

The Bay Beacon

8 Pages, 1 Section, 5 Inserts

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

50¢

Prepping for storm season

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

From June 1 through Nov. 30, the Twin Cities area, along with the rest of Florida and other Southeastern states, will live through yet another annual hurricane season. Throughout the region, federal, state, and local governments, as well as a variety of private organizations and individuals, have been preparing to survive and recover from whatever damage may be done by hurricanes or tropical storms this year.

This year's Atlantic hurricane season got an early start, as subtropical storm Alberto, formed in the southern Gulf of Mexico, brought rain and winds, but little damage, to Northwest Florida during the Memorial Day weekend.

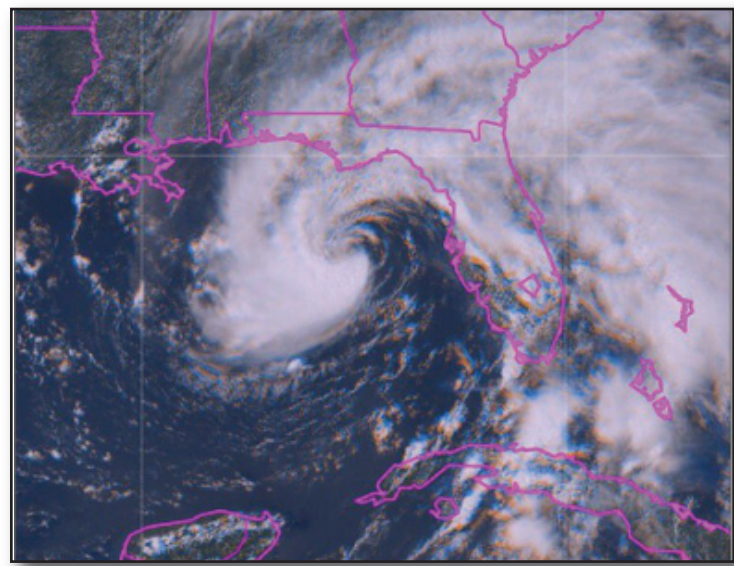
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has predicted a 70 percent likelihood of 10 to 16 named tropical storms forming this year. Of those, five to nine of the storms are expected to develop into hurri-

cans, with winds of 74 miles per hour or above. One to four of the storms could turn into major hurricanes, reaching above a category 3 (on a scale of potential damage from 1 to 5) with winds at 111 m.p.h. or higher. It is impossible to forecast how many, if any, of these expected storms may hit populated areas.

The forecast for this year hovers around the average hurricane rate, according to NOAA.

Among technological

Please see **STORM**, page A-5



Alberto, a subtropical storm that washed over the area during the Memorial Day weekend, got the 2018 Atlantic Hurricane season off to an early start. Here, an enhanced satellite view. NOAA

Let the summer begin!



Family Fun Day at the Bluewater Bay Tennis Center was held Saturday for children 4-16. Pro Matt Kirkham gave lessons and led fun drills for the young players. Two more sessions will be offered July 14 and Aug. 11. Meantime, playoffs have begun in the 34th season of the Okaloosa Men's Baseball League. Featured here is a weekend game between the Wildcats and the Sharks at Niceville's Twin Oaks complex. The playoffs continue this week, with the championship game to be held Sunday, also at Twin Oaks. Also pictured is blacksmithing class at the Heritage of Northwest Florida Museum, Valparaiso. The museum will host a variety of classes this summer for children and adults, as well as a day camp.

Beacon photos by Paula Mims

County eyes transit woes

Cost overruns, complaints cited by consultants

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

How to improve Okaloosa County's troubled public transit system, including an expected budget overrun of nearly \$350,000 this year, was the topic at a county commission workshop held in Shalimar May 29.

A central feature of the discussion was a recent report provided, at the county's request, by the Institute for Senior Professionals (ISP), a group of retirees who consult, on a voluntary basis, at the request of government and nonprofit organizations. The institute is based at Northwest Florida State College.

After reviewing the report, commissioners discussed what to do next to improve the transit system.

Commissioner Nathan Boyles said that it is hard to know whether the county provides enough transit service.

Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel said that the transit service, however difficult and expensive, is necessary. "The elderly, the blind, and the disabled really need the service," she said.

Commissioner Graham Fountain spoke of some of the complaints he has received from his constituents, including a story about a 90-year-old left alone for several hours at a closed facility after the transit system failed to pick the person up and take the person home as expected.

Fountain suggested that instead of the county trying to run the transit service itself, it should look for a free-enterprise solution, favoring the "entrepreneurial spirit" versus a government-run pro-

Please see **TRANSIT**, page A-3



An organization of volunteer professionals has recommended an overhaul of the county's transit program to reverse overspending, reduce complaints, and improve oversight.

Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

College to add more job-oriented programs

Chrissie Kirila
Beacon Correspondent

People who want to become commercial pilots, medical assistants or medical laboratory technicians will soon be able to pursue such training at Northwest Florida State College.

The Niceville college will offer three new academic programs beginning in the spring of 2019. They will lead to two-year degrees in Professional Pilot Technology with a Commercial Pilot Certification, Medical Laboratory Technology, and Medical Assisting (Advanced) with a Medical Assisting specialist certificate.

The community college is responding to projected demand for new pilots in the airline industry over the next 10 years.

"There are 50-plus annual openings in the region (for commercial aircraft pilots), and the average wage of \$45.88 an hour is higher than the national average wage and almost double the average wage in the area," said Scott Behrens, college vice president for teaching and learning, in an interview.

"There are no other colleges in the Panhandle offering an associate of science degree in professional pilot technology, with the closest program located in Jacksonville," Behrens said.

The college board of trustees last month accepted a proposal for Emerald Coast Aviation of Crestview to provide airplanes, maintenance and hangar space for equipment used for pilot

Please see **COLLEGE**, page A-3



Motor scooter, car collide

The driver of a motor scooter was airlifted to a hospital Thursday after his vehicle collided with a car at John Sims Parkway and Rocky Bayou Drive, Niceville. No other injuries were reported. The motor scooter was heavily damaged after striking the right side of a small Cadillac in the intersection. The patient was moved by ambulance to the Ruckel airstrip, Niceville, from which he was flown to a hospital, inset.

Beacon photos



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THE INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER —by Mike Griffith

What do you think about legalizing gambling on sports?

Location: CEFCO gas station on College Boulevard



"I don't gamble myself, but I'm not against other people choosing to do so."

David Belle, 45, Niceville, delivery driver



"To be honest, I couldn't care less."

Neil Stone, 43, Ponce de Leon, truck driver



"I don't see anything wrong with it."

Mandy Smith, 32, Natchez, Mississippi, beautician



"I think gambling never ends well. It can lead people into all kinds of trouble."

Cassie Lieb, 34, Crestview, teacher



I think people should have the choice to do whatever they want with their own money, as long as it doesn't cause harm."

Saylor Davis, 23, Pensacola, sales representative



"I'm not a big gambler myself, but I have friends who are. I don't think it's any different from other kinds of gambling."

Amy Hoffman, 28, Crestview, student

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

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Orchestra director named

Beacon Staff

Northwest Florida State College has named Devin Hughes as the Mattie Kelly Distinguished Chair in Music and Conductor for the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra.

Hughes most recently was music director and conductor of the Boulder (Colo.) Symphony. He will take the helm of the Northwest Florida Symphony July 2.

"Devin's musical talent, extensive experience and energetic personality are sure to be an authentic fit for the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, Northwest Florida State College and our entire community," says Devin Stephenson, college president. "I'm certain the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra and our community initiatives will thrive under Devin's leader-

ship." Hughes will succeed Jeffrey Rink, who has led the Niceville-based orchestra since 2007. Rink and his wife, Jennifer Boudette, are moving to New Hampshire.

As conductor, Hughes plans the orchestra season and conducts all rehearsals and concerts, works with its support organization, the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra Guild, develops and directs the Northwest Florida Youth Symphony Orchestra, supervises education and outreach initiatives, and fosters community support.

The orchestra's 2017-18 season is scheduled to begin Sept. 15.

In addition to his post at the Boulder Symphony, Hughes served concurrently in those positions with the Arapahoe Philharmonic, Littleton, Colo.,

and the Civic Youth Orchestra of Denver. He has also held positions with the Santa Fe Youth Symphony Association, Denver Young Artists Orchestra, Denver Philharmonic Orchestra and Denver Contemporary Chamber Players.

Hughes' education includes University of Denver's Lamont School of Music, Grinnell College, Vienna Conservatory of Music and Ball State University.



Devin Hughes

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TRANSIT

From page A-1
gram.

Boyles asked whether the program's paratransit operation, which transports disabled or infirm persons door to door on demand, could be replaced with a commercial system such as those provided by such companies as Uber and Lyft. The paratransit system appeared to be the source of much of the program's red ink.

The county system also includes conventional, fixed-route bus routes on a schedule, on weekdays. One of the 10 lines links Crestview and Fort Walton Beach, stopping in Niceville six times a day (three in each direction) at Northwest Florida State College and City Hall. Fares range from 75 cents to \$1.50.

After further discussion, Deputy County Administrator Greg Kisella said he would prepare a plan for putting the transit system under his direct supervision rather than under the County Growth Management Department. Kisella said he would also look into hiring a professional transportation services manager to oversee the performance of Maruti Transportation, the county contractor that has operated the service since 2015.

Kisella said he will report back to the commission with a specific plan at a future commission meeting, at which commissioners may discuss the transportation issue further, and vote on whether to implement the plan.

The ISP report stated that, although 98 percent of Okaloosa County households have at least one motor vehicle, "public transportation is needed."

"Getting to work, medical appointments, and other everyday tasks are increasingly difficult, especially on heavily used corridors such as State Road 85 and U.S. Highway 98," the study reported.

The ISP stated that "transportation investments in a well-run public transit system could have significant benefits at much lower cost," including reducing



A county transit fixed-route bus, driven by Ciji Baynard, arrived on time at Niceville City Hall at 2:55 p.m. May 31. One passenger was aboard.
Beacon photo by Mike Griffith

traffic congestion and "providing a sustained transit service for elderly and transportation-disadvantaged persons"

Paratransit services, operating seven days a week, are intended for those people that have a transportation disability, operate on-demand, taking qualified riders from point-to-point. Riders qualify if they are 60 years or older, 17 years or younger, are lower income, or are physically disabled. Fares range from zero to \$1.25 a mile, often with the county looking to medical insurers or Medicaid for reimbursement.

The ISP report expressed concern about the program's finances.

Grants to the county, funded by state and federal taxpayers, are the primary funding for its transit system. This year, Okaloosa County will receive \$3.2 million in grants, according to the report. The total county transit budget is \$3.9 million, with ballooning costs expected to result in a budget overrun of \$344,622, according to the ISP.

The ISP report outlined some of the accomplishments and problems of the county transit system.

"Fixed route revenue hours and revenue miles have been holding steady while ridership is trending downward. Revenue hours and revenue miles have only changed about one percent from

FY 2015 to estimated FY 2018."

"On the other hand, ridership has declined 26.8% over the last five years. Riders per revenue hour have fallen from 4.98 FY 2015 to 4.11 FY 2018."

"Paratransit ridership has increased 7.1% over the last five years, but revenue hours have increased 37.7% and revenue miles have gone up 46%. Ridership is measured in trips, with a trip being defined as picking up a registered client and dropping the client off at his/her destination."

The ISP expressed concern about an apparent lack of service quality in the county transit system.

"Service quality has declined," said the report, "mostly for the paratransit program. Fixed routes, although affected by traffic congestion during peak times, are running well."

"Paratransit on-time performance, reportedly, is now 81% (goal is 90%) and complaints have spiked since the TDP study."

The ISP report concluded that, "The Okaloosa County Public Transit Program faces several significant challenges. Even though fixed routes operate with few customer complaints, ridership is down 27% from FY 2014. This means farebox and pass revenues

are down and that few paratransit clients are being moved to fixed routes. Paratransit trips are increasing, but paratransit vehicle revenue hours are increasing at a much faster rate. This has led to large cost increases and budget overruns."

"Client satisfaction, particularly with paratransit service, has fallen since FY 2014. Scheduling problems have caused missed or late pickups resulting in increased complaints. Program performance issues, data collection and billing errors, and late data entry are increasing the burden on county transit staff and costing the County money. County staff are stretched thin and spend their time "firefighting" and taking on tasks to keep the system running. As a result, service improvement and planning tasks are not getting done."

The ISP made a number of recommendations to cut costs and improve efficiency in the transit program.

"The key to getting operating expenses under control is to reverse the growth of paratransit vehicle revenue hours," the report stated.

The ISP recommended certain actions to reduce passenger complaints.

Many of the actions would require direct county oversight, the ISP stated. It recommended renegotiating the contract with Maruti to permit this, and the hiring of a county senior manager to oversee performance.

The institute also recommended advertising the transit program. It also recommended boosting fixed-route service in tourist-heavy corridors, and between the north and south ends of the county to serve commuters.

No one from Maruti Transportation spoke during the county commission meeting. Comment from the Jacksonville-based company was not received by press time.

Life Tributes

E-mail items to info@baybeacon.com

Gene Goodridge

Gene Goodridge, the "Muffler Man" from Country Corners Tires in Valparaiso, Florida, passed away suddenly May 24, 2018.

Although Gene's wishes were to be cremated and no formal service, his family is hosting a memorial in his honor on Saturday, June 9, at the Valparaiso Community Center from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

COLLEGE

From page A-1

A contract will be developed. Instructors will be college faculty.

The college is also responding to the need for qualified health care personnel in the area.

NWF State is "working hard to ensure that we are attractive to new business," Behrens said. "Researchers have demonstrated that better hospitals and health care are pull factors when people consider a move to a new area."



Scarlett Quesenberry, a student in the recently added welding program at Northwest Florida State College. The Niceville institution will add three more career-oriented programs in 2019. Beacon photo by Chrissie Kirila

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Tammy Summers (601) 597-3777

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6225 Shire Lane, Crestview
Bethany Zaal (850) 217-2509

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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

On May 11 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office arrested Steven Michael Swear, 25, of 1008 Everglade Dr., Niceville, on charges of armed burglary of a dwelling, structure or conveyance, larceny of between \$20,000 and \$100,000, and dealing in stolen property.

The arrest was made on a warrant stemming from an incident in Niceville on Nov. 3, 2017, in which Niceville police questioned Swear regarding a burglary that occurred in late October 2017 on McKinley Street. The investigation indicated that Swear had broken into a residence, stealing a large number of items valued at a total of \$23,395, including firearms, a switchblade knife and a WWII Nazi flag.

On May 12 Niceville police arrested James Kenneth Mayberry, 32, of 103 Beverly Dr., Niceville, on a charge of DUI.

Police received a report of an apparently impaired man seen driving away from a gas station, and later spotted the described vehicle, which was swerving, making wide turns, and failing to stay in the proper lane.

The driver, Mayberry, produced no driver's license, showed several signs of intoxication, and refused a breath test.

On May 14 Holly Nicole Mason, 34, of 201 Island Ln., Niceville, was arrested on a charge of retail theft shoplifting.

The arrest was made on a warrant stemming from an incident in Niceville on March 1, in which Mason had been seen switching price tags on items of clothing, altering their prices, taking food, and leaving the store without making the correct payment. Total value of the items taken was \$129.88.

On May 15 Niceville police arrested Amber Elizabeth Wojciechowski, 28, of 3910 Solano Rd., Panama City, on charges of possessing a controlled substance without a prescription, and drug equipment possession and/or use.

An officer stopped a 2010 Toyota Prius for running a stop sign at Palm and Valparaiso boulevards. A police dog gave a positive indication for the presence of drugs. The resulting

search revealed a syringe containing a brown liquid which field tested positive for heroin.

On May 16 Niceville police arrested Beverly Jean Hilton, 53, of 5503 Brackin St., Crestview, on charges of grand theft of between \$300 and \$5,000, and possessing a controlled substance without a prescription.

Also arrested was Elton Cordell Long, 52, on charges of grand theft of between \$300 and \$5,000, possessing a controlled substance without a prescription, and drug equipment possession and/or use.

Police received a call from Walmart stating that a man and woman had left the store without paying for numerous items, and had departed in a black sport-utility vehicle. Police found the described vehicle in a fast-food drive-through lane, saw the reported stolen items in the back seat, and detained the occupants—Hilton and Long.

While handcuffing Long, police observed him attempting to discard cash and cocaine. A search of his person revealed a glass pipe, which Long said he owned and used to consume drugs. Further search of the vehicle revealed suspected cocaine which field tested positive, as well as 3 Xanax pills that were identified through Web MD. The stolen items were valued at a total of \$711.94.

On May 16 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office arrested Steven James Litchult, 36,1602 26th St., #A, Niceville, on a charge of dealing in stolen property.

The arrest was made on a warrant stemming from an incident in Niceville on Nov. 3, 2017, in which Litchult had pawned stolen items.

On May 16 Niceville police arrested Lacy Richelle Owens, 25, at large, on charges of permitting an unauthorized person to drive, possessing a controlled substance without a prescription, and drug equipment possession and/or use.

Also arrested was Jeffery Daniel Goodwin, 28, of 593 Hill Ln., Niceville, on a charge of driving while license suspended, 3rd or subsequent offense.

An officer observed Goodwin

Youth fatally injured in accident is mourned

Beacon Staff

A funeral service for a Niceville youth fatally injured in a skateboard accident was held Thursday.

Kenneth Alan Moss Jr., 17, of Niceville, died as a result of injuries suffered while skateboarding on 20th Street, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

According to an FHP report, a Ford driven by a 19-year-old was at the top of a hill on 20th Street near Pine Avenue, at 12:20 p.m. on May 24. The driver released the brakes, traveling west on 20th.

Moss, riding a skateboard on the street, grabbed the Ford to gain speed and pushed himself down the hill, according to the report.

After traveling 400 feet on 20th Street, the youth lost his balance and fell from skateboard to pavement. The FHP said he was taken to Fort Walton Beach Medical Center.

An investigation had not been completed as of Friday, according to the FHP.

A funeral service was held May 31 at Crosspoint Church, Niceville. A funeral notice stated that Moss, "a gifted and talented musician who had a beautiful baritone voice," had just graduated from Niceville High School and had earned a performing arts scholarship to Northwest Florida State College. He is survived by his parents and three siblings.

driving a 2013 Ford Edge, and recognized Goodwin as someone not having a valid driver's license. A police database confirmed that Goodwin's license was still suspended, and the officer stopped the vehicle on North Partin Drive and arrested Goodwin.

Owens was arrested for allowing Goodwin to drive the vehicle, and said the reason for doing so was that she did not have her corrective lenses. She also told police that she had a syringe on her person, and a further search revealed additional syringes containing an unknown substance which field tested positive for fentanyl.

Goodwin said that the pair had just bought heroin.

On May 18 Niceville police arrested Rodney Dewayne Johnson, 40, of 4291 East Hwy. 90, Crestview, on charges of marijuana possession not more than 20 grams, and drug equipment possession and/or use.

Police received a call from Walmart regarding a theft suspect who had fled the store. While proceeding toward the store, an officer was flagged down by a citizen who had seen Johnson run into another store, where he was captured by police.

As he was being detained, Johnson dropped a small pouch, in which police found a pill fob containing about 1 gram of marijuana, which field tested positive. Walmart declined to pursue charges for the theft report.

On May 18 Niceville police arrested Ralph Willie Neely, 42, of 1460 30th St., #B, Niceville, on a charge of driving while license suspended, 3rd or subsequent offense.

An officer observed a vehicle being driven on Government Avenue, and recognized Neely at the wheel. A police database confirmed that Neely did not have a valid license. Police later spotted the vehicle, which was then being driven by another person, with Neely as a passenger.

The driver said that Neely had picked her up and asked her to drive because he had been seen driving the vehicle. A police database revealed 3 convictions for driving without a valid license.

On May 21 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office arrested in Niceville Jerry Ray Armes, 44, of 1200 James Lee Blvd., Crestview, on a charge of failing to register as a sex offender.

On May 21 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office arrested Trystan Anthony Villareal, 18, of 125 Edge Ave., Valparaiso, on a charge of failure to appear for a misdemeanor offense.

On May 21 Karissa Leone Frank, 39, of 1578 Hickory St., Niceville, was booked into the Walton County jail on a charge of failure to appear — misdemeanor. She was released on bond the following day.

On May 25 Robert Jacob Cheatham, 31, of 428 Smith Rd., Freeport, was booked into the Walton County jail on a charge of failure to appear — felony. The following day, he was also booked on charges of unarmed burglary of an unoccupied dwelling, and grand theft of between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

On May 26 Valparaiso police arrested Xavier Elias Mitry, 31, of 362 Kaylee Rd., Freeport, on a charge of knowingly driving while license suspended or revoked.

Police stopped a vehicle Mitry was driving on College Boulevard after a police database confirmed that he did not have a valid license. Mitry said that he did not have a valid driver's license, and produced an ID card.

Criminal summons

On May 13 Niceville police issued a criminal summons to Matthew Edward Young, 39, of 1101 Hickory Ave., Niceville, on charges of marijuana possession not more than 20 grams, and drug equipment possession and/or use.

Police responded to a disturbance, and determined that the best course of action was for the parties involved to separate. As an officer was preparing to transport Young to a hotel, Young admitted to the officer that he had "weed" on him.

A search of his person revealed a small glass jar containing about 7.33 grams of a green leafy substance, as well as a black grinder and a glass pipe which smelled of marijuana. The green leafy substance field tested positive for THC, the intoxicating chemical in marijuana.

Fire Department Reports

Niceville

The Niceville Fire Department responded to the following calls from May 25, 2018 through June 3, 2018.

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



Table with columns: STREET, SITUATION, DATE, TIME. Lists various fire department incidents in Niceville from May 25 to June 3, 2018.

Weekly Safety Tip: Fireworks are dangerous! Even sparklers, which burn as hot as 1200 degrees F (649 degrees C), cause thousands of injuries to children each year.

The Niceville Fire Department has a Facebook page, check it out!

North Bay

The North Bay Fire District responded to the following calls from May 25, 2018 through June 3, 2018.



Table with columns: STREET, SITUATION, DATE, TIME. Lists various fire department incidents in North Bay from May 25 to June 3, 2018.

Visit northbayfd.org for more information.

Other

On May 10 Valparaiso police responded to an address on Seminole Avenue regarding the theft of a trailer. The trailer was valued at approximately \$1,000, its license plate and decal were valued at \$34.10, and the trailer was loaded with carpentry tools and other items valued between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

On May 15 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Meadowbrook Court regarding a reported battery.

On May 16 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Fairway Lakes Drive regarding a reported battery.

On May 16 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Cedar Street regarding a disturbance.

On May 17 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on E. College Blvd. regarding some lost/damaged property.

On May 17 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Cedar Street regarding a disturbance.

On May 18 Niceville police responded to the west entrance of the Northwest Florida State College campus regarding a report of a man in the middle of the road who appeared to be under the influence of something. Further investigation indicated that the man was upset and had gone for a walk. He told police he was walking home and was going to go to sleep.

On May 20 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Bayshore Drive regarding a reported battery.

On May 20 Niceville police responded to Turkey Creek Park

where a vehicle window had been broken out in the parking area behind the restrooms.

On May 20 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on White Point Road regarding a vehicle burglary.

On May 20 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Bay Drive regarding a vehicle theft.

On May 20 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Gleneagles Drive regarding a burglary of a vehicle.

On May 20 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Bayshore Drive regarding a reported battery.

On May 20 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on N. Partin Dr. regarding a burglary.

On May 21 Niceville police responded to an address on Alderwood Way regarding a report of a juvenile male seen urinating in someone's front yard.

On May 22 Niceville police responded to an address on Boyd Circle regarding a possible burglary, in which a resident reported that she had heard what sounded like someone clawing at her door. She told police that her dogs had awakened her when they heard the noise, and further investigation indicated that the noise may have been caused by a small animal.

On May 22 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on E. John Sims Parkway regarding a narcotics misdemeanor.

On May 23 the Okaloosa Sheriff's office responded to an address on Crestview Avenue regarding a burglary.

Attention Advertisers! 'It's a Grand Old Flag!' A colorful Special Section in the Bay Beacon. FREE color on ads! Don't miss this chance to show your colors with the Red, White and Blue! Less than 1¢ per reader! Ad Deadline: Thursday, June 7. Publication: June 13 in the Bay Beacon. DON'T BE LEFT OUT! CALL 678-1080, TEXT 850-428-2429 OR E-MAIL INFO@BAYBEACON.COM TO RESERVE YOUR SPACE TODAY! Beacon Newspapers • 1181 E. John Sims Pkwy. • Niceville, FL 32578 (850) 678-1080 • info@baybeacon.com

2018

CALENDAR
 E-mail items to
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 by 5 p.m. Wednesday.

Road Closure Notification

Cedar Ridge Way between 101 and 107, Niceville, will be closed for the removal of a tree. This will take place Wednesday, June 6, 2018 and Thursday, June 7, 2018 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., weather permitting. There will be access from Beech Wood Way and Evergreen Ave. We apologize for this necessary inconvenience. If you have any questions, please call the Public Works office at 850-279-6436, Ext. 2004

Boston Butt Sale

Just in time for the 4th of July. These delicious smoked Boston Butts are \$30 each or 3 for \$80 (sales tax already included). Visit www.lighthousebay.com to order yours now. If you prefer to pay by cash or check, visit the Niceville Public Library, Synovus Bank (Bluewater Bay, Niceville or Valparaiso) or Valparaiso City Hall to purchase tickets. Pickup will occur on July 3 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the Mullet Festival site.

Natural alternative classes

Niceville Public Library will offer three classes this summer for those interested in exploring natural alternative to support their families physically and emotionally. The first class will be "Support for the Adult Brain" on Thursday, June 7 at 6:00 p.m. in the Library. Please RSVP to Michelle Ruschman by texting (850) 218-7095 to confirm your seat.

Soap Making

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida is holding a great class for first time or beginner soap makers.

The class will teach the cold-process method of soap making with a focus on working with lye and safety. Students will watch a soap making demonstration, which will visually and interactively teach the process from start to finish. During the last half of the class, students will make their own 1 pound batch of cold-process soap which can be taken home. All materials and safety equipment will be provided.

Join Instructor Walter Roof on Saturday, June 9 from 1-3 p.m. Cost is \$50 (\$45 Museum Members). Call the Museum to register: 850-678-2615.

The Bees Waggle Dance

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida will hold "KIDS Summer Sagas" one Saturday a month on June 9, July 14 and August 4, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

"KIDS Summer Sagas" is a public program for ages 5-14, designed to spark the minds of young people and provide children with a fun hands-on learning experience that will create memories that last a lifetime.

"The Bees Waggle Dance", Saturday, June 9 is all about bees communication. Local beekeeper, Edward Crosby will teach kids all about the honey bee by showing his live bee hive,

identifying the parts of the hive and talking about the tasks of a beekeeper. Kids will identify the Queen, Drones and the Worker bees, but most importantly how, when, and why bees do the waggle dance.

\$10 per child; \$8 per Museum Family Member.

Space is limited. Please call to make reservations: 850-678-2615 (MC/Visa).

Woodturning

Emerald Coast Woodturning Guild meets the second Saturday of each month at the Freeport Community Center. (16040 US Business Hwy 331 South; Freeport).

Our next meeting is on June 9, from 8:30 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Meetings are open to anyone interested in using or learning about wood lathes. Contact Earnest Nettles at 850 585-6064 or Jim Reese at 850 499-9173 for additional information.

Make dad a card

Blue Star Families and Niceville Starbucks will be hosting "Make Dad a Card" on Sunday, June 10 from 2:30 - 4 p.m. at Starbucks in Niceville.

For more information, contact Stephanie Jergens at 850-333-8671.

Valp. Library activities

The Valparaiso Community Library has a variety of summer programs scheduled for the week of June 10.

On Monday (June 11) we have our regular pre-school story time at 10 a.m. and the summer artist class at 2 p.m. Class size is limited and registration is required. On Tuesday June 12 our story time begins at 10 a.m., and at 2 p.m., the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance has a program for children up to age 17. Also, the Anime Club with a Japanese language class meets at 4 p.m.

On Wednesday morning the library has its American History

Summer day camps



E.O. Wilson Biophilia Nature Center has announced the schedule for Summer Day Camp opportunities. The day camps will be held every Wednesday from June 6 - August 1. Camps start at 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. for ages 5-12. The cost is \$45 each session with a different theme each week. There will also be 2 week long summer day camps. They will be Monday-Friday sessions with the first session on July 16-20 and the second session on July 23-27 at a cost of \$165 each session. For more information, call 850-835-1824 or visit www.eowilsoncenter.org.

Seminar that is open this summer to all students over the age of 14. New adult students are also welcome. The theme for the history class will be American Pop Culture. At 12:30 p.m., the Knitting group meets and they are also inviting teenagers interested in needlework or sewing to attend their meeting. The lap-sit story time has it's regularly scheduled program on Wednesday mornings at 10 a.m.

On Thursday, June 14, the EOD from Eglin will bring their robotics for a special program at 2 p.m. This will be a family oriented event and the community is invited. If your child loves STEMM activities they will enjoy this lively and informative program. All library programs are free of charge and we offer lots of fun activities to help your child have a productive summer. For additional information call the library at 729-5406 or visit us on Facebook. You can now register for library program announcements at Meetup.com.

The library is located at 459 Valparaiso Parkway in Valparaiso.

SafeStaff food handling

Valparaiso Goodwill Career Campus Training Center will be providing free SafeStaff Food Handling certification training to anyone who is interested on June 13th. Class will be from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. If you are interested, please call 850-729-8690 to register. Located at 143 N. John Sims Pkwy.

EOD robotics program

The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) from Eglin Air Force Base's

Special Ops will be presenting an informative and energetic program at the Valparaiso Community Library at 2 p.m., Thursday, June 14. Come and experience how these specially trained technicians dispose of explosive devices through the use of robotics. This is a family oriented program and the community is invited to this free program. For additional information call the library at 729-5406 or visit us on Facebook. The library is located at 459 Valparaiso Parkway in Valparaiso.

Fireworks Fundraiser

Twin Cities Hospital will host their 4th annual Boggy Bayou Fireworks Fundraiser Luncheon Friday, June 15 from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m., with all proceeds benefitting the Boggy Bayou Fireworks Foundation. This event is open to the public; however, tickets are limited. It is strongly encouraged to pick up tickets in advance at the Niceville Public Library (during their normal business hours) or at Twin Cities Hospital Cafeteria (Monday - Friday, 7a.m. until 1p.m.). A minimum \$5 donation per ticket receives a meal including home cooked barbeque ribs, sides, dessert, and beverage.

Thank you to everyone who supported this event in the past; with your continued participation, Twin Cities Hospital looks forward to another great fundraising event supporting the community's annual Fourth of July celebration.

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STORM

From page A-1

upgrades, according to NOAA, are new satellite observation systems, and improved forecasting models. Also, NOAA's National Hurricane Center has made its Arrival Time of Tropical-Storm-Force Winds graphics operational on its website this year. One graphic displays the "earliest reasonable" arrival time of such winds (39 to 73 m.p.h.), at which point further preparedness activities could be hindered. A second graphic displays the "most-likely" arrival time of the winds.

At the local level, "Okaloosa County stands ready to protect the safety of residents and visitors," said county Public Safety Director Stefan Vaughn. "We have a robust system in place," he said, "to ensure that information is provided to the public," in the event a tropical storm or hurricane approaches the county.

A local improvement first implemented last year, said Vaughn, is the "Alert Okaloosa" system, which tracks information about storms, as well as other possible disasters such as toxic spills, and transmits that information via email or messages to landline or mobile phones belonging to local residents who subscribe to the free service.

The Alert Okaloosa system replaced an earlier, similar system called Code Red. The new system, said Vaughn, is paid for by state taxpayers rather than directly by county ones, and offers greater accuracy in determining who receives a warning and who does not.

For example, he said, when a tornado struck Fort Walton Beach during mid-May of this year, some local television stations were airing warnings that the tornado was moving into the Niceville area. The Alert Okaloosa system, however, had more accurate information, showing that the tornado had dissipated after passing near Racetrack Road, and did not pose a threat to the Niceville area after all.

Thus, Niceville and Valparaiso



Hurricane Opal was a Category 4 hurricane that caused severe damage along the northern Gulf Coast of the U.S. in October 1995. Here, a storm-toppled tree on a house in Niceville.

Beacon file photo

area residents did not receive false alarms on their phones. By reducing such false alarms, the credibility of any future warnings that residents do receive on their phones is enhanced, making it more likely that people will comply with such warnings and take shelter or other appropriate measures when necessary.

Vaughn urges county residents who have not already done so to sign up for Alert Okaloosa, which can be done free of charge on the Public Safety page of the county website at okaloosafl.com, or by phone at 651-7150. Families who have members with special needs are also encouraged to contact the county to arrange for sheltering or other specialized care for their special needs loved ones.

In preparing for a storm, Vaughn said that people who live in sturdy homes outside storm surge or flood-prone areas may choose to ride out relatively low-intensity storms such as category 1 or 2 storms, but should stock up on emergency supplies, board up windows, clear yards of patio furniture and other light objects, and take other precautions.

Residents of more vulnerable homes, or anyone facing a more intense storm, should be prepared to evacuate if necessary, and should pay close attention to instructions and evacuation routes issued by state or county officials.

As a last resort, the county opens one or more emergency

shelters during hurricanes. The first county shelter likely to open for a storm, said Vaughn, will be at Davidson Middle School near Crestview. That site, he said, is away from the coast and outside flood zones, and is equipped for people with special needs. Other shelters in the county, including the emergency shelter at the Raider Arena on the Niceville campus of Northwest Florida State College—the only such shelter in the Niceville-Valparaiso area—will open only as deemed necessary by county officials, depending on the severity of the emergency and the number of people requiring shelter.

Local utilities are also preparing for hurricane season. Gulf Power representatives Gordon Paulus and Kimberly Blair told the Beacon that the electric utility has been busy getting ready.

"We've been replacing wooden poles and cross arms with steel and concrete, to provide better and more reliable support for transmission lines," said Blair. For example, she said, new concrete poles have been installed in Niceville near the Citgo fuel depot on the shore of Boggy Bayou.

"We have made over \$250 million worth of improvements for system since Hurricane Ivan," said Paulus, mentioning the last major storm to hit the area, in September 2004. "We have fitted our substations with smart technology, to include auto-remote line testing,

automatic rerouting, and redundant feeds, especially for high priority customers such as hospitals."

"We learned some valuable lessons last year from hurricane Irma, where we suffered some losses despite hardening," Paulus said, "and have used those lessons to make further improvements."

In addition, Gulf Power trims trees along powerlines, to prevent trees or their branches from being blown into power lines, causing blackouts and danger from downed lines. Residents in the company's service territory are encouraged to contact the utility before planting trees on their property in places where the trees might interfere with power lines when they grow to full height.

Gulf Power also maintains a storm center on its website, which includes a power outage map that people can access to see where blackouts have occurred, along with estimated times of power restoration.

When restoring service, said Paulus and Blair, Gulf Power, like other utilities, works outward from power stations, along main lines to transformer stations, and then outward from there. This may take time, but power will be restored as rapidly as it can be done safely.

Areas where lines are buried underground may be less likely to suffer outages, but may still suffer failures if flooded or otherwise damaged, and may take longer to repair.

Despite efforts to harden the power system, Paulus and Blair said that residents should prepare themselves to go for up to three days without electricity, and those with home generators should check the machines to make sure they will work when needed.

If a generator is used, it should be operated outdoors, to prevent carbon monoxide from building up inside of a structure, and should supply power directly to individual appliances, rather than being connected directly to the power system of a home or other building, as this can pose severe safety hazards to residents as well as to repair crews.

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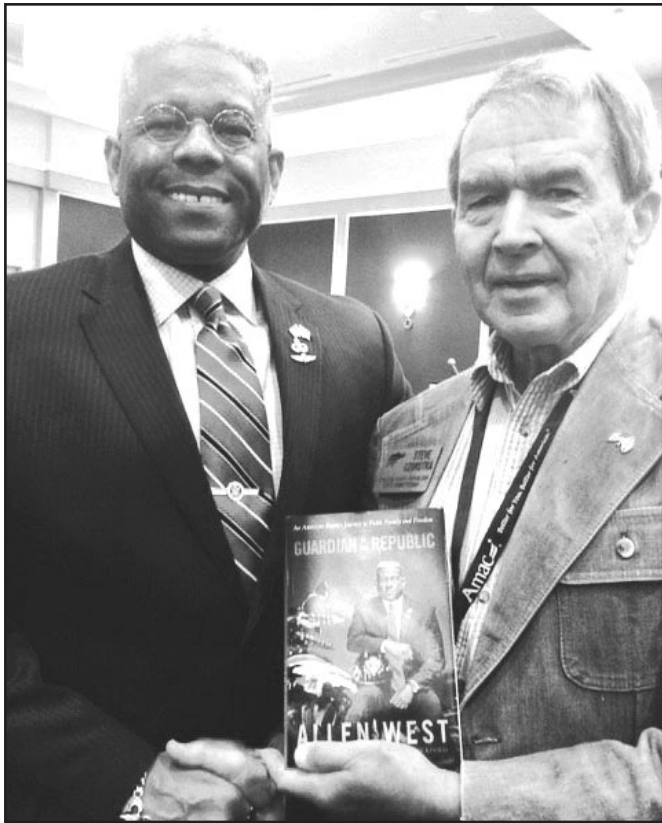
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Niceville's Newspaper

Steve Czonstka attends AMAC



Steve Czonstka, right, President and Delegate for the Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC) Chapter for Florida Congressional District One, receives his signed copy of "Guardians of the Republic" from its author, US Army Lieutenant Colonel (RET) Allen West. West was the keynote speaker at the 2018 AMAC Delegates Conference held recently in San Antonio, Texas.



NHS Interact Club helps ShelterBox

Sierra Collins, President of the Niceville High School Interact Club, presents Steve Gardner, President of the Mid-Bay Rotary Club, with a check for \$1,000 for a ShelterBox. Interact Club members support community service projects with volunteers and conduct fund raisers to support projects locally and internationally.

Autism Spectrum speaks to Kiwanis

At a recent breakfast meeting, the Niceville-Valparaiso Kiwanis guest speaker was Brad Burnette from Autism Spectrum on the Emerald Coast. His organization is dedicated to raising community awareness while providing support for individuals with autism and their families. Brad is shown in the photograph with Kiwanis President Lynn Gauthier.



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Postal food drive is a success



Recently a nationwide effort to fight hunger the Stamp Out Hunger postal carrier's food drive took place. A voluntary campaign by our nation's letter carriers, the Stamp Out Hunger food drive brought in over 11,000 pounds of food in the Niceville area though generous donations of non-perishables left by community members for mail carriers to pick up by their mailboxes. In all they estimated \$16,844 in food was collected benefiting Niceville's Sharing and Caring. 100% of Niceville's USPS mail carriers volunteered to participate in this year's event. The North Bay and Niceville Fire Departments, members of First Presbyterian of Niceville along with community volunteers helped collect, sort and shelve these goods and place them on the shelves of the Sharing and Caring Food Pantry.

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Plew students raise money for Relay

The students at Plew Elementary held a Dime Challenge recently and raised \$2,524.21 in dimes for Relay for Life. The students pictured are Henry's Hornets and they were responsible for collecting almost 20% of that total from their class alone.

Woman's Club installs new officers



The Twin Cities Woman's Club held their last luncheon of the fiscal year at the Sunset Beach Clubhouse in Bluewater Bay. New officers were elected and installed for 2018-2019. They are (L-R) Dale Fuqua, President; Kissy Gordon, Recording Secretary; and Annie Fair, Treasurer. Not pictured is Lindsey Chabot, Corresponding Secretary.

RBCS students win academic competition



Recently, Rocky Bayou Christian School fifth grade students placed first in the fifth grade academic team competition at Lewis School. Pictured left to right are 5th graders Luke Franklin, Oliver McKinney, Kailey Yang, Daylan Hudson, and Mikaela Weinstock.



Beta Sigma Phi names Woman of the Year

Members of Gamma Epsilon Master Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi held their annual Founder's Day at the Boathouse Landing Restaurant in Valparaiso recently. Mattie Williams (L) was honored as the 2017-2018 Woman of the Year, and was presented flowers and a pin by last year's Woman of the Year, Helen Martin.

BWB Academic Team 3rd in nation



Bluewater Elementary's 20 member Academic Team recently took the online America Answers contest and placed third in the nation. The contest was 100 questions long and covered various topics including geography, math, science, literature, history, current events, and sports to name a few. All team members are fifth graders and they earned 1,172 points out of a possible 1,500 with 92% accuracy with no adult help at all.

Doolittle Institute celebrates opening



Doolittle Institute celebrated their grand opening with a Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting recently. The Doolittle Institute is a nonprofit organization which works with the Department of Defense to assist in the transfer of military technologies into the private sector.

Youth group donates to CAC



During a recent Niceville City Council meeting, Youth Advisory Council Chair Mariah McClaren briefed council members on recent and upcoming YAC projects and activities. The youth group members also presented a \$200 check to Danielle Jacko, Community Outreach Advocate for the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) in Niceville, as part of the YAC's charitable fundraising program. The CAC helps children who have been abused or neglected. YAC members at the May 8 council meeting included Martin Bouldo, Abigail O'Laughlin, Mariah McClaren, and Corey Arsenault.



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Mid-Bay Rotary donates to Relay for Life



Mid-Bay Rotary contributed \$250 to the Niceville-Valparaiso Relay for Life. In addition, Mid-Bay Rotary helps with providing its Rotary tents to the Relay Organization. Pictured (L to R): Steve Gardner, Mid-Bay Rotary President; LeAnne Archer, Co-Event Lead Niceville-Valparaiso Relay for Life; Donna Barrow, Event Lead for the Niceville-Valparaiso Relay for Life Organization; and Mid-Bay Rotarian and Cancer Survivor Dr. Don Schak.

RBCS seniors celebrate Decision Day



Many of the Rocky Bayou Christian School Academy Senior Class chose to don t-shirts from their college of choice for Decision Day.

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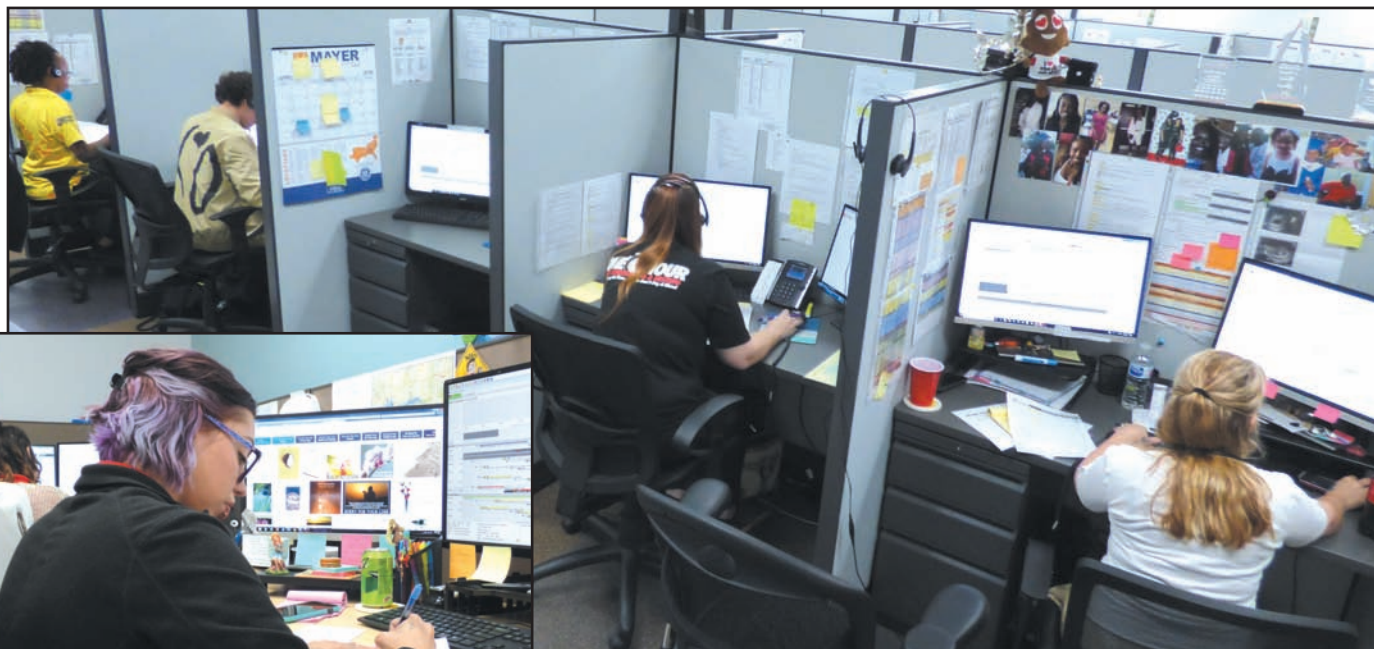
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When most of us envision a “command and control center,” we think of military command posts or 911 emergency call centers. Such centers, however, are also necessary for any organization that must quickly respond and keep track of rapidly changing situations.

One Hour Air Conditioning and Heating, with its sister companies Benjamin Franklin Plumbing and Mister Sparky Electrical, are such an organization. While most calls for service are routine, some are more urgent, as when someone’s air conditioning, plumbing, or electrical system suddenly fails. One Hour technicians are dispatched throughout Northwest Florida, and personnel at One Hour’s Niceville control center track their location, safety, and the status of each service call, determining who will be available soonest for the next call. Work at the One Hour control center is challenging, as customer

service representatives (CSRs) listen carefully to customers to determine their needs, while passing that information to dispatchers who monitor technicians. The control center requires people who can get along with others, communicate effectively, and manage multiple tasks simultaneously. Such work is stressful, but rewarding. Some team leaders at the One Hour control center



Above: The first voices One Hour Air customers usually hear are those of call center operators, such as (L-R) Jay King, Carlos Torres, Renee Roush, and Rebecca Lott. Left: The other part of the One Hour control center is the dispatch center, where the location and status of technicians are tracked, to ensure that technicians are safe, which technicians are available, and that work is proceeding on schedule.

recently told the Beacon how working there has impacted their lives.

“It’s all about the people,” said call center director Trista Gonzales, who was working fast-food and taking courses at Northwest Florida State College when she was offered work at One Hour. “Somebody took a chance on me,” she said. “I worked really hard,” learning all she could about the company and how it functions. The call center, said Gonzales, “is a living, breathing organism, constantly evolving.”

Trista said customer calls are handled in 3 phases:

—The CSR who answers the call gives the customer their first impression of the company, while passing the customer’s information to the dispatch center.

—Dispatchers contact a technician to assign and schedule service.

—The technician meets the customer and performs the required work, while earning the customer’s trust for the future.

Call center team leader Valerie Grant said that after working elsewhere, she was offered an opportunity to come to One Hour. The call center was something she had never done before, but Valerie learned rapidly. “I like the culture

here. I find it uplifting, motivated, and competitive.”

Kayla Beliveau has been a call center team leader for about 2 years. “I came here and applied,” she said, “and have never wanted to leave.”

“We work as a team,” said Crystal Graveman, “from the CSR who first takes a call to the technician who completes the job. We all get to know each other, and become very close.”

“It’s like a family,” said Brittany Quarrier. “When one of us is down, we all work together to pull them up.”

One of the best parts of working at One Hour, said Valerie Grant, is listening to the “Happy Line,” where customers call One Hour to praise the work of technicians, customer service representatives, and others. Such calls are played at the end of each month for all employees to hear.

Customers who would like to say something nice about the One Hour employees they have encountered can call the Happy Line at 850-467-0038. People requesting information or service can call 850-678-0911 for air-conditioning and heating service, 850-729-1776 for plumbing service, or 850-477-2759 for electrical service.

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