Mae Center at 385 Harbor Blvd., in Destin.

Provider for both military and educators.

Call for an appointment (850) 837-2189



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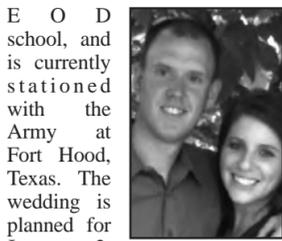
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Engagements

Johnson-Evans

Marla and Roger Johnson, of Niceville, announce the engagement of their daughter Morgan Breann Johnson, to Travis Edward Evans, son of LeeAnn and Tim Jochec of Cypress, Texas. Morgan is a 2007 graduate of Niceville High School, and is attending college for Nursing. Travis graduated Cy-Fair High School, Cypress, Texas in 2005. Travis has a bachelor of arts in history, and graduated



Travis Evans and Morgan Johnson

of Niceville, announce the engagement of their daughter, Lisa Marie, to Grant Christopher, son of Mr. and Mrs. Mark Wright, of Niceville.



Grant Wright and Lisa Banegas

Both the bride and the groom are graduates of Niceville High School. A May 2012 wedding is planned.

Banegas-Wright

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Banegas,

PAWS in dire need of cat, dog food

Special to the Beacon

The Panhandle Animal Welfare Society is in desperate need of dry puppy, cat and kitten food. PAWS is currently caring for more than 190 cats and kittens, and is critically low on cat and kitten food.

There are currently 50 puppy mouths to feed, and PAWS is down to the last few bags of dry puppy food. The shelter is in danger of having

nothing to feed the animals.

PAWS provides service to Okaloosa County, and animals and their owners who live in the surrounding communities. The shelter relies heavily on donations from local individuals and companies to provide nourishment, shelter and healthcare for abused, neglected and abandoned animals.



Donations can be dropped off at PAWS on 752 Lovejoy Road, Fort Walton Beach, any day between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., or at the Junkyard Dog, 179 NE Eglin Parkway, Tuesday through Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Info: pawshelter.com, or pawstfbw@embarqmail.com.

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Reception/Mailroom Full-time

Beacon Newspapers (The Bay Beacon, The Eglin Flyer, The Hurlburt Patriot, The Green Beret) has an opening for a full-time person to handle reception, secretarial, production and mailroom duties. We are looking for a conscientious, reliable, upbeat person who will represent the Bay Beacon well on the phone. Ability to type quickly and accurately in computer word-processing, spreadsheet and database programs is required. Some lifting of bundles or boxes weighing 20 to 40 pounds required. Applicants should be comfortable working in a small-business environment where flexibility and the ability to meet unexpected challenges is required. Paid vacation & holidays, IRA plan. Nonsmokers only. Apply in person at the Beacon's office, 1181 E. John Sims Parkway, Niceville.

Help Wanted

Newspaper Delivery

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)

Newspaper Ad Sales

The Beacon Newspapers (The Bay Beacon, The Eglin Flyer, The Hurlburt Patriot, and The Green Beret) has an opening for a career-minded, full-time person to sell newspaper advertising outside the office. Calling on new customers and collecting also required. Candidates should be upbeat, energetic, organized, self-starting and detail-oriented. Salary plus commission. Benefits include IRA plan and paid vacation. Candidates must be available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. We will train the right person. Reply with cover letter and resume, or apply in person at the Beacon, 1181 John Sims Parkway, Niceville, FL 32578.

Help Wanted

Newspaper Graphic Artist Part-time

Beacon Newspapers, publisher of The Bay Beacon, The Eglin Flyer, The Hurlburt Patriot, and The Green Beret, seeks a part-time graphic artist to create ads on Macintosh computers, paginate news, Photoshop images, and perform other production, office and mailroom duties. Experience with QuarkXpress or another page-layout program required. Applicants should be organized, detail-oriented, and work efficiently to meet deadlines. This is a small-business environment that rewards the ability to master new challenges. Ability to lift 40 pounds required. Nonsmokers. Apply in person at the Bay Beacon, 1181 E. John Sims Parkway, Niceville.

Homes for Rent

Valparaiso, Refurbished, fenced, carpet, \$965+DD. Available May, 582-4417.

Homes for Sale

Silver Oaks, Crestview, 4 BR/3 BA, 2 CG, formal LR/DR, excellent condition, \$223,000, see Okaloosa/Ft. Walton Craigslist, 682-1709

Jewelry

We pay the most for gold, diamonds and jewelry. 700 Beal Parkway, Fort Walton Beach, 850-974-2462, Tom.

Yard Sales

128 Edward Circle, Valparaiso, Saturday, 4/21, 7a-1p. Collectibles, furniture, television, designer clothes, toys, kitchen supplies, something for everyone.

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Call the Beacon at 678-1080!



THE INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER —by Mike Griffith

Location: Valparaiso T-Pier and Lincoln Park

How well do you think the government uses your tax money?



"I guess it's good to use it for infrastructure, like roads and bridges. Paying taxes isn't really an option."

Weston Murray, 24, Crestview, sales representative



"Not very well at all. There's a lot of government waste—unnecessary studies and that kind of thing."

Berry Drake, 68, Niceville, retired



"Pretty well for the most part. They have a lot to take care of."

William Mitchell, 41, Crestview, student



"I think they should do a better job. Too much is going to an unresolvable conflict overseas. I'd rather spend more to help U.S. citizens who are in need."

Adam Glidden, 30, Niceville, beach attendant and recent Navy veteran



"Not very well. There's too much waste."

Travis Blow, 29, Niceville, plumber



"An American citizen works from their teen years through adulthood, putting money into the government. When it's time for you to make a withdrawal, it's not there."

Sheila Bembow, 51, Crestview, unemployed

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

Briefs

Ruckel golfers win pair

The Ruckel Middle School girls golf team defeated the Bruner girls, 159-173, April 2 at the Fort Walton Beach Golf Club. Ruckel was led by Sarah Pabst

(36) and Carmen Little (38).

The Ruckel boys team also won, 121 to 163. Ruckel was led by Patrick Poate (25) and Austin Pettibone (31).

In the April 10 match against

Davidson, held at Foxwood Country Club, the Ruckel girls defeated the Davidson girls 164-188. Ruckel was led by Pabst (36) and Meghan Horrigan (40)

The Ruckel boys team won, 105 to 117. Ruckel was led by Poate (24) and a host of boys at 27.

Fishing tournament, fry

The fourth annual Sunset on the Harbor fishing tournament, fish fry, silent auction and cocktail contest will take place April 27 on the Destin Harbor.

A Fishing for Business Corporate Fishing Challenge, in which four-person and two-per-

son teams, and individuals will board party boat Destiny at noon and compete for the largest fish award will take place. The boat will dock at the Destin Fishing Fleet Marina, behind Fisherman's Wharf restaurant, at 6 p.m., where the fish fry, music and silent auction will be under way, and area restaurants will compete in a cocktail mixing contest.

This event is open to the public. Fish fry tickets are \$15 for adults and \$8 for children under 12. Those 21 and over who purchase fish fry tickets will also be able to taste the cocktail entries and vote on their favorite. Find

out more about the fishing tournament at destinchamber.com or by calling 837-6241.

Also available will be a \$15 harbor discount card, offering freebies and discounts at establishments all along the harbor. All who purchase a ticket will also be entered to win a vacation package from Dale E. Peterson Vacations.

Tournament and fish fry sponsorships are available for area businesses. Restaurants wishing to participate in the cocktail mixing contest or businesses wishing to sponsor should contact the Destin Area Chamber of Commerce at 837-6241.

HERE'S TO YOUR Health

2012 Community Seminar Series



Gender Specific Knee Replacements

Monday, April 30, 11:30 am

Twin Cities Hospital Wellness Center

Join us as Joe Cope discusses the benefit of having a gender specific knee replacement procedure.



Take Pause

Friday, May 11, 11:30 am

Twin Cities Hospital Wellness Center

Join us as Dr. Maureen Thompson discusses normal, abnormal, and serious changes to the female body during menopause



Women's Woes & Why's

Wednesday, May 16, 11:30 am

Twin Cities Hospital Wellness Center

Join us as Joy Makela, LMHC, discusses tips and tactics for coping with women's life issues, such as: empty nest syndrome and life after losing a loved one.



No Bones About It

Thursday, May 31, 11:30 am

Twin Cities Hospital Wellness Center

Join us as Darlene Martin, RN, BSN, ONC, CDE, discusses osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis—the two leading types of arthritis that can lead to knee and hip replacement.

Reservations required, call 850.729.9463



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presents the . . .

5th Annual Choctawhatchee Estuary Family Festival

The first 100 kids to complete their scavenger hunt will receive a special book!

Free of charge! No park entrance fee!

Sat., April 28, 2012 • 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Fred Gannon State Park, Hwy. 20 Niceville

A family & community event for all ages!

Visit www.mattiekellyinstitute.org for more details.